

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

05-Nov-63

5227

At the 4520 CCTW at Nellis AFB NV, Class 64-E of F-105D Operational Training Course 111506E graduated 25 pilots. The course started on 6 September 1963 and was assigned to the 4526 CCTS commanded by Maj Warren Foss. The student pilots and their home stations were:

Lt Col William R. Peters - Itazuke	Capt Malcolm D. Winter - 388 TFW McConnell
Lt Col Louis R. Vogt - McConnell	Capt William J. Barthelmas, Jr. - 355 TFW George
Capt Dwight P. Bowles - Itazuke	1Lt David H. Groark - George
Capt Joseph Edward Bower - George	1Lt Murphy N. Jones - England
Capt Giles W. Gainer - Luke	Capt William M. Kurtz - George
Capt Teddy Gay - George	1Lt Cecil W. Powell - George
Capt Stephen G. Huisenfeldt - George	1Lt John W. Redmond - 8 TFW Itazuke
Capt Frank J. Kohler, Jr. - George	Capt Stanley S. Rynear - Itazuke
Capt Lothar A. Olman - Cannon	1Lt Larry G. Van Pelt - Itazuke
Capt Robert D. Pielin - Nellis	1Lt Victor Vizcarra - Homestead
Capt Robert D. Reichart - Cannon	Capt George M. Weeks III - George
Capt Robert P. Taylor - Myrtle Beach	1Lt Larry J. Wright - George
Capt Gordon M. Walcott - England	

Robert Taylor had entered the Air Force as an enlisted man. "In March '52 I entered Air Cadet training in Texas and earned my wings in March '53 when I graduated from T-33 training at Webb AFB, Big Springs, Texas. I went through F-84G upgrade training at Luke AFB, Arizona and was stationed in Maine with the then SAC Fighter Bomber Group. Went to northern Japan (Misawa AB) for Korean backup in the fall of '53. Our squadron upgraded to the F-84F swept wing planes in '54 and I went back to Officer's Electronic School at Keesler, AFB, Mississippi in mid '54. I pulled duty as Radar Maintenance and Communications Officer at Langley AFB, Virginia (TAC Headquarters), spent about a year at a remote radar station in Labrador, went to two years of electrical engineering school and got my BSEE from Oklahoma State University. I worked for a few years at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico on nuclear weapons drop systems and was manager of the electronic shop that did the installation of all the diagnostic equipment for the 1962 Christmas Island US nuclear drop testing. I then went back to full-time flying in F-100s and moved to the F-105s in the fall of 1963. I went to Itazuke AB in southern Japan for 6 months and then we moved the whole fighter wing to Yokota AB near Tokyo.

"... On my first flight at Nellis, I lost my ATM (Air Turbine Motor) and had to land without any AC power so used backup instruments only. This was somewhat sporty for the first time you ever flew in the machine."

Prior to his F-105 training, Lt Groark had flown F-104s with the 476 TFS at George AFB, CA. He went on TDY to Hahn AB, Germany, during the Berlin Wall crisis in August 1961 and in October 1962 was deployed to Boca Chica NAS, Key West, FL to fly missions around Cuba during the Cuban Missile crisis. (Dave Groark, e-mail 10 April 2010.) After his F-105 training he was assigned to the 80 TFS, Itazuke AB, Japan.

1Lt Vizcarra was an F-100 pilot from the 309 TFS at Homestead. His next assignment was to the 80 TFS, 8 TFW, Itazuke AB, Japan. ("Thud Pilot" unpublished memoirs)

SO AA-3 dated 6 Sep 63 in History of the 4520 CCTW, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 63, AFHRA Call # K285.5435, IRIS # 0488615 & Robert Taylor letter to Bauke Jan Douma, 2 Dec 1988.

31-Dec-63

5655

Eight new pilots arrived in December to join the undermanned 80 TFS, 8 TFW, Itazuke AB, Japan. They were:

Maj Phillip A. Coll
Capt Lothar A. Olman
Capt Robert P. Taylor

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Capt Robert D. Pielin
Capt Giles W. Gainer
Capt Gordon M. Walcott
Capt Robert D. Reichart
1Lt Victor Vizcarra

Robert Taylor described his experience at his new base. "On joining the 80th at Itazuke, we were in the final stages of converting from the F-100 to the F-105. We also pulled nuclear alert at Osan AB in Osan, Korea. We would pull a week's alert at the alert pad and then be back at our home base for 2 - 3 weeks and then rotate back on alert. This was our main purpose there in Japan. Of course we couldn't store nuclear weapons in Japan so we had them all in Korea."

Capt Larry D. Waller was the one pilot in the 80th who departed in December.

"The year 1963 was the safest flying year for the 8 TFW since 1955. According to statistics kept by the Consolidated Safety Office, more than 25,000 hours were flown by the Wing's F-105, F-100, and F-102 aircraft. The figure also included flying time logged by the T-39A, T-33, and C-47 support aircraft. ... The F-105s logged over 6,000 accident free hours since Lt Col Max T. Beall, 8 TFW Director of Operations, flew the first Thunderchief to Itazuke in May 1963. The 80 TFS, flying F-100 and F-105 aircraft completed two years of accident-free flying hours"

By the end of 1963, the 8 TFW possessed 74 F-105Ds. "Some problems were encountered with the block 31 series F-105D, since this was the first organization to utilize this series. However, every possible corrective action was taken throughout the maintenance complex. In addition, aircrews were constantly kept abreast of the newer problems, which aided considerably in reducing the accident potential."

8 TFW history, 1 July - 31 Dec 63, pp 121, 129 - 130, 145 - 146, AFHRA Call # K-WG-8-HI, IRIS # 447600 & Robert Taylor letter to Bauke Jan Douma, 2 Dec 1988.

17-Nov-64 **29-Dec-64**

1051

Pilots from the 80 TFS from Yokota AB, Japan, continued arriving at Korat RTAFB, Thailand, to replace the 35 TFS. This was the 80th's first combat deployment of the Vietnam war and they were the third F-105 squadron from Yokota to fly combat missions at Korat. Maj John P. Anderson commanded the 80th.

In addition to Maj Anderson, twenty pilots eventually deployed with the squadron:

Maj Phil Coll	Capt Robert D. Pielin
Capt Robert D. Reichardt	Capt David E. Weaver
Capt John Atkinson	"Pappy" Detwiler
Capt Giles W. Gainer	Capt Chan E. McInelly
Andy Olman	Capt Robert L. "Bob The Wedge" Keller
Capt Lawrence D. Wilson	Capt Wayne Ensminger
Capt Gary Banks	Capt Murphy Neal Jones
Maj Delbert F. Smith	Capt Chuck McClaren
Maj Arthur Mearns	Capt David H. Groark
Capt Victor Vizcarra	Capt Gordon M. Walcott

Capt Vizcarra described the primitive conditions he found at Korat. "The whole base with the exception of the flightline was on dirt, no concrete or asphalt roads or sidewalks. Sidewalks that did exist were wood planks like in the old west. Throughout the base, in the center of nowhere, there were pipes sticking out of the ground with funnels on top about waist high - urinals! There was no Officer's Club (O'club); enlisted and officers ate together in the mess hall. You either walked or rode bicycles to wherever you needed to go. The phones were connected with open wire lines that were strung out from beneath the hooches."

