

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

14-Oct-67

236

The fourteenth F-105 RTU Class 68BR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class, named "The Many Splendored Studs", began on 20 Apr 67 but didn't start training until 15 May 67. It took the place of class 68CR that was deleted due to the extension of RTU training from 70 to 92 flying hours. The class had 22 student pilots and deployed 24 F-105s for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 29 Sep - 13 Oct 67 with the 562 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col James A. Young.

"Experience level in this class ranged from 760 to 5,500 flying hours. ... This was considered to be one of the outstanding classes to have graduated from the 562 TFS and the 23 TFW. Reason for this was due to nearly unanimous high performance aircraft background of the students, who were assigned exclusively from tactical fighter, fighter interceptor and trainer aircraft units."

Capt George D. Graves was Overall Outstanding Student and Capt Kenneth D. Thaete was Top Gun. Col Thomas H. Curtis had graduated early, in July 1967, for his assignment as Deputy Commander for Operations at the 355 TFW, Takhli RTAFB, Thailand.

One of the students, Maj Billy J. Dulin, was awarded the TAC Pilot of Distinction for the month of December 1967.

The student class roster included:

Col Thomas H. Curtis	Capt Edward Y. Cleveland
Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen	Capt Robert J. Furman
Lt Col James B. Ross	Capt George D. Graves
Maj Thomas W. C. "Robert" Birge	Capt Eric B. Nelson
Maj Richard J. Bono	Capt Frank E. Peck
Maj Francis J. "Frank" Byrne	Capt James E. Sehorn
Maj Kenneth W. Dickson	Capt Anthony Cameron Shine
Maj Billy Joe Dulin	Capt Kenneth D. Thaete
Maj Kenneth M. Hiltz, Jr.	Capt Forrest S. Winebarger
Maj James G. LaChance	1Lt William C. Jones
Maj Grayson C. Powell, Jr.	
Maj Clair L. Thompson	

Lt Col Ross had been a squadron commander of a pilot training squadron at Vance AFB, OK. He was next assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat.

23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 67, USAF microfilm MO554, frames 0986 and 1058 & Jim Ross, e-mail 30 Apr 10.

30-Nov-67

2770

During the month of November 1967, the 354 TFS from Takhli flew " ... a total of 400 combat sorties, of which 333 were strike sorties and 67 were Iron Hand sorties. 39 strike sorties and 12 Iron Hand sorties were against targets selected by the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

At the end of November, " ... the squadron had 29 flying officers present for duty. Six squadron pilots and one EWO completed their 100 missions during November. They were Major Anton J. Mickech, Captain Frederic O. Hawkins, Major Ralph E. "Sam" Adams, Major Dale W. Leatham, Major Alonzo L. Ferguson, Captain John F. Piowaty, and Capt Richard L. Grover."

Nine men arrived in the squadron in November. They were: Lt Col James J. Butler, Jr., Maj Clair L. Thompson, Maj Harold A. Homan, Capt Kenneth D. Thaete, Capt Edward Y. Cleveland, Capt Anthony Cameron Shine, Capt Eric A. Nelson, Capt Forrest S. Winebarger, and EWO Capt George C. Wilson.

Maj Turnage R. "Bob" Lindsey departed the squadron in November.

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

355 TFW history, Oct 67 - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1570.

18-Dec-67

485

For the fourth time, the 355 TFW and 388 TFW bombed the Paul Doumer Bridge (JCS 12) in Hanoi, North Vietnam. The raid was the most devastating attack yet with eight of nineteen spans dropped and credited to the 388 TFW. The raid also destroyed three SAM sites and one 100-mm AAA site.

The mission commander was Capt Vernon D. Ellis, 34 TFS, from the 388 TFW, flying F-105D 60-0530, which he had named "Holly Ann" after his 2 year-old daughter. Capt Ellis received the silver star (1 OLC). (Vern Ellis, e-mail 23 April 2012.)

Korat's weekly newspaper, the Sawadee Flyer, described the 388th's bombing efforts. "Pilots of the 388 TFW here took full advantage of a break in the nearly month-long spell of bad weather over North Vietnam to blast four major targets in five days of successive bombing strikes in the Hanoi area.

"The recent strikes were highlighted by the complete devastation of the strategically important Hanoi highway railroad (Paul Doumer) bridge, located just 1.7 miles from the center of Hanoi. The mile-long structure, which connects the country's northeast railway bringing in supplies from the northern industrial area for resupply of NVN regulars and guerrillas operating in South Vietnam, 'won't be of much use to them for a long time,' according to Capt Vernon D. Ellis, 28, Yuma, Ariz., who led Monday's raid against the bridge.

"Capt Ellis assigned to the Wing's 34 TFS, praised the dedication and skill of Wing pilots as they flew through some of the heaviest anti-aircraft fire and highest concentration of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) of the war.

"Later post-strike photos showed that seven spans of the bridge were completely destroyed and at least three others heavily damaged.

"Strike forces of the 388th had first struck the Doumer bridge on Dec. 14 and followed the next day with a strike on the Canal des Rapides bridge, five miles northeast of the capital and servicing the same line as the Doumer bridge.

"The next day [19 Dec 67], Wing pilots struck the Yen Vien railyard, the largest in North Vietnam, catching 41 pieces of rolling stock in the yard, cutting rail lines and destroying numerous support and repair buildings.

"Sunday [20 Dec 67], the Thunderchiefs went back to the often-hit Kep airfield northwest of Hanoi, cratering the runway and taxiways and strafing and bombing aircraft revetment areas.

"Wing SAM-suppression and destruction flights reported good results protecting the strike force from missiles and neutralizing enemy ground defenses.

"A 388th SAM suppression and destruction flight reported damaging one site 12 miles south-southeast of the city, when bombs went across the site and into the radar equipment.

"One 100-mm anti-aircraft artillery site, the largest known type in use by the North Vietnamese, was destroyed, five miles east of Hanoi.

"On the Canal des Rapides bridge raid, again using 3,000-pound bombs, 388 TFW pilots, flying through heavy SAM barrages to reach the target, hit both approaches and the center swing span, which opens to allow travel on the canal.

"One missile was seen to detonate on the ground near the Red River, five miles southeast of Hanoi. At least two of eight SAM sites located around the city were damaged.

"An 85-mm anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) site north of the bridge was also destroyed.