Victor Vizcarra, e-mail, 10 Sep 00 & "Thud Pilot", unpublished memoirs, Chap. 1, pp 2 - 3.

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21-Nov-64

1052

RF-101C 56-0230, escorted by two F-105s from the 80 TFS, was shot down during a reconnaissance mission over Laos. Capt Burton Waltz of the 15 TRS on TDY to Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam, from the 18 TFW, Kadana, AB, Okinawa, was being escorted by F-105D pilots, Capt Neal Jones and Capt Chuck McClarren, from Korat AB, Thailand, when AAA hit his RF-101 during his second pass over a gun site near Tchepone, 20 nautical miles south of Mu Gia Pass.

Capt Waltz ejected and landed in a tall tree. He broke his left leg and arm when he released his chute and fell over 100 feet to the ground. The F-105s destroyed the AAA site with 2.75" rockets. While the F-105s strafed enemy soldiers heading toward the downed pilot, an Air America helicopter picked up Capt Waltz and flew him to the Army hospital at Camp Friendship near Korat. He remained at Korat for 10 days then transferred to Camp Kue Hospital, Okinawa. "For his gallant action, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart."

Capt Robert D. Pielin was one of the F-105 pilots from Yokota flying rescap for Capt Waltz. "I flew a four hour RESCap for the RF-101 pilot, expended 2.75 rockets and emptied the Gatling gun against AAA." (Bob Pielin, e-mail 17 Oct 07.)

The 80 TFS squadron history described the loss of the RF-101C and their rescap for its pilot. "During a second pass over a known concentrated flak area, on 21 Nov., an RF-101 escorted by Captain Charles W. McClarren and 1Lt Murphy N. Jones was fired upon and hit. Capt McClarren and Lt Jones were in position to deliver immediate retaliatory fire on the AAA site, each making one rocket pass. Capt McClarren, then exhibiting excellent professionalism, kept the burning RF-101 in sight and advised the pilot of his situation and to bail out. With the pilot successfully bailed out, Capt McClarren set up a momentary rescap over the downed pilot long enough to plot his position and direct rescue aircraft into the area. Realizing that there would not be enough time for both himself and his wingman to reach a tanker before both aircraft would be in a precarious position in regards to fuel, Capt McClarren directed his wingman to return to Korat while he attempted to rendezvous with the tanker. Upon completing his refueling, he then returned to the location of the downed pilot and continued to provide cover for rescue aircraft and helicopter until the pilot was successfully picked up." (80 TFS history, 1 July - 31 Dec 1964, AFHRA Call # K-SQ-FI-80-HI, IRIS # 1026421.)

After the loss of the RF-101, three days after an F-100 was shot down, Admiral Sharp, "... personally recommended to the JCS a retaliatory strike. The joint chiefs also backed retaliation, but Washington, as usual, turned aside the requests for punitive strikes as they had escalatory overtones." ("USAF in Southeast Asia, Interdiction in Southern Laos 1960 - 1968", by Jacob Van Staaveren, pg 42.)

"Within the JCS, General LeMay urged rapid retribution for the aircraft losses by air strikes on five infiltration targets in the Laotian panhandle, but had to settle for a more moderate JCS consensus. The Joint Chiefs asked McNamara to approve flak suppression missions along and in the vicinity of Routes 12 and 23 from the North Vietnamese border to the junctions of Routes 8 and 121 in Laos. The Defense Secretary, preparing for another NSC review of the war, did not reply formally. To reduce the risk of additional shootdowns, he issued new operational guidance requiring all U.S. medium-altitude missions in Laos to fly no lower than 10,000 feet, well out of range of most communist antiaircraft guns." ("Gradual Failure", by Jacob Van Staaveren, pg 61)

CNA Loss/Damage database & "Thud Pilot" by Victor Vizcarra, unpublished memoirs, Chap. 1, pgs 9 - 11 & e-mail, 10 Sep 00 & History of 18 TFW, Jul - Dec 1964, pp 47 - 48, USAF microfilm MO496, frames 1441 - 1442.

26-Feb-65

05-Mar-65

5495

"During 1965, Fifth Air Force continued its participation in Joss Stick -- exchange of visits of flights of tactical aircraft between PACAF on the one side and the Royal Air Force (Far East Air Force) and Royal Australian Air Forces on the other. Fifth Air Force participated in two such exercises during 1965, Joss Stick Fighter 2/65 and 3/65.

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"... Six F-105 aircraft of 41 Air Division (including two F-105Fs) deployed to RAAF Station Butterworth, Malaya, 26 February through 5 March 1965 to participate in Joss Stick Fighter 2/65. Two RF-101s of 15 Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron (313 Air Division) also took part in the exercise. Initially, 313 Air Division had been scheduled to provide the fighters, but this requirement was cancelled because of the heavy commitment of 313 Air Division in combat activities in Southeast Asia. By the same token, the Fifth Air Force participation in Southeast Asian hostilities led Headquarters Fifth Air Force to request relief from this exercise, but the decision to participate was held firm by Pacific Air Forces.

"During the deployment, KC-135 tanker support was provided by 4252 Strategic Wing (SAC), operating out of Kadena Air Base (AB), Okinawa. Limited tanker support required an en route stop at Clark AB, Philippines. A total of 33 sorties were flown at Butterworth, 11 in close air support role with the Royal Air Force and 3d Malay Regiment, 22 sorties in Air Defense roles. During the above mission, some 12 Royal Australian Air Forces (RAAF) officers and one Royal Air (RAF) officer were provided with familiarization flights in the F-105s. Redeployment from the mission took four F-105s to Takhli AB, Thailand, with two F-105s returning to Yokota AB, Japan."

Capt Robert D. Pielin was one of the F-105 pilots on this deployment. "The Aussies had an F-86 Squadron, and the Brits had a Vulcan Squadron. Needless to say, I hung around with the 'riff-raff' Aussies. You had to make a choice, since the Aussies stayed on one side the bar, the Brits on the other, and never spoke to each other, except in an argument. "

History of Fifth Air Force - 1 Jan - 31 Dec 1965 Vol I: Narrative, pp 61 - 64, AFHRA Call # K730.01, IRIS # 00521781 & Bob Pielin, e-mail, 29 Oct 07.

29-Jan-66

169

The 357 TFS from McConnell AFB KS began arriving at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, to become the third F-105 squadron permanently assigned to the 355 TFW at Takhli. The squadron replaced the 334 TFS on TDY from Seymour Johnson AFB. The wing now included the 333 TFS, the 354 TFS, and the 357th.

Upon its arrival at Takhli, the 357th's squadron commander was Maj Robert F. Herman but he was replaced by Lt Col Kenneth L. Skeen, 47 years old, who had been commander of the 333 TFS. Col Skeen flew P-47s in Europe during WW II and 159 combat missions in F-84s and F-86s in Korea where he was credited with shooting down a MiG-15. The Operations Officer was Major Douglas E. Whatley.

"Prior to the 355 TFW moving to Takhli, the 357th was assigned to the wing but was on rotational duty at Korat RTAFB, Thailand. In the original deployment planning conference it was deemed appropriate that the squadron be returned to the states for all members to get their personal matters aligned and prepare for the PCS move back to the wing at Takhli."

1Lt Leonard C. "Lucky" Ekman was one of the pilots originally assigned to the 357th. He had returned to McConnell with the 562 TFS when they had completed its TDY at Takhli in December 1965 whereupon he volunteered to return to combat with the 357th when they transferred PCS to Takhli. However, "... when I got off the C-130 in Takhli, I was picked up by the guys from the 354th, with whom I flew until August 1966 and my reassignment to McConnell as an instructor [in the 561 TFS] in 1966." (Lucky Ekman, e-mail 24 Jan 2010.)

Capt Robert L. Pielin was an F-105 pilot who supported the 357th during a TDY from his parent unit, the 36 TFS at Yokota AB, Japan. "The 357th had just started out at Takhli in January of 1966, and requested TDY help from Yakota to fill the Squadron. I had just transferred out of the 80th [80 TFS] to the 36th, wanted to build up my "counters", get 100, and get the hell out of Yakota, not knowing what was forth coming for the 36th to 34th conversion. So I volunteered to go to Takhli. I was assigned to the 357th, which was commanded by a great, experienced fighter pilot named Skeen. I flew my first mission with the 357th on 9 February and my last on 2 April, 1966. I flew 53 missions with the 357th, 40 'counters' to North Vietnam, and 13 to Laos." (Bob Pielin, e-mail 1 Apr 2007.)

355 TFW History, Jan - Jun 66, USAF microfilm NO461, frames 1072 and 1282.

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F-105 History

24-Mar-66

5337

Capt Robert D. Pielin, assigned on TDY to the 357 TFS, 355 TFW, from the 36 TFS, 6441TFW, "... was hit in the fuselage fuel cell and started losing fuel rapidly, while on a ground support mission in Southeast Asia. He proceeded at near maximum speed, and landed at the first available friendly base, before running out of fuel. The aircraft was left there for repairs."

355 TFW history, Jan 66 - March 66, USAF microfilm NO461, frame 1394.

30-Mar-66

5120

Captain Robert D. Pielin, TDY to the 357 TFS at Takhli from the 36 TFS at Yokota, "... was hit in a fuselage fuel cell and started losing fuel rapidly, while on a ground support mission in Southeast Asia. He proceeded at near maximum speed, and landed at the first available friendly base, before running out of fuel. The aircraft was left there for repairs." The 355 TFW history recorded the event as happening on 24 March 1966.

However, Bob Pielin's Form 5 shows his mission was on 30 March 1966. He recalled that his flight lead was Capt James W. Alder. "... #2 was Bob Keller (TDY from the 80th at Yakota), #3 was me (TDY from the 36th at Yakota), #4 was George Peacock from the 357th. We dropped six 750's on a truck park, then fired two pods of 2.75 rockets, and then strafed. I got hit in the left wing on the strafe pass by 37-mm AAA. I do not recall a fuel leak, since I was more worried about a hydraulic leak. I was doing about .96 Mach back to Udorn. On the way, P1 lost all fluid, and I was operating on P2. I made a GCA straight in and had about 1,000 pounds pressure left in P2. I extended the RAT (Ram Air Turbine) about a mile out on final, landed, taxied into the de-arm area, and shut down."

355 TFW History, Jan - Jun 66, USAF microfilm NO461, 357 TFS history 1 Jan - 31 Mar 66, frame 1394 & Bob Pielin, e-mails 1 and 2 April 2007.

31-Mar-66

5338

In the 357 TFS, 355 TFW, "... there was great interest and competition among the pilots regarding the total combat missions flown in Southeast Asia versus the number of combat missions that counted toward the 100 mission completion of a combat tour. Many of the pilots had flown missions while on temporary duty to Southeast Asia, in 1965, and these previous missions counted toward their tour completion. As of 31 Mar 66, the total combat missions and those which counted toward the 100-mission tour completion were as follows:

	Counters	Total
Lt Col Kenneth L. Skeen	45	58
Maj Richard A. Bevan	26	32
Maj Charles P. Busick	30	44
Maj John O. Colton	80	93
Maj Rex A. Hill	24	36
Maj Joseph L. Hutto	29	34
Maj Virgil D. Loken	33	42
Lt Col Douglas E. Whatley	23	27
Maj William N. Wright	20	33
Capt James W. Alder	28	42
Capt Paul W. Hanson	76	90
Capt Willis E. Hedgepeth	28	42
Capt Larry G. Lighty	86	97
Capt Stanton G. Lockley	86	96
Capt George H. Peacock	27	45
Capt Hugh M. Milton III	31	42
Capt Harold A. Shelton	11	17
Capt Robert E. Steiner	1	1
Capt Stanley S. Gunnerson	33	48

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Capt John J. King	60	71
Capt Robert D. Pielin	85	98
Capt Gary L. Retterbush	35	43
1Lt Michael L. Brazelton	30	41
1Lt Gordon L. Clouser	29	39
Capt Robert L. Keller	64	74
Col Aaron J. Bowman	38	40
Lt Col Joseph M. Pelter	12	20
Lt Col Robert F. Herman	57	62
Maj Robert P. Randall	10	17
Capt Alfred R. Mason	3	4
1Lt David K. Dargitz	2	2

355 TFW history, Jan 66 - March 66, USAF microfilm NO461, frames 1394 - 1395.

18-Apr-66

5176

The 6441 TFW selected the pilots for the squadron that became the 34 TFS to deploy to Korat. Most would come from the 36 TFS; consequently, the 36 TFS was slated to disband.

Bob Pielin from the 36 TFS, who had already flown 87 combat missions during temporary duty tours to Korat and Takhli, remembered how he helped select the pilots for the new squadron. "Fitz [Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron's Operations Officer] and I initially made out a list of 25 pilots from the Wing resources to go as 34th members. The list was bounced back from HHQ as being too overloaded in pilots with over 50 missions. They recommended 6 guys in the 0 to 20 mission category, 6 in the 21 to 40, 6 in the 41 to 60, 6 in the 61 to 80, and anyone with over 80 to go TDY." This distribution was to spread out their eventual departures from Korat as each pilot completed his 100-mission tour. Capt Pielin and Maj Fitzgerald reworked the list "... with some pronounced disapproval from those that were removed from the [original]. ... A 1.5 aircrew/aircraft ratio was authorized for 27 pilots plus Commander and Operations Officer. ... Bob Jones [Capt Robert H. Jones] was removed from the first list since he had his papers in to be discharged. When he found out about the 34th going PCS to Korat, he volunteered to go with [them] and get 100 missions before he got out. Red Dog [Lt Col Howard F. 'Red Dog' Hendricks the squadron commander] worked a 'deal', and he went TDY." (Bob Pielin e-mails, 23 Sep 2006 and 7 April 2007.)