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

"Enemy AAA fire and SAM launches over the city were heavy. Pilots reported receiving 37- and 57-mm fire from boats and barges located on the Red River in addition to the normal firing from stationary emplacements.

"Two SAMs arched over and impacted on the ground, six miles southeast of the city, while two other SAMs were observed to collide in mid-air, 14 miles east of Hanoi, resulting in a brilliant orange flash." (Sawadee Flyer, Vol I, No. 12, Friday, Dec 22, 1967, pg 4.)

"In a letter to Colonel Giraud (355 TFW commander), General Momyer praised the pilots for their skill and professionalism in the successful strike on this important target." (355 TFW history, Oct 67 - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1572.)

Twenty F-105s were in the strike force. Two of the pilots in the third flight were Capt Gene I. Basel from the 354 TFS flying F-105D 62-4385 on his 54th combat mission, and his wingman Capt Kenneth D. Thaete. The planes each carried two 3,000-pound bombs. They dodged SAMs fired from Phuc Yen and dropped their bombs on the bridge in a shallow 20-degree dive. While entering his bomb run, Capt Basel's plane, "Terrible Tina" exhibited the flight control problem that had plagued the plane for several months. "The nose swung around and the wings dipped back and forth in an awkward 'Dutch Roll. ... I finally stomped both rudder pedals hard, just stood up on them, locking the controls, and she settled down."

One F-105D, 62-4367, from the 355 TFW was severely damaged when its ordnance wouldn't release. The hung ordnance resulted in damage to the bottom of the fuselage and aft section, to the skin, access doors, formers, ribs, and left hand fairings under the stabilizer. (355 TFW History, Oct - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1037.)

Capt Harold E. Forman was a pilot from the 357 TFS, 355 TFW, on this mission. He was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross. (Greg Forman (son), e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 8 July 2002).

Capt Cecil G. Prentis from the 333 TFS also received a DFC (First Oak Leaf Cluster) for his extraordinary achievement on this mission. "... Major [then Captain] Prentis was a member of a flight committed against one of the most heavily fortified bridges in the Red River delta. Major Prentis, despite MiG threats, heavy antiaircraft fire, and multiple surface-to-air missiles, delivered his ordnance precisely on target." (Cecil G. Prentis DFC citation (1st OLC))

A Wild Weasel crew from the 333 TFS at Takhli also flew on the strike. Capt Malcolm D. Winter was the pilot with EWO Maj Frank N. Moyer. In his diary and combat log, Maj Moyer described the mission, his 64th. "Up at 0200 for an early brief. We were executed primary but delayed 4 hours, so back to write the folks and get 1 1/2 hours more sleep. ... Went 'downtown' (to Hanoi) with Mal Winter, who had become more or less my regular pilot until the end of his tour in January. Bit of a White Knuckler; we had MiGs 17 and 21s + SAMs but no one got hurt. That's what counts!"

Maj Francis J. Byrne from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his participation in this strike. "I was Green Sixteen, the last one down. (#4 of the last flight down the pipe). Destroyed many spans of bridge. Lots of AAA 42 SAMS, 4 MiGs." He flew F-105D 61-0086. (Francis J. Byrne, letter to Ron Thurlow, 22 Sep 2001.)

The day after the raid, Capt Robert M. Crane, 29, Duarte, CA, from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew over the bridge in an F-105 with a strike camera. His photos showed that "... the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th spans and half of the 5th span were damaged. It was estimated that it would take 2 1/2 to 3 months to repair the damage enough to handle traffic. In fact, it was not until 14 April 1968, when a 2800-foot rail bridge (pontoon type), 4.5 nautical miles southeast of the Doumer Bridge, was completed, that rail traffic again flowed across the Red River by other than ferry."

"... The Doumer Bridge strike of December 18, 1967, was to be the last major bombing success in Hanoi for more than four years. Most of the damage was done by F-105s from the 388 TFW ... " ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 112).

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

In their issue on Friday 29 December 1967, Time Magazine described this strike against the Doumer Bridge and strikes against other North Vietnamese targets during a six day period. The article was titled "Change of Weather".

"North Viet Nam's major cities of Hanoi and Haiphong are normally blanketed by thick monsoonal clouds at this time of year. But for six brilliantly sunny days, the weather changed and the clouds lifted. Lifted, too, were some of the restrictions that Washington had imposed on the flight paths of U.S. fighter-bombers, enabling them to fly through the air space adjacent to China and around Hanoi. The combination sent U.S. pilots of the Air Force, the Navy and Marines pounding away day after day last week at vital transportation points throughout North Viet Nam. There was no lack of targets: under a month of cloud cover, the North had repaired much of the damage from previous raids; freight cars were everywhere on the move, truck traffic had tripled.

"Eight spans of the Paul Doumer bridge leading into Hanoi were dropped into the Red River, putting the bridge out of use for the third time. Upriver, two spans of the Canal des Rapides bridge were sent sagging into the water, and two of Haiphong's main bridges were put out of use again. Bombs ripped up the oft-repaired runways of the Kep, Phuc Yen and Hoa Lac MIG bases.

"Up and down Ho Chi Minh's domain the attackers ranged, cutting rail lines and roads, taking out trains, trucks and barges, bombing missile sites and anti-aircraft batteries. Even by the Jovian standards of Operation Rolling Thunder, the code name for the air war against North Viet Nam, it was a spectacular performance: the most devastating six days of the air war."

388 TFW Chronology compiled by SSgt Bryon Beers, 388 TFW Historian & "Pak Six", by G. I. Basel, pgs 125 - 129 & "The Tale of Two Bridges", pg 75 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1579 and 1757 & Sawadee Flyer, 4 Oct 69.

01-Apr-68

748

Pilots from the 354 TFS flew five afternoon missions from Takhli. The four planes in "Dolphin" flight took off at 13:05 on a Sky Spot mission. Their mission lasted 2.8 hours and they didn't encounter flak or SAMs. The pilots and the F-105Ds they flew were: "Dolphin 1", Capt Kenneth D. Thaete flying 62-4230; "Dolphin 2", Lt Col Howard P. Maree III in 61-0064; "Dolphin 3", Maj William A. Wiese in 62-4364; and "Dolphin 4", Maj Samuel L. Ray, Jr. in 61-0212.