The following list contains the positions and names of the initial twenty-nine pilots assigned to the 34 TFS. This is the revised list after Capt Pielin and Maj Fitzgerald reworked their original to provide a broader base of experience. One of the pilots, Gordon Walcott, annotated his copy of the printed list, dated 18 April 1966, with this comment: "This was the original 34th TFS crew roster when formed as an all-volunteer squadron from the 35 TFS, 36 TFS, and 80 TFS (Yokota AB, Japan)"

Commander - Lt Col Howard F. "Red Dog" Hendricks who had been commander of the 36 TFS.
Operations Officer - Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald

India Flight
Flight Commander - Maj Wayne N. Whatley
Capt Robin K. Nierste
Capt James I. Miholick
Capt Douglas G. Lauck
Capt Robert H. Jones
Capt Robert R. Reed

Lima Flight
Flight Commander - Capt James E. Hayes
Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr.
Capt Gordon M. Walcott
Capt Stanley S. Gunnerson
1Lt John Bernard Sullivan III

Juliet Flight
Flight Commander - Maj Kenneth T. Blank
Capt Carl L. Hamby

Metro Flight
Flight Commander - Capt Robert D. Pielin
Capt Alan K. Rutherford

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Capt Thomas H. Curtis
Capt David H. Groark
1Lt Phillip J. Kelley

Capt Ralph D. Watkins
Capt Wayne D. Hauth
Capt Rainford "Ray" McMaster Tiffin

Kilo Flight
Flight Commander - Maj Jack R. Stresing
Capt William O. Lessard
Capt John R. Layman
Capt Rex L. Dull
Capt Clarence E. Fox
1Lt Denis D. O'Donoghue

E-mail from Monty Pharmer, 22 Sep 2006 forwarding letter to him from Lt Col (Ret) Gordon Walcott dated, 29 July 1988, which included a roster of 36 TFS pilots, dated 18 April 1966.

21-May-66

4956

On Saturday, 21 May 1966, an advance party of the 34 TFS deployed by C-130 from Yokota AB, Japan, to Korat RTAFB, Thailand. The C-130, "Chalk 1", took off from Yokota at 0503. The group consisted of four pilots and maintenance and administrative personnel along with maintenance equipment. The four pilots were:

Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron Operations Officer
Capt Robert D. Pielin
Capt Stanley S. Gunnensen
Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr.

Capt Lewis brought with him on the C-130 the squadron mascot, a dog he owned named "Roscoe". Roscoe was from a litter of pups originally belonging to Capt Roscoe E. "JR" Anderson from the 80 TFS who had died in an F-105D accident near Yokota on 8 September 1964.

E-mail from Lamont Pharmer, 22 Sep 2006, with attached letter to him from Bob Pielin dated 11 July 1988..

02-Jun-66

5192

(Approximate date). Six F-105 pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Yokota, flew in a C-130 to Takhli to partially satisfy a PACAF levy on 5th Air Force units to provide pilots on temporary duty to fill shortages in the F-105 squadrons in the 355 TFW at Takhli. The pilots were:

Maj Kenneth T. Blank
Capt Carl L. Hamby
Capt Thomas H. Curtis
Capt David H. Groark
1Lt Phillip J. Kelley
Capt Douglas G. Lauck

In their time at Takhli, some of these pilots would fly combat missions with 355 TFW squadrons. While he was at Takhli, 1Lt Kelley flew his first (and only) combat mission with the 333 TFS. Unfortunately, he was shot down and rescued but resigned from the Air Force due to this experience.

Others on TDY at Takhli did not fly missions before they transferred to Korat. Doug Lauck recalled that he "... went through orientation there but did not fly any sorties." (Doug Lauck, e-mail 11 April 2007.)

The pilots stayed at Takhli until approximately 15 June 1966 when they rejoined the 34 TFS that finally arrived at Korat.

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Over the next few days, other pilots assigned to the 34 TFS flew on C-130s from Yokota to Korat to join the four advance-party pilots who were already there. During this TDY, they flew combat missions with the 388 TFW's squadrons and airplanes until the 34th's F-105s could be delivered to Korat. For example, Capt Robert D. Pielin, one of the advance party pilots who arrived at Korat on 21 May 1966, flew two missions with the 421 TFS.

Capt Robert H. Jones was another 34 TFS pilot who deployed from Yokota to Korat.

Tom Curtis, e-mail 3 Apr 2007 and Bob Pielin, e-mail 1 Apr 2007.

03-Jun-66

F-105D 581171 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by 37/57-mm AAA while attacking a ferry landing in RP-1, North Vietnam. Crashed 2 miles off shore, 26 NM NNW of Dong Hoi. 17-46N 106-27E Capt Robert D. Pielin 34 TFS pilot ejected. Rescued by a USAF HU-16. Call sign: "Oak 3". Capt Pielin was one of four pilots in the advance party of the 34 TFS that had arrived at Korat on 21 May 1966. The rest of the 34 TFS pilots had been delayed at Yokota. The squadron's planes did not get to Korat until 15 June 1966. Capt Pielin flew this mission with the 421 TFS. His was the first F-105 combat loss of the 34 TFS.

A PACAF Evasion and Recovery Report described Capt Pielin's shoot down and recovery. "Capt Pielin flew as number 3 in a 4-acft flight of F-105Ds, call sign Oak 3. Flight took off at 0730 hours and proceeded with no inflight refueling to the target area. ... Weather over the target was clear, and visibility unlimited. The flight plan was for Oak Lead and number 2 to make a low pass over the target while 3 and 4 remained high. If lead spotted any ferries, he would mark them for 3 and 4; if not, 3 and 4 were to make a normal bombing run on the ferry landings. Lead and 2 made the pass on a heading of 075, reported no ferries and no flak. Oak 3 had made a 180 turn over the target and began his bomb run on a heading of 170, from 16,000 feet, using a 45 degree dive angle, at a speed of 500 knots, releasing at 7,000 feet, starting his recovery at 6,000 feet.

"As he pulled off target, the pilot, Capt Pielin, felt a severe jolt aft on the fuselage. The pilot reported that on a previous mission he had taken a direct hit by 37MM in the same place on the fuselage which was not nearly as severe as this. He continued his pull out and noticed his left main gear showed unsafe. The pilot advised lead that the left main gear had fallen out; at that time the aircraft went into a 30-degree bank to the right heading inland. The P-1 and P-2 hydraulic systems showed zero and the stick locked up. Pilot called lead again and advised that he was going to put the RAT (Ram Air Turbine) out; if this were not successful, pilot intended to eject. The RAT did provide enough hydraulic fluid to enable the pilot to right the aircraft and put it into a 10-degree bank to the left in an effort to get out over the water. Pilot climbed to approximately 10,000 feet and was maintaining 400 kts. The stick became sluggish again and pilot attempted to level aircraft to get out over the water. The stick froze completely and aircraft went into a slight left roll. The aircraft had reached the coast when the pilot ejected.

"Upon ejection, the pilot lost both his helmet and face mask. As the pilot descended, he first drifted across the beach out over the water; then the wind blew him inland by about 2 miles. At approximately 6,000 feet, the wind changed directions and he was again drifted back across the beach and out to sea. As he crossed the beach, ground fire started coming up at him; the pilot reported he could hear small arms, automatic fire, and what he thought to be 37MM (Note: The rest of Oak flight confirmed that they had seen 37MM bursts around him). The pilot took the URT 10 out of his survival vest and requested lead to suppress the ground fire. Oak 1 made a low pass over the beach but his gun jammed; however, as he crossed the beach, he popped his AB and the firing ceased.

"Another difficulty the pilot encountered involved the deployment of the raft. When the pilot ejected, he pulled the handle for deployment of the seat pack, but the pack only dropped about 2 feet below him, the survival kit in the pack dropped completely away and was lost. The raft did not inflate so the pilot pulled the seat pack into his arms and began pulling the raft from the pack with the intention of inflating it manually. When it was halfway out of the pack, the pilot heard the air bottle pop and the raft inflated normally; it was fully inflated by the time he touched down in the water.

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"His descent lasted approximately 15 minutes, and at touch-down the wind had blown him about 2 to 3 miles from the shore. As he climbed into the raft, the shore fire began again; he could see some of the bullets skipping in the water about 10 yards from his position and could hear the same crackle of small arms and AW. The pilot again made contact with lead and was advised that the SA-16 was in the area and he was requested to pop a smoke flare, which he did. Almost immediately the SA-16 landed and a paramedic jumped into the water to pull him in. At this time the shore batteries began shelling the area with mortars along with the AW fire.

"Aboard the SA-16, the medic checked him over and treated a small cut below his right eye. With the exception of a few bruises and the cut, Capt Pielin was physically all right. The shelling continued, making it extremely hazardous for take-off; but the SA-16 after two or three changes of course took off without taking a hit. Capt Pielin was taken to Da Nang where he received a thorough examination with no injuries found.

"The most adverse factor throughout was the drift fluctuations caused by the wind. Capt Pielin also remarked that in the water the tide was coming in which pulled him, in the 10 minutes that he floated, about 1/2 mile closer to the shore. The pilot felt that the whole recovery and rescue operation resembled a 'by the book' exercise in the Namuazu Water Survival Training [course that Capt Pielin had taken]. The best piece of equipment in his estimation was the URT 10.

"... Recommendations: This is apparently the first incidence of the North Vietnamese firing on the pilot as he descended. In the future, it should be briefed to other pilots."

"DIOE COMMENT: Concur in recommendations cited by the Debriefing Officer ... Pilots in descent occasionally are fired upon while over water, whereas the opposite seems to apply over land. The theory apparently being Evasion from capture is more probable over water than over land." (PACAF Evasion and Recovery Report No. 18.)

"... I ejected about 3 miles inland and the wind blew me about 1 mile off shore. I'm not sure where the airplane ended up, never discussed it with anyone." (Bob Pielin, e-mail, 11 Sep 06.)

The SA-16 Albatross crew rescuing Capt Pielin were from Det 1, 3 ARRGP: pilot Capt Melvin H. Kapson, copilot 1Lt David W. Haines, navigator Capt Robert Maybury, flight mechanic SSgt Dennis L. Rioux, radio operator SSgt Ralph Schreiner, crew chief A2C Trevor Lloyd, and PJ A2C Henry C. Kirk. Airman Kirk swam to Capt Peilin and tied a rope to his raft. The men in the HU-16 pulled them into the plane. They took off with gunfire striking all around them and landed at Da Nang. ("PJs in Vietnam", by Robert L. LaPointe, pgs 226 and 422.)

In his mission narrative report, Capt Kapson, the pilot of the SA-16 that rescued Capt Pielin, described the rescue. "On 3 June 1966 we departed from Da Nang AB, RVN at 0455 hours, in an HU-16B aircraft, to perform a precautionary combat rescue orbit over the Gulf of Tonkin and the coast of North Vietnam.

"At 0825 hours, a U.S. Naval Destroyer informed us that they were painting a May Day squawk about 30 miles south west of our orbit position. The destroyer then gave us radar vectors to the area of the distressed aircraft.

"En route to the scene of action, we made UHF contact with the leader of a flight of F-105 aircraft who told us that his number three wingman had been hit by AA over the target, in the Dong Hoi area, and had punched out over the water.

"He informed us that the downed pilot was 1 1/2 miles off the beach and two miles north of the river at Dong Hoi, and that he had radio contact with the downed pilot who was drifting towards the shore and that the downed pilot was experiencing severe enemy gunfire from the shore in the form of small arms, recoilless rifle, and mortar fire. We requested the F-105 flight to make a fire-suppression run over the beach and they then informed us that the enemy fire had ceased.

"I made a call in the blind over guard channel to the effect that we were a rescue aircraft on an emergency mission and for any aircraft in the vicinity to come to our assistance for the purpose of suppressing enemy ground fire. This call

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

was immediately answered by Air Force and Navy aircraft among which we identified four A-1Es, three F-105s, and four F-4Cs.

"Contact was made on guard channel with the downed pilot who was instructed to light a smoke flare and immediately upon his doing so, we made positive identification of his exact location.

"The open sea condition consisted of a primary swell, five feet in height moving in the direction of 300 degrees, a secondary swell, two to three feet in height moving in the direction of 220 degrees, and the wind out of the south at about 5 to 8 kts. In order to deep from over-flying the coastline we elected to land on a heading of 200 degrees, which was almost parallel to the primary swell but quartering into the secondary. This gave us a few bad moments on touchdown and as a result the aircraft experienced a badly damaged right elevator during the landing at 0845 hours.

Immediately after touchdown, all hell broke loose in the form of extremely severe enemy fire from the shore, several large explosions occurred within 50 yards of the aircraft, and the sound of small arms fire was almost continuous. As we approached the downed pilot, the pararescue man dove into the water and with a rope tied around his waist, swam to the pilot, grasped the pilot in his arms and then the two of them were pulled to the aircraft by the flight mechanic and the flying crew chief. As they attempted to pull the pilot into the HU-16, it was found that the rope which fastened his one-man dingy to his chute harness was tangle around his legs and they couldn't pull him inside. The radio operator raced back and with his knife, cut the rope and then assisted in bringing the pilot and the pararescue man aboard.

"During the entire period on the water, the rescap continued to pound the shore line. Although the enemy fire did not stop or even slow down, after the first flurry the accuracy of the fire deteriorated to about 10% of what it had been initially.

"As soon as all were securely aboard the aircraft, a high-speed taxi run was initiated directly away from the shore and almost directly into the face of the primary swell. After about a half mile, someone in the aft of the aircraft reported surface explosions rapidly approaching the aircraft from the rear. As we made a quick 60-degree turn to the left, we observed an explosion about 50 feet in front of the aircraft and in line with our original direction of movement. Our new heading of 360 degrees placed us on a quartering heading to both swell systems and going down wind, however a successful take off was accomplished and a routine return was made to Da Nang.

"All the crew members performed their duties in an extremely competent fashion. I have never before seen such outstandingly professional cooperation, and know full well that without this excellence on the part of all the crew members, this mission could not have been successful.

"Special notice must be taken of the excellent support provided by the rescap aircraft who reported in after our call on guard channel. As we departed the area, I looked back and saw about a three mile stretch of shore that was completely blacked out by smoke, dust, and flying debris. Smoke billows up to three for four thousand feet indicated the intensity and high-explosive power of the support we received." (Mission Narrative No. 1-3-35, 3 June 1966, written by Capt Melvin H. Kapson, Rescue Crew Commander.)

U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & "PJs in Vietnam", by Robert L. LaPointe, pgs 226 and 422.