In a mission into RP-1, North Vietnam, "Bear" flight from the 354 TFS led by "... Capt George T.A. Tobin, Jr., took off at 13:29 and destroyed six buildings, started three fires, and reported several trucks in the area probably damaged or destroyed. Other members of the flight were "Bear 2", Maj Robert E. Evans flying 62-4318; "Bear 3", Capt Larry J. Wright in 62-4246; and "Bear 4", Lt Col James J. Butler, Jr. in 61-0212. On this mission, each pilot flew between 2.8 and 3.0 hours.

The two F-105Ds in "Wildcat" flight took off at 13:40 and hit suspected SAM launchers and a military storage area, 23 miles north-northeast of Mu Gia Pass. The pilots reported destroying five trucks and one military storage structure. They also caused one secondary explosion with a fireball and smoke rising to 200 feet. "Wildcat 1" was Maj Thomas W. Stinson flying 61-0150. He logged 2.3 hours flying time. "Wildcat 2" was Capt Eric B. Nelson in 61-0188 who logged 2.5 hours.

"Bison" flight took off at 13:50 and, under FAC control, struck a suspected SAM storage area and truck park, 25 miles north-northeast of Mu Gia Pass on Route 15. The pilots destroyed two military storage structures and caused two sustained fires. The pilots and the F-105Ds they flew were: "Bison 1" Capt Edward Y. Cleveland in 61-0159; "Bison 2", Lt Col Jack Modica, Jr. in 59-1765; "Bison 3", Buskirk in 59-1772, and "Bison 4" Capt Kenneth D. "Don" Harten flying 62-4259. The pilots logged 2.6 hours of flying time.

"Reddog" was a two-ship Wild Weasel flight that took off at 15:03. "Reddog 1" was Maj Thomas J. Murch with EWO Capt Daniel J. Hanley flying 63-8320. "Reddog 2" was Maj Gene W. Goodwin with EWO Capt Roger R. Elmer in F-

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

105F 63-8352. The crews logged 2.7 hours flying time.

Takhli Times, 12 Apr 1968 & 354 TFS history, Apr - Jun 68, microfilm NO464, frames 0792 and 0802 - 0812.

11-Apr-68

754

"... 355 TFW pilots used radar bombing techniques to drop 750-pound bombs on a highway segment 14 miles east of the Mu Gia Pass. Solid overcast covered the area and prevented bomb damage assessment (BDA). Col. Lawrence J. Pickett, Wing Vice Commander, and Capt. Kenneth D. Thaete were two of the pilots on the mission."

F-105 pilots from the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, "...struck a military storage area seven miles west-northwest of Dong Hoi. Pilots reported one large secondary explosion."

Takhli Times, Friday, April 19, 1968 & Sawadee Flyer, Saturday, April 20, 1968, pg 1.

16-Apr-68

3797

The 354 TFS launched two strike missions and a Wild Weasel mission into North Vietnam.

In RP-1, "Marlin" flight, led by Capt Edward Y. Cleveland flying F-105D 62-4369, successfully made road cuts, destroyed one river ford, one gun position, and inflicted possible damage to four other gun positions. The flight encountered light flak but sustained no battle damage. The other members of the flight were Lt Col Donald L. Nangle in 61-0071 who ground aborted due to an inoperative HSI, Maj William A. Wiese in 61-0176, and Capt Forrest S. Winebarger in 59-1739. The flight took off at 07:23 and the pilots logged 2.9 hours for the mission. The flight's spare was Maj Thomas W. Stinson in 61-0188 who logged 2.8 hours when he filled in as "Marlin 2" for Lt Col Nangel.

"Dolphin" flight took off at 08:05. The pilots in this flight were "Dolphin 1" Capt Larry J. Wright; "Dolphin 2", Lt Col Howard P. Maree III in 61-0072; "Dolphin 3", Capt George M. Nygaard flying 61-0109; and "Dolphin 4", Maj Robert E. Belli flying 62-4318. The flight members logged 2.8 hours for the mission. "Dolphin Spare", Capt Anthony C. Shine in 61-0089, was launched at 0800 to assist in recovering an aircraft that had lost airspeed indications and was returning to Takhli.

The Wild Weasel crew of Maj Gene W. Goodwin with EWO Capt Roger R. Elmer, as "Otter 1" in F-105F 63-821, aborted due to an aircraft malfunction. "Otter 4", the crew of Maj Elmer W. Otto and EWO 1Lt Larry N. Bjorn in 63-8352, encountered no flak or SAMs and logged 2.8 hours flying time.

Also on this day, Capt Kenneth D. Thaete from the 354 TFS flew a one-hour FCF on F-105D 62-4284.

354 TFS history, Apr - Jun 68, microfilm NO464, frames 0791 - 0792 and 0802 - 0812.

07-May-68

3725

Eleven flights of 355 TFW F-105Ds destroyed or damaged approximately 60 trucks on Route 137 in North Vietnam. The flights expended 750-pound bombs, rockets, CBU-24s, and 20-mm cannon fire on the trucks.

Two of the flights hitting the truck park in North Vietnam were "Wildcat" and "Shark" flights from the 354 TFS. "The area contained approximately 30 trucks, thirteen of these trucks were located. When Wildcat and Shark completed their attacks, one truck was destroyed, five were burning or smoking, and ten were damaged."

"Shark" flight took off at 0535 and flew for 2.7 hours. They encountered flak and claimed one building destroyed. Capt George T. A. Tobin, Jr. led "Shark" flight in 61-0159 with wingman Lt Col Howard P. Maree flying 61-0089.

"Wildcat" flight took off at 05:50 and flew for 2.5 hours. The pilots encountered "mach-mach" flak. Capt Larry J. Wright was "Wildcat 1" flying 62-4234 and Capt Edward Y. Cleveland was "Wildcat 2" in 60-0480.

Throughout the day, six more flights from the 354 TFS flew other combat missions.

Taking off at 0535, Capt Eric A. Nelson in 59-1731 was "Marlin 1". His plane was damaged by its own bombs. He

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

flew for 3 hours 20 minutes. "Marlin 2" was Van Sickle in 61-0072 who logged 3 hours 10 minutes flying time.

A 05:50, "Merc" flight took off led by Maj James R. Dunbar flying 61-0109. He claimed 2 trucks and logged 3:10 flying time. "Merc 2" was Kelly flying 60-0490 who logged 3:00 hours flying time.

Maj James R. Gibbons took off at 06:50 as "Dolphin 1" flying 62-4347. His wingman, "Dolphin 2", was Maj William A. Wiese in 60-0445. They struck a ford in Laos and two trucks in RP-1.

"Panda" flight, led by Capt Kenneth D. Thaete in 60-0530, took off at 07:05. His wingman, "Panda 2", in 60-0415, was Capt Kenneth D. "Don" Harten. The pilots logged 2 hours 50 minutes flying time.

After taking off at 08:40, "Dallas" flight, led by Maj Robert E. Belli in 62-4364, went to a target in RP-1. "Dallas 2" was Capt Richard Kenneth Allee in 62-4229. They logged 2.5 hours flying time.

A Wild Weasel flight took off at 11:40. "Newark 1" was Maj Gene W. Goodwin with EWO Capt Roger R. Elmer flying F-105F 63-8323. "Newark 2" was Maj Robert F. Delaney with EWO Capt Peter A. Cook in 63-8321. They logged 2.3 hours flying time.

After lunch, at 13:10, Capt George M. Nygaard, also from the 354 TFS, flew as "Root 11" on an FCF of F-105D 61-0212. He logged 1.0 hour of flying time.

355 TFW history Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO464, frame 0552 & 354 TFS history, Apr - Jun 68, microfilm NO464, frames 0795 and 0802 - 0812.

08-May-68

3799

The 354 TFS from Takhli launched six flights of F-105s on combat sorties in South Vietnam.

First off at 11:05 was "Barracuda" on a Wild Weasel mission crewed by Lt Col Howard P. Maree III with EWO Capt Daniel J. Hanley in F-105F 63-8317.

At 13:35, "Zebra" flight took off from Takhli on the 100th mission of "Zebra 1", Capt Larry J. Wright, flying F-105D 62-4259. His wingman, "Zebra 2" in 62-4246, was Capt Kenneth D. Thaete. The pilots logged 2.7 hours flying time.

The four planes in "Kingfish" flight took off at 13:50. "Kingfish 1" was Lt Col Lawrence E. McKenney flying 62-4444 as a single seat Combat Martin F-105F. "Kingfish 2" was Capt Anthony C. Shine flying F-105D 62-4292. "Kingfish 3" was Capt Donald M. Tribble flying F-105F 62-4432 also configured for Combat Martin. Maj Donald E. Kelley was "Kingfish 4" in F-105D 62-4318 who logged 3.1 hours flying time. The first three pilots logged 3.0 hours.

After taking off from Takhli at 13:55, "Calico" flight supported the 3rd Marine Division in South Vietnam. Lt Col James J. Butler, Jr. in 62-4364 and Lt Col Orland W. Jensen in 60-0522 flew the mission. "Calico neutralized a heavy artillery site causing two secondary explosions." The pilots logged 3 hours flying time.

The two F-105D pilots in "Bear" flight took off at 15:20 and supported "Operation Athens" in South Vietnam. "Bear 1", Capt George M. Nygaard, flew 62-4394, and "Bear 2", Maj James R. Gibbons, was in 61-0212. Both pilots logged 2.7 hours for the mission.

"Reddog 1", Capt Eric A. Nelson, flying 60-0530, and his wingman in 60-0415, took off at 15:35 and provided close air support at Dak To, South Vietnam. They were under the control of FAC "Cider 12". They logged 3.1 hours of flying time.

Later in the afternoon, a 354 TFS crew, using call sign "Root", flew F-105F 63-8352 on an FCF. They took off at 17:20 and logged .9 hours flying time.

354 TFS history, Apr - Jun 68, microfilm NO464, frames 0795 and 0802 - 0812.

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

26-Jun-68

3751

A flight of two Wild Weasel F-105Fs from the 355 TFW dropped four 2,000-pound bombs on an SA-2 site 11 nautical miles south of Quang Khe on Route 101. The flight observed smoke from seven secondary fires in the target area. "Bear" flight was from the 354 TFS. "Bear 1" was Maj Robert F. Delaney and EWO Capt Peter A. Cook in 63-8323. "Bear 2" was Maj Elmer W. Otto with EWO 1Lt Larry N. Bjorn in 62-4436. They took off at 12:50 and logged 2.5 hours flying time.

Two F-105Ds from the 354 TFS, taking off at 16:00, flew chase for "Combat Lancer" F-111As. "Basin 13" was Maj Warren J. Kerzon flying F-105D 62-4311. He logged 1.4 hours flying time on a T-3 mission. "Basin 18" was Capt Kenneth D. Thaete in 61-0089, who logged 1 hour flying time.

355 TFW history Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO464, frames 0557 and 0802 - 0812.

01-Sep-68

F-105D 600512 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by AAA while en route to a storage area in Laos. Crashed in Laos. 18-40N 103-30E Capt Kenneth D. Thaete 34 TFS pilot ejected and was rescued by a USAF HH-53B helicopter. Call sign: "Pancho 02". "Capt. Kenneth D. Thaete, on temporary duty with the 34 TFS, was downed over Barrel Roll due to engine failure and a fire. Ground fire of unknown type was thought responsible. The pilot was recovered."

Capt Thaete was rescued by the crew of an HH-53 from the 40 ARRS. The helicopter pilot was Maj John V. Allison and his copilot was 1Lt Leone S. Russo. The flight engineer was SSgt Gene A. Sellers and the PJs were Sgt Richard Grossman, Jr. and Sgt Thomas R. Pope.