18-Jun-66

5200

Three days after their arrival at Korat, the 34 TFS flew its first combat missions. Capt Robert D. Pielin was one of the four flight leaders for these missions "... since we already had a 'local area checkout'". Pielin, who had arrived in the squadron's advance party on 21 May 1966, had flown 89 missions by the time the rest of his squadron got to Korat.

"I was in that flight with Rick Laymen [Capt John R. Layman], and two other 34th pilots (unknown names)." (Bob Pielin, e-mail 2 Apr 07.)

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

"My last 11 missions with the 34th were not too exciting compared to some of the previous 89. The first two days of flying, 18 and 19 June 1966, I checked out pilots that had not been in-theater during the previous six months. Their previous missions were flown TDY with their own squadrons, and things [had] changed considerably with [7th Air Force in] Saigon now running the show. Even to the ridiculous situation of fragging our ingress to and our egress from Pac #6 targets. Red Dog didn't hold us to that. We planned our own missions, and let him know our route, in case something happened. Anyway, I did.

"The 18th would be my first mission after [my] shoot-down [on 3 June 1966]. I was fragged to a Pak #1 on a typical 'suspected truck park'. I know Fitz [Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron's DO] had something to do with that, to see how 'shaky' I would be. I wasn't about to drop short of the target, so pressed in to make sure. I pressed in so far that my bombs dropped at least 1,000 feet long at 12 o'clock." (Bob Pielin, e-mails 25 Sept 2006 and 7 April 2007.)

Bob Pielin, e-mails 25 Sept 2006, 2 April 2007, and 7 April 2007

19-Jun-66

5201

Capt Robert D. Pielin flew a mission on the fourth day after the 34 TFS had arrived at Korat. "I was back to normal again on the 19th on a mission to Pak #2 around Vinh. Target was a rope and bamboo bridge that 2,000 other guys had already bombed."

Bob Pielin, e-mail 7 April 2007.

20-Jun-66

5202

Capt Robert D. Pielin on TDY with the 34 TFS at Korat flew a combat mission that lasted 2 hours 30 minutes. "The 20th I led a flight to Pak #5, out in the 'flats' between the Gulf of Tonkin and the mountains. It was an electrical power plant that straddled a small river. I knew it was going to be a bitch to find since it had rained the two previous days, and all the rivers and streams would look alike. Also, I had only been to Pak #5 a few times, since it previously belong to the Navy, so the terrain was not familiar. We approached the target, at 17,000 feet, from the South for a left hand roll in, like all fighter pilots do. I couldn't pick out the target, so started a left turn back to the mountains. Rick Layman [Capt John R. Layman] was #3, and said he had the target in sight. I gave him the lead, told him to roll in, and we would follow. We were too far away for a 45-degree dive angle, so we adjusted the pipper and made a 30-degree dive run. There was no flak, and we expected no flak, so we pressed in close, and all four of us had good hits on the target. On the way home, I thought about that power plant. That poor little thing, out there in the 'flatlands', with no AAA protection, and four ugly Americans demolishing the thing. I guess you think like that, after you get your ass shot off."

Bob Pielin, e-mails 25 Sept 2006 and 7 April 2007.

30-Jun-66

5203

Capt Robert D. Pielin from the 34 TFS flew a combat mission against a railroad yard in RP 5. Over the last 10 days, he had had one mission cancelled, one mission that aborted, and had flown one non-counting mission to Laos. "I was scheduled for three flights to Pak #6, but one was cancelled for weather before we launched. Another was aborted when the clouds were too low to get to the target, and a FAC directed us to a storage barn in Laos. On the 30th, four of us hit the railroad yard at Yen Bay. Probably the 10th time I had done that. I actually think it was a diversion for the POL raids. Of a 3+20 mission, I logged one hour for ResCap, but it wasn't for Nierste." (Bob Pielin, e-mail 7 April 2007.)

Since Capt Robin K. Nierste was the only pilot shot down over North Vietnam on 30 June, Capt Pielin's rescap was probably for Capt Murphy Neal Jones from the 333 TFS at Takhli who had been shot down and captured the day before.

CNA Loss/Damage Database, USAF losses 315 (Jones) and 317 (Nierste), pg F19.

01-Jul-66

5204

Capt Robert D. Pielin from the 34 TFS at Korat flew his 95th combat mission over North Vietnam. "On 1 July I

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

flew the most bizarre, unique, ridiculous mission I ever flew. A night, single-ship, weather recce to Hanoi. I was supposed to arrive just before dawn, check the weather at Hanoi and Haiphong, and report back if the 'pop-up' maneuver was feasible for the day flights. I got that Thud as high as it would go and still go fast, about 33,000 since I only had 450's. As I broke out over the valley, I could see the city lights shining through the thin, low, overcast. The hills all around were covered with low puffy thunder bumpers. I was actually dumb enough to fly between Hanoi and Haiphong, circle to the left, and head south from Yen Bay. I was that high so I could see any SAM's coming up, and could out run any MiG by diving to the deck. I think that is the only time I ever turned on that funny black box in the right hand corner of the windscreen, what ever it was called.

"By then the sun came up over the horizon, and when I radioed in the weather report, I was directed to a Res Cap. When I got to the area east of the 'fishes mouth', a chopper and two A-1's were already inbound. They flew in and picked up the guy(s). I never did find out the type aircraft or who was in it. There I was, with only a Gatling gun, protecting the chopper from bad guys with BB guns. No other Res Cap ever showed up.

"When I became low on fuel, and headed for a tanker, the A-1's actually asked me to come back. I think they were using me for a decoy. I flew with them to a site in Laos, and I went home logging 6+00, with 4+40 as Res Cap.

"That left me five missions to go, and Red Dog/Fitz put out the rule for no more Pak #6 missions for anyone with five left to go. I think they did that when they saw that funny look in my eyes. I had two more refueling missions to who knows where, and two close by no-brainers without refueling."

Bob Pielin, e-mail 7 April 2007.

09-Jul-66

5206

Capt Robert D. Pielin from the 34 TFS at Korat flew his 100th combat mission. Since he had already flown 89 missions by the time the squadron arrived at Korat on 15 June 1966, he was the first pilot assigned to the 34th to reach this goal.

"My last mission on the 9th was a two ship flight with Ray Tiffin [Capt Rainford "Ray" McMaster Tiffin]. A 'sand pile' mission to Pak #1, but Fitz told me to go anywhere I wanted. I had them load six 750's, and rocket pods. We dumped the bombs on my favorite place just outside of Vinh. As the river came down from the mountains, a canal was built across a 'U' in the river and ended by going through a tunnel in a hill before re-entering the river. If you hit the entrance to the tunnel, you blocked the canal, and backed up 500 barges. A very nice 'no-no' target, to go back to and strafe barges later.

"We then road recce'd toward Mu Gia pass and found two trucks parked on individual platforms adjoining the road; another favorite place to recce before getting to the AAA sites at Mu Gia pass. We hit the trucks with the rockets, but no explosions, probably carrying rice.

"Ray then lost his generator, and we headed home. On the Laos side of Mu Gia pass, I left Ray high, rolled in from 17,000, and emptied the gun at a AAA site that shot at me on my very first combat mission, 5 October 1964."