"At 0825L, 1 September 1968, Jolly Green 68 took off from Channel 70 and proceeded to 025/58/70 and rendezvoused with Jolly Green 71. The mission was to cover strikes in a hostile environment. Jolly Green 68 and 71 then proceeded north from that position only to be turned back by cloud buildups and turbulence. While orbiting in the vicinity of 025/58/70, a call was received that 'Poncho 2', an F-105 pilot, had bailed out. The time was 1000L. 'Poncho 1' had viewed the bailout of 'Poncho 2', and had observed a good chute but lost it when it had entered the clouds. Jolly Green 68 and 71 then proceeded northwest to the general area of 035/86/70, guided by 'Poncho 1' using UHF/ ADF. The survivor had a good radio and was in contact with 'Poncho 1'. The weather in the area was scattered to broken clouds with occasional rain showers. Visibility was generally good, but the mountain peaks were obscured by clouds. The terrain features were river valleys and tall peaks to 6200 feet. After eight passes through a large valley, the survivor was electronically located on a cloud-capped peak of 3200 feet elevation. After receiving confirmation by the survivor that he heard rescue craft overhead, the two Jolly Greens orbited the area looking for a break in the cloud cover. At 1050L, the survivor was requested to fire a flare from his pen gun. Jolly Green 68, the closest to the survivor, spotted the smoke trails of the flare and pinpointed the position, still within the confines of a cloud approximately 300 feet thick. It was then decided that by using the rotorwash of the HH-53B, the cloud might be dissipated. The two Jolly Greens then began repeated passes over the survivor. Slowly the cloud parted and at 1110L the survivor was sighted. The parachute was tangled in trees approximately 100 feet tall. The Flight Engineer of Jolly Green 68 directed the pilot into a hover and the survivor was brought up through a hole in the jungle canopy. The survivor had suffered a strained arm and back in addition to facial lacerations. He was given immediate medical aid by the Pararescuemen aboard. As Jolly Green 68 and 71 departed the area at 1120L, the clouds closed over the site. Recovery was made at Channel 70 at 1200L.

"The survivor was Captain Ken Thaete, 7th Air Force, Tan Son Nhut, RVN; attached TDY to Korat.

"The crews were:

Jolly Green 68
RCC Major John V. Allison
RCCP 1st Lt Leone S. Russo
FE SSgt Gene A. Sellers
RS Sgt Richard Grossman, Jr.

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

RS Sgt Thomas R. Pope

Jolly Green 71

RCC Major Lucius F. Hallett III

RCCP Captain Glen E. Hoff

FE Sgt Edward J. Koebornik

RS TSgt Larry W. Bigelow

RS Sgt Robert P. Koecher

AP SSgt Raymond E. Windham

(Rescue Mission Narrative Report (#2-3-054, 1 Sep 68) submitted by Maj John V. Allison, Rescue Crew Commander)

388 TFW History, Jul - Sep 68, USAF microfilm NO585, frame 0070 & Bob LaPoint, e-mail 16 Jan 04.

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.

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.)

1Lt Joseph W. Widhalm, assigned to the 34 TFS in January 1969, also transferred to the 44 TFS. (Joe Widhalm, e-mail 7 May 2012)

Maj William R. McDaniel was another 34 TFS pilot who transferred to the 44th.

After flying 58 combat missions into Laos, the last one today 9 May 69, 1Lt Alan B. Reiter also transferred from the 34 TFS to the 44 TFS on 10 May. In the 44th, Lt Reiter was assigned F-105D 59-1759, which he named "Summertime Blues". "The name came from a 1958 rock song by Eddie Cochran." (Alan Reiter's AF Form 11 & e-mails 19 and 22 Feb 15.)

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

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

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)	Pitman	KIA
			Stewart	KIA
15.	15 May 67	62-4429 (F)	Heiliger	POW
			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

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

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

03-Jun-69

4267

The TAC commander, General William W. Momyer, visited McConnell AFB, Kansas, and presented Silver Stars to Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen and Capt Kenneth D. Thaete, both F-105 instructor pilots in the 561 TFS, for missions they flew during their Vietnam combat tours.

23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 1969, USAF microfilm MO555, frames 0402 and 0509.

29-Jun-69

4270

Maj Joe R. Steen from the 562 TFS flew an F-105 to Cannon AFB, NM, to participate in Falcon 69 for the USAF Academy cadets. Capt Kenneth D. Thaete from the 561 TFS represented the 23 TFW at Falcon 69 "... by familiarizing the AFA cadets with F-105 operations in the tactical environment."

23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 1969, USAF microfilm MO555, frames 0403 and 0534.

01-Jul-69

09-Jul-69

263

The 23 TFW supported the Falcon 69 firepower demonstration at Cannon AFB NM for freshmen from the USAF Academy. Five Combat Nail F-105Fs along with 5 pilots, two maintenance officers and 38 support personnel deployed from McConnell AFB, Kansas.

The deployment project officer was Maj Robert D. Reichart. The other four pilots were: Maj Robert E. Phillips, Maj Joe R. Steen (562 TFS), Capt Kenneth D. Thaete, and Capt Kenneth D. Harten. The maintenance officers were Capt James T. Delaney and 1Lt Kay W. Wheeler.

They flew 44 sorties on the gunnery range with USAF Academy cadets in the back seats of the F-105Fs that lacked the control stick in the rear cockpit. "McConnell's Life Support Technicians fitted each Air Force Academy cadet with a parachute, helmet, and face mask and briefed them on their use and ejection procedures. Sorties were flown in flights of four on low-level routes to the gunnery range. Three simulated attacks were made during the 42 minute sortie with outstanding results: (the) cadets were highly motivated and enthusiastic concerning the flights.

"A total of 44 sorties were flown with 33.6 hours flying time recorded."

23 TFW History, Jul - Sep 69, USAF microfilm MO555, frames 0657 and 0700.

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, Jr. -- 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
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.

25-Oct-70

7132

(Approximate date) Wild Weasel Class 71-DWW graduated at Nellis AFB, NV. The crews trained in the F-105G

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

and were assigned to the 66 FWS. The three crews were:

Capt Frank E. Peck (WW # 921) and EWO Maj John Mojica (WW # 117)
Maj Merlyn D. Smith (WW # 922) and EWO Capt Robert E. Tondreau (WW # 77)
Capt Kenneth D. Thaete (WW # 923) and EWO Capt Norbert J. Maier (WW # 177)

Capt Thaete and Capt Maier were both assigned to the 561 TFS that was converting to a Wild Weasel squadron at McConnell AFB KS.

Wild Weasel class roster and database.

07-Nov-72

4424

"On November 7, 1972, one of the most long-lived aircraft to serve in the Vietnam war, the A-1, flew its last mission in USAF livery. Its SAR role was assumed by the A-7D."

On 14 October 1972, seventy-two A-7Ds from the 354 TFW had arrived on TDY to Korat from Myrtle Beach AFB, under "Constant Guard IV".

These A-7Ds flew in the successful SAR for the 561 TFS F-105G crew of Capt Kenneth D. Thaete and EWO Maj Norbert J. Maier on 16 - 18 Nov 1972.

"The Secret Vietnam War", pg 181.

16-Nov-72

F-105G 638359 561 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by a SAM while leading a Hunter/Killer team protecting a B-52 Arc Light strike. Crashed in RP-3, North Vietnam. 19-05N 105-20E Capt Kenneth D. Thaete 561 TFS pilot rescued by a USAF helicopter. Maj Norbert J. "Nez" Maier 561 TFS EWO rescued by a USAF helicopter. Call sign: "Bobbin 01". This was the last F-105 lost to Vietnam combat and the first in which A-7Ds "... were tasked with mission of locating downed aircrews, suppressing hostile fire in survivor's area and escorting rescue helicopters in and out." (AFHRA abstract for 354 TFW history, Call # K-WG-354-HI V.4. IRIS 902516.)

John Williams was an EWO in an F-4C Wild Weasel in "Bobbin" flight. "Ken was the lead for a flight of three (one Thud and two F-4C Weasels). Rich Graham and I were in one of the F-4s on the wing and although this is a lot more cloudy, I believe it may have been Stu Stengenga and Hans Zimmermann who were in the other F-4). Anyways, we were "Iron Hand" supporting a B-52 strike around Vinh. We were early, so Ken decided to take the most direct route and go "feet wet" and wait for the 52s off the coast. As we passed over Thanh Hoa we were illuminated by a SAM radar, followed closely by a missile coming up through the undercast. At that point it was every man for himself and we pushed it over, picked up speed, and as we pulled up I saw the missile explode and hit Ken and Norbs' aircraft in the belly. Rich and I then spent the next five hours flying over the area to see if they would come up on the radio. They didn't come up until the next day and it was the third day when they were rescued." (John O. S. Williams "Dancing Bear", e-mail on Weasel Net, 21 Oct 1997)

Capt Larry Lemieux was an EWO at Korat during this period. "They took a hit just north of Vinh and thought they were on a ridge near there until they got back to Korat and saw their location on the map. I was in one of the Weasel birds supporting the flight that finally located them. We started DF-ing the beeper around Vinh and kept going north almost to Thanh Hoa. I think they had the front of the airplane blown off because Ken said he saw the sky between his feet before he ejected." (Larry Lemieux, e-mail to CASBAR, 1 Jun 2005.)

"Bobbin 1 had been part of a Korat force supporting an Arc Light strike in RP III when it had been shot down by a SAM. Both crewmen (ejected) and landed in dense underbrush in a valley near Thanh Hoa. For two days they evaded the NVA, many of whom were manning AAA and SAM sites in the area. They were in voice contact with Sandy A-7s using their hand radio beepers, but there seemed little chance of a successful rescue under the very noses of the enemy. [A-7D pilot] Maj Colin A. "Arnie" Clarke [from the 356 TFS, 354 TFW on TDY to Korat from Myrtle Beach AFB] was determined to try. Apart from the proximity of forces lethal to a helicopter, the weather all but prevented the HH-

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

53 landing. Clarke kept searching for a gap in the overcast, which was at least hiding the would-be rescuers -- for a while, at least. When the rescue force attempted a way in from another direction, Sandy I narrowly missed being shot down. Remaining on station far longer than was healthy, Clarke continued to search for a clear landing zone for the Jolly Greens. He had been airborne for nearly seven hours, and the second pair of helos were critically low on fuel. Clarke sent them home and called in the original pair, while seeking out a tanker to top off his own tanks. Finally, a CH-53 did land. Clarke and the other A-7 pilots kept the AAA crews' heads down, and the pickup was finally made. The tenacious A-7 pilot took hits on his aircraft during strafing passes on the enemy guns, and he diverted to Da Nang rather than risk limping back to Korat. His nine-hour marathon sortie earned Clarke one of the most deserved Air Force Crosses of the Vietnam war." ("Wrecking Crew" by Jerry Scutts. pp 164-165.)

In May 1988, Air Force Magazine described Clarke's mission in more detail. "At 4:30 a.m. on Nov. 17, five 354th Sandys, followed shortly by six A-7 smoke birds, lifted off the runway at Korat, led by Maj. Colin A. "Arnie" Clarke, the mission commander and a former F-100 Misty FAC with more than 800 hours of combat time in three previous SEA tours. They rendezvoused with HH-53 Jolly Green rescue helicopters above an overcast about 70 miles west of Thanh Hoa. Clarke told the HH-53s to hold while he and his wingmen, Capts. Don Cornell and Dave Sawyer, looked vainly for a break in the clouds. Clarke made several instrument letdowns into narrow valleys, using his Projected Map Display (PMD) and radar altimeter. Each time the ceiling was too low and the valley too narrow to turn in. There were no passes open from the west.

"Clarke then took his wingmen out over the Gulf of Tonkin, where the two held as he worked his way down through heavy AA, automatic weapons, and SAM defenses. No HH-53 could make it past those missiles and guns, but Clarke was able to pinpoint the Weasel crew and mark their location on his PMD. Back on top, he picked up his wingmen and the smoke birds and then flew down again to show them where the men were hiding. The A-7s, particularly Clarke's, took many .51-caliber hits in the pickup area.

"Clarke knew what was going through the survivors' minds. He had been there twice himself on earlier SEA tours. He also knew that the downed men would be found by the enemy before long. It was now or never. Flying up a valley from the east under increasingly lower clouds, he orbited and called one of the HH-53s to do a direction-finding (DF) letdown on him. The Jolly pilot came in, but, low on fuel, had to leave. It was now six hours into the mission. A frustrated Clarke climbed up through the overcast to refuel and regroup his forces for another attempt. Returning above the clouds, he learned that the pickup would have to be made without delay because the second Jolly was short of fuel. There was no time to search for an open pass.

"Without hesitation, Clarke dove into a valley filled with broken clouds down to the deck and called the second HH-53 to DF down on him. Flying 360-degree turns to stay with the Jolly, he led it to a point near the survivors, using terrain masking to protect the chopper from guns in the pickup area. He told the pilot to hold while he and his wingmen went in to quiet the guns and direct the smoke birds to lay a screen.

"Then came an unpleasant surprise. He spotted another .51 gun only a few feet above the survivors. It had to be knocked out before the chopper came in.

"At this point, the HH-53 pilot, who apparently thought he had been cleared in, picked up both survivors and started to climb out directly past the gun. Clarke called the pilot to stay low and turn while he hosed the gun pit with 20-mm shells, flying so low he took a ZPU round in the A-7's nose. On his final pass as the chopper made it safely out of the area, Clarke was hit 'by something that felt like a 57-mm.' All his instruments went out.