Capt Pielin returned to Yokota where he had left his family. He was next assigned as an instructor pilot in the F-105 Replacement Training Unit at McConnell AFB, Kansas.

Bob Pielin, e-mail 7 April 2007.

31-Dec-66

678

One year after the start of their RTU mission, the 23 TFW at McConnell AFB KS, had trained a total of 105 pilots to fly the F-105. The wing had 30 F-105 instructor pilots who had completed at least 100 missions in South East Asia. The 560 TFS and 561 TFS each had 7 pilots, the 562 TFS had 12, and the 563 TFS had 4. Five additional 100-mission pilots were attached to the 23 TFW. 1Lt Leonard C. Ekman, assigned to the 561 TFS, had completed 185 missions in SEA, the most of any Air Force pilot.

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

The 100-mission instructor pilots in the 560 TFS were:

Maj Eleas Casillas	Capt Jack L. Graber
Maj Robert E. Phillips	Capt William S. Koenitzer
Capt Marion M. "Mack" Angel	1Lt William E. Ardern
Capt Rex L. Dull	

The 100-mission instructor pilots in the 561 TFS were:

Maj Fred T. Coleman	Capt Robert Kieth Hannah, Jr.
Maj John C. Shay	1Lt Roger A. Ayres
Capt Ralph J. Beardsley	1 Lt Leonard C. "Lucky" Ekman
Capt Roderick G. Beckett	

The 100-mission instructor pilots in the 562 TFS were:

Lt Col James A. Young	Capt Wayne D. Hauth
Maj Phillip O. Bradley	Capt Robert L. "Bob the Wedge" Keller
Maj Robert D. Pielin	Capt Douglas G. Lauck (SEFE)
Capt Arthur L. Brattkus	Capt Robin K. Nierste
Capt Teddy Gay	Capt William S. Secker, Jr.
Capt Stanley S. Gunnersen	Capt Joseph R. Steen

The 100-mission instructor pilots in the 563 TFS were:

Maj Kenneth G. Frank
Capt Robert V. "Boris" Baird
Capt James I. Miholick
1Lt John C. Russell

23 TFW attached 100-mission pilots were:

Capt Clarence E. Cox
Capt John R. Layman
Capt Charles Loucks
Capt Clifford H. "Ted" Rees, Jr.
Capt Robert L. Chastain

23 TFW History, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1966, 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 Majors, 8 Captains, and 5 1Lts. 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.

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

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

Maj Earl M. Freeman	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 Takhli. (Bob Huntley telephone interview 20 May 2010)

Capt Clyde L. Falls came from Laredo AFB, TX where he was an Academic Instructor in the 3641 Student Squadron (ATC). After F-105 training, he arrived at Korat on 6 July 1967 and was assigned to the 34 TFS.

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.

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 67, USAF microfilm MO554 & Clyde Falls AF Form 11 & Irv LeVine, letter received 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-Jan-68

2915

(Approximate date) The 12 TFS, 18 TFW, published a crew roster of 64 names that included "Whisky" Flight, the Wild Weasel crews from Nellis that deployed on TDY to Osan due to the USS Pueblo crisis. Two of the crews were Maj Harrison W. Matthews and EWO Maj David Brog, and Maj John J. Revak and Maj Stanley E. Goldstein, whose Wild Weasel training at Nellis had been curtailed due to the deployment to Osan.

Other pilots on the roster included:

Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe was a pilot in Lima Flight.
1Lt James Benton West was a pilot in Kilo Flight.
Col William L. Janssen was an attached 12 TFS pilot.
Capt Jack A. Phillips - 12 TFS. Nympho Flight pilot.
Maj Anatole "Tony" Semenov, Jr. 12 TFS. Juliet Flight Flt Cmdr

Capt Robert D. Pielin was listed as Asst Flt Commander of "Metro" Flight. Captains Douglas G. Lauck and Stanley S. Rynear were listed as pilots in "Nympho" Flight. Capt Clifford H. "Ted" Rees, Jr. was an Assistant Flight Commander in Nympho Flight. Lauck and Pielin were F-105D instructor pilots with the 562 TFS at McConnell while Rynear was an instructor pilot with the 561 TFS. Rees was a 100-mission pilot assigned to the 23 TFW. All four had been deployed from McConnell on TDY to Osan.

12 TFS Roster from John J. Revak.

31-Mar-68

5165

Five F-105 pilots assigned to the 34 TFS in the 388 TFW at Korat completed flying 100 missions during March 1968. Since Capt Robert D. Pielin flew his 100th mission in July 1966, the first pilot in the 34th to do so, these five were the 76th through the 80th pilots from the 34th to achieve this goal.

#76 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.
#77 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer - 12 March 1968
#78 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. - 17 March 1968
#79 - Maj William M. Blakeslee
80 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.

After arriving home on 23 March 1968, Maj Dickson's assignment returned him to the Air Defense Command this time to Tyndal AFB where he flew F-106s. He remained there until he retired as a major in 1970.

Maj Falls was also assigned to the Air Defense Command as an F-106 pilot. He belonged to the 318 FIS, McChord AFB, WA. He died in the crash of F-106A 59-0148 on 22 April 1969 near Mt. Rainier, WA.

Capt Beyer was reassigned to Wurtsmith AFB MI as a KC-135 aircraft commander. (Doug Beyer, e-mail 27 Apr 10)

34 TFS web site accessed on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Carolyn Dickson, telephone interview, 23 Apr 09 & F-106 Delta Dart Forum at <http://forum.f-106deltadart.com/>

09-May-69

410

The 34 TFS flew its last F-105 mission before it converted to F-4Es at the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

The F-4Es were delivered on 11 May 1969 by the 40 TFS from Eglin AFB FL. The 40th changed its designation to the 34 TFS when it arrived at Korat. "...They were met with cold beer, a lei, a parade of smoke bombs, water hoses, and welcomed through most of the streets of Korat ...". The 40th designation returned to Eglin.

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

The final 34 TFS squadron commander with F-105s was Lt Col Harvey W. Prosser, Jr. When the squadron converted to F-4Es, he was replaced by Lt Col Joseph M. Potts. Col Prosser was reassigned to Kirtland AFB, NM where he flew the F-4 and F-104.

On 10 May 1969, Capt Clayton Bane Lyle III was one of the F-105 pilots who transferred from the 34th to the 44 TFS. (Bane Lyle, e-mail 20 Aug 2010.)

On 11 May 1969, the 34th distributed its F-105s to the 355 TFW at Takhli, RTAFB and to the 44 TFS, the only unit still flying F-105s at Korat. The 44 TFS possessed 23 F-105s. Its squadron commander was Lt Col Herbert L. Sherrill who had replaced Lt Col Guy J. Sherrill on 12 March 1969.