"Flying on instinct, he pulled up through the overcast, joined another A-7, and made an IFR landing at Da Nang, flying on the A-7's wing. The "57-mm" turned out to be a .51 incendiary that exploded an empty wing tank, blowing in the side of the A-7's fuselage.

"For Clarke, it had been a grueling mission filled with world-class flying, great leadership, and courageous determination to save two fellow airmen. The Air Force Cross he was awarded for a superb performance during those

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

8.8 action-filled hours was well-earned that day."

Capt Larry Funk was an F-105G Wild Weasel pilot from Korat who flew cover during the rescue. "I had the lead in a flight of two Thuds and two F-4s. We were working with A-7s, making their first flights in a Search and Rescue role, supporting the 'Jolly Greens.' We were around to protect the rescue forces from SAMs located in the Thanh Hoa area. We stayed with the mission for a total of seven hours in the rescue area. After the Jollies picked up the two crewmen from the downed Weasel, we escorted them home.' "

On 20 Nov 72, the Pacific Stars and Stripes (Vol 28, No 324) reported the rescue. "Saigon (AP)--A US Air Force rescue team braved heavy antiaircraft fire and overcast skies Saturday to pull two downed American fliers from North Vietnam. The rescue occurred as ground troops with dogs closed in on the fliers after a 40-hour chase, an Air Force spokesman announced.

"The two rescued American pilots are Maj Norbert J. Maier, 36, Avalon Pa, and Capt Kenneth D. Thaete, 33, of Wendell, Idaho. They were shot down Thursday night while flying an F-105 as bait to draw surface-to-air-missile fire away from the B-52 bombers, the Air Force said.

"The helicopter that rescued them was hit by North Vietnamese fire. But it managed to fly back to Thailand with the pilots, who were reported in good condition, the spokesman said. The fliers were on a temporary assignment in Thailand from McConnell Air Force Base near Wichita, Kan, when they were downed in a missile duel 15 miles southwest of the port of Thanh Hoa. Maier and Thaete fired air-to-ground missiles at the North Vietnamese surface-to-air-missile site just about the same time they were being fired upon. The missiles passed each other in the air. The F-105 was hit, and the two pilots immediately parachuted.

" 'After we hit the ground, there were enemy troops in the area, and we could hear dogs barking,' said Thaete. 'Occasionally, they (the North Vietnamese) would fire .50 caliber machine guns apparently to get us to move from our hidden positions. We were in a valley between two hills, and the enemy set up two .50 caliber machine gun emplacements on top of each of the two hills. The adverse weather in the area made rescue difficult, but it also helped us evade the troops looking for us.' Thaete said that about midmorning Saturday four rescue helicopters arrived with a flight of A-7 attack bombers. 'This was the first time A-7s were used to support a rescue effort, and they did a magnificent job,' said Thaete." (Posted by Phil Steeves <psteeves@POL.NET> E-mail posted to Weasel Net, 17 Oct 2003).

Capt Bob Hipps was an F-4E WSO who, with his pilot Capt Alexander H. Murchison III, supported the SAR for Capt Thaete and Maj Maier. The F-4E crew was from the 335 TFS on TDY to Korat from Seymour Johnson AFB. Their mission started the day after the Wild Weasel crew had ejected. "17 Nov 72: Captain Alexander H. (Sandy) Murchison III from the 335TFS and I were scheduled for a mid-day Wolf FAC flight. To avoid confusion in this little tale, I will refer to him as "Sandy" and the A-7 flight lead as "SANDY." I was still checking out in the program and Sandy was an IP (as were all Wolf pilots). Right around briefing time, we were informed by the command post that a weasel crew had been downed by a SAM the previous evening somewhere north of Vinh and Blue Chip wanted us to head up there and see if they could raise them on the radio. Turned out the crew was nowhere near the position we got from 7AF. In fact, we didn't even have a map of the area where we eventually found them. Anyhow, we launched with our wingman and headed north through Laos and hit our first tanker of the day. The weather steadily worsened the further north we flew and we thought there was no way the survivors could be recovered if they hadn't been captured already.

"When we arrived in the area given us by 7th, we started calling the survivors on Guard channel. No luck so we widened our search area running a north/south racetrack pattern just west of the NVN border. We finally raised them at the northern most end of our search pattern. Turned out they were about 20 or 30 miles south of Thanh Hoa close to the SAM site that had shot them down (although we didn't know that at the time).

"After much discussion, Sandy and I decided we needed to pinpoint their position for the SAR forces. So we told our

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

wingman to hold west of the border and we crossed over NVN, went feet wet and let down under the overcast out over the Gulf. We went feet dry headed for the weeds. Sandy flew the airplane constantly changing altitude and heading (we called this "jinking") and I pretty much kept my head in the cockpit trying to get a DF cut on them while telling Sandy which way to fly.

"We located them both on the east side of a ridgeline running north and south just west of some river and Route 1. Although I couldn't hear anything but the usual cockpit noise as we got close to their position, one of them said on the radio, Hey Wolf, they're shooting at you." I could see the tracers as we jinked through the area but the survivors could actually hear the roar of the guns as the gunners took their best shot at us. We got a good hack on their position and headed back west to the tanker.

"While we were on the tanker's wing, we were told to contact the ABCCC for words. They gave us some directions for the survivors to get them to move to the west side of the ridge line since there was no way the Jollies could come in from the water side due to all the guns between the coast and the ridge. The whole thing required copious notes on my part since it was based on the geography at McConnell AFB. Something like 'go out the main gate and turn left at doofus street or whatever.'

"About that time, some Thud weasel showed up at the tanker claiming emergency fuel and he was down to his last couple hundred pounds. We got out of the way and let the Thud have the boom. I remember admiring his set of shark's teeth (especially the one long fang) and wishing I had a camera that day.

"We got our gas, flew back to the area and passed the message to alpha and bravo. They seemed to know what we were talking about (although Sandy and I had no clue what we were saying since we had never been to McConnell). As best I remember, that was about it for the day and we RTB'd back to Ubon.

"My Form 5 says we flew 6.7 hours in F-4E tail # 295 that day. Saw lots of AAA (looked like mostly ZPU and 23mm to me) but no SAM's or Migs although the RHAW gear went crazy all day.