F-4E pilots of the 388 TFW called the F-105 "Thud" ("... cause that's the sound it makes when it crashes!") while Korat F-105 pilots referred to the F-4E as the "Thumb" (Two-Hole-Ugly-Mini-Bug). (388 TFW history)

Harvey Prosser commented on the attitude of the F-4 pilots. "They were not a happy bunch. I could have as many F-4 guys switch to 105s as I wanted. All the 34th young guys and the old F-4 pilot Gibs much preferred the Thud. We put up a big sign at the entrance to the O Club stating 'Tiny Tim flies F-4s'. The new F-4 guys refused to take it down and it stayed up for at least a month when the Wing Commander commanded the 34th pilots to remove it because it hurt the F-4 pilots' feelings. Also, the nickname for the F-4 at Korat at that time was Mini-Buff. Again, at the Wing Commander's order, we desisted." (Harvey Prosser, e-mail 2 Feb 10)

During the time the 34th flew F-105s, the squadron received three Outstanding Unit Awards and a Presidential Unit Citation. After it began flying F-4Es, the squadron received its fourth Outstanding Unit Award for the period 1 July 1968 to 15 September 1969 as well as the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross With Palm for the period 15 May 1966 to 29 January 1973. (James Geer, "The Republic F-105 Thunderchief Wing and Squadron Histories", Schiffer, 2002, pg 241.)

However, in its 3 years of flying the F-105, the 34 TFS paid a high price. Pilots assigned or attached to the squadron lost 39 planes to combat and accidents -- 37 "D" models and two "F" models -- enough to equip the squadron more than twice over. Thirteen squadron pilots died in combat (KIA), three more in accidents. Four pilots survived accidental crashes, ten were rescued, and 11 more became POWs, one of whom died in captivity. The following recaps each of the squadron's 39 losses, the pilots involved, and their fate:

	Date	F-105	Last Name	Fate
1.	03 Jun 66	58-1171	Pielin	Rescued
2.	15 Jun 66	62-4377	Kelley	Rescued
3.	21 Jun 66	62-4358	Sullivan	KIA
4.	30 Jun 66	62-4224	Nierste	Rescued
5.	15 Jul 66	59-1761	Hamby	Rescued
6.	20 Jul 66	62-4308	Lewis	KIA
7.	21 Jul 66	62-4227	Tiffin	KIA
8.	06 Aug 66	62-4315	Rutherford	Rescued
9.	17 Sep 66	61-0191	Rutherford	Rescued
10.	10 Oct 66	62-4300	Bullock	Died
11.	10 Jan 67	62-4265	Gauley	KIA
12.	19 Mar 67	61-0123	Austin	KIA
13.	05 Apr 67	62-4395	Youngblood	Survived
14.	12 May 67	63-8269 (F)	Stewart	KIA
			Pitman	KIA
15.	15 May 67	62-4429 (F)	Heiliger	POW

Robert D. Pielin F-105 History

		Pollard	POW	
16.	02 Jun 67	61-0190	Smith	POW
17.	04 Jun 67	61-0148	Kough	Rescued
18.	15 Jun 67	61-0213	Swanson	KIA
19.	17 Oct 67	61-0205	Andrews	POW
20.	17 Oct 67	62-4326	Odell	POW
21.	17 Oct 67	60-0425	Sullivan	POW
22.	27 Oct 67	62-4231	Flynn	POW
23.	28 Oct 67	62-4356	Waldrop	Survived
24.	19 Nov 67	58-1170	Vissotzky	POW
25.	04 Feb 68	60-5384	Lasiter	POW
26.	14 Feb 68	60-0418	Elliot	KIA
27.	15 Apr 68	61-0206	Metz	POW Died
28.	25 Apr 68	60-0436	Givens	Died
29.	14 May 68	61-0132	Bass	Died
30.	28 May 68	61-0194	Ingvalson	POW
31.	31 May 68	60-0409	Beresik	KIA
32.	08 Jun 68	61-0055	Light	Rescued
33.	13 Jul 68	60-0453	Confer	Survived
34.	01 Sep 68	60-0512	Thaete	Rescued
35.	17 Nov 68	61-0092	Dinan	Survived
36.	11 Feb 69	62-4256	Zukowski	KIA
37.	17 Mar 69	61-0104	Dinan	KIA
38.	29 Mar 69	62-4270	Stafford	Rescued
39.	03 Apr 69	62-4269	Christianson	KIA

388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 69, USAF microfilm NO586

18-Aug-69

4212

Maj Richard E. Moser became the Operations Officer of the 561 TFS at McConnell AFB, Kansas, replacing Maj Gene W. Goodwin. He had been the Assistant Operations Officer since 5 May 1969 when he had transferred from the 563 TFS where he had been an F-105 RTU instructor pilot.

On this same date, Maj Robert D. Pielin transferred from the 23 TFW and assumed duties as the 561 TFS Assistant Operations Officer. Maj Teddy Gay was assigned as "A" Flight Commander and Maj Donald M. Majors transferred from the 4519 CCTS to become "B" Flight Commander in the 561 TFS.

Col Moser's AF Form 11 provided by his son, Rick Moser & 23 TFW history, 1 Jul - 30 Sep 69, USAF microfilm NO555, frames 0671, 0813, and 0817

01-Jan-70

4348

As of 1 January 1970, the twelve key officers in the 561 TFS at McConnell were:

- Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen -- Commander
- Maj Richard E. Moser -- Operations Officer
- Maj Robert D. Pielin -- Assistant Operations Officer
- Capt Guy H. Morgan -- Stan/Eval officer
- Maj Teddy Gay -- "A" Flight instructor
- Maj Jackie R. Youngblood -- "A" Flight instructor
- Capt Kenneth D. Thaete -- "A" Flight instructor
- Maj Donald M. Majors -- "B" Flight instructor
- Capt Robert Dunkelberger -- "B" Flight instructor
- Capt Donald O. Austin -- "B" Flight instructor

Robert D. Pielin

F-105 History

Capt Roger Prather -- "B" Flight instructor
Lt Col Myron D. Ulrich -- Materiel Branch Officer

23 TFW History, Jan - Mar 70, USAF microfilm MO555, frame 1256.

20-Mar-70 **09-May-70**

206

Two pilots from the 561 TFS, 23 TFW, McConnell AFB KS were sent on TDY to Nellis AFB NV for seven weeks of Wild Weasel training in the F-105G. Maj Robert D. Pielin, Assistant Operations Officer, and Capt Guy H. Morgan, Jr., Stan/Eval Officer, were the first pilots of the 561 TFS trained to support the upcoming conversion of the squadron from its RTU mission to the F-105G Wild Weasel mission.

Both pilots entered Wild Weasel Class 70-FWW conducted by the 66 FWS. Since they were fully qualified instructor pilots, they did not need training in ACM and aerial refueling. The five Wild Weasel crews in the class and their follow-on assignments were:

Maj John P. Stroud (WW# 883) and EWO Capt Charles P. Creech (WW# 889) to Korat.
Maj Robert D. Pielin (WW# 884) and EWO Capt Vilius Ramunas (WW# 890) to McConnell.
Capt Guy H. Morgan (WW# 885) and EWO Capt George L. Williamson (WW# 891) to McConnell.
Maj Samuel M. Hauck III (WW# 886) and EWO Maj Everett D. Fansler (WW# 892) to Korat.
Maj Russell G. Westcott, Jr. (WW# 887) and Capt Raymond E. Greene (WW# 888) to the 333 TFS at Takhli.

23 TFW History, Jan - Mar 70, USAF microfilm MO555, frame 1203 & Wild Weasel Class 70-FWW roster.