"After we had debriefed, Sandy got called to the head shed and I headed for the bar. He came into the bar after an hour or so and said 7AF wanted us to lead the SAR forces into the area the next day and would I fly with him? Since I had nothing better to do the next day, I told him 'no sweat' and we headed back to TOC to do a little preliminary mission planning for the next day's go.

"18 Nov 72: That morning, Sandy and I had an oh-dark early briefing. I think we launched about 0430 or so and was it ever dark! We headed up to the tanker and rendezvoused with the rest of the force. Unlike the previous days effort when there was just us and a couple of weasels flying around, 7AF fragged a CAP flight, some weasels, some F-4 strike aircraft and of course the Jollys and Sandys. As it said in the AF Magazine story, this was the first time the A-7D had been used in a SAR role in SEA.

"When we arrived in the area, the weather was even worse than the previous day. It was 1,000' to 500' overcast with some rain showers in spots. Our two ship joined up with SANDY Lead and we headed feet wet from over the mountains. When we got out over the Gulf, we had our wingman hold, put the A-7 on our wing and down we went through the weather. We broke out at about 700' AGL overwater and coasted in. SANDY Lead dropped back to a fighting wing position and we proceeded to the projected pickup area. We led the A-7 around the south side of the ridge (didn't want to over fly the survivors' positions and tip our hand to the bad guys). We raised them on the radio and then the A-7 took off on his own to find a route into the area for the Jollies. That was the last time we saw him that day.

"As I mentioned before, there were AAA sites all over the place so we decided to kill a few of them to get the gunners' heads down. The first strike flight checked in with us and we gave them our standard target briefing including the weather. Then, my front seater asked them if they could work with us. The flight lead said, 'Well, we'd rather not.' So, we sent them on their way and called for the next flight. These intrepid souls came down through the murk and tried to

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

bunt their CBU's on the guns, but their fuses were all set for 4 seconds and they all were duds.

"Since we were running out of ideas at that point, we called for our wingie Bob Kendall to come on down. This kid was a 1Lt from the 25 TFS (I think) who liked to break glasses in the club and eat light bulbs. He could also fly a mean Phantom, as we soon learned. I *still* to this day don't know what kind of whifferdill he did to get his weapons to arm, but he did and killed several gun sites for us. Then, it was back to the tanker for more gas.

"We also noticed that the bad guys had placed several guns on the west side of the ridge on a small knoll just west of the survivors. At that point, all we had left was 20MM and Sandy said we had to take them out or the Jollies would never make it in. As all of you former Phantom drivers know, there isn't a whole hell of a lot for a GIB to do on a strafe pass so I leaned forward and looked over Sandy's left shoulder as he strafed the gun pits. To this day if I close my eyes, I can still see the tracers going from us to them and vice versa as well as the exploding ammunition in the pits. Unfortunately, the gun camera film somehow got 'lost' when we got back (personally I think the developers copped it as it would have been one hell of a shot).

"After we and our wingman had completed our last strafe pass, we were both winchester and bingo. The ABCCC said they were running out of tankers and the Jolly and Sandys were coming in so we were ordered to RTB.

"We returned to Ubon and were told the pickup was successful and the survivors were aboard the Jolly headed for a friendly base in Thailand. We felt pretty damn good about the whole thing at that point although we were disappointed that we hadn't been on-scene for the survivor pickup. My Form 5 for 17 November 72 says we had 6.6 hours (1.7 night time) in F-4E tail # 333."

Both Capt Murchison and Capt Hipps were put in for the Air Force Cross. However, Hq 7th Air Force downgraded the awards to the Silver Star. (Bob Hipps, "Another Day at the Office", story posted at www.geocities.com/wolf_fac/wolf.htm, downloaded 3 Jun 05)

The 388 TFW history for the period October - December 1972 (Volume I, pgs 40 - 41) also described the loss of this F-105G and the rescue of the crew. "At about 2214, Bobbin 05 was navigating on radar and turned to a heading of 100 degrees. At this time, Bobbin 05 received an E/F High PRF Fan Song radar signal at twelve o'clock, 3 -4 rings, azimuth sector light, blinking activity and launch lights, and ALR 31 E/F indications. The backseater called the AGM-78 was locked up, so the pilot fired it off and began a left break and selected afterburner. About 8 - 12 seconds later, there was an explosion, followed by intense fire. Both crewmembers ejected ..."

"The two crewmembers landed safely, separated from one another so that join up was not possible. Captain Thaete was burned on the face from the fire, while Major Maier was bruised painfully in the right thigh. He also had other minor pains which he attributed to improper body position during ejection. The area of the landing was about two miles from a small village near a ridge line deep in North Vietnamese territory.

"Radio contact was made with Wolf FAC the next morning, and the FAC got a fix on their position. The FAC gave instructions to the crew members moving that night.

"The move was very difficult due to rough terrain, tall grass, and hidden rocks. The temperature was also very cold. The rough terrain helped in the evasion process by making pursuit difficult. The weather also assisted; high winds blew the tall grass and effectively covered any trail left by the moving crewmembers.

"The next day, jets were heard, and the downed crewmembers came up on the radio. With A-7 'Sandy' support, the 'Jolly Green' rescue helicopters came in and picked up the EWO and then the pilot.

"In spite of the 'Sandy' support, there was a lot of ground fire in the area. As soon as the rescued crewmember was in the plane, the mini-gun was moved into place and utilized in protecting the helicopter. Happily the helicopter made its egress without sustaining damage, the SAR was completed, and Captain Thaete and Major Maier were returned to

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

duty."

Maj Tom Coady from the 17 WWS was an F-105G pilot who flew a mission on 18 Nov 72, one day after he had returned from three weeks leave. "We had been capping him all day, though I don't recall that anyone was talking to him. After nightfall we had almost given up. But that evening he (Capt Thaete) (literally) rolled into the club (at Korat) -- through a window door -- on a beer dolly. He had refused to see the docs and insisted he be taken straight to the O' Club." (Tom Coady, e-mail to Weasel Net, 17 Oct 2003.)

After their rescue, the Wild Weasel crew returned to their home base at McConnell. EWO Bob King was there when they arrived in Wichita. "I had the pleasure of seeing them meet their families at the airport when they arrived back in Wichita about a week later. (They had both been shot down once before and the folks up the chain of command decided they had played out their run of luck and sent them home.) (Bob King, e-mail to CASBAR, 1 Jun 2005)

This was the second time Ken Thaete had been shot down and rescued. The first was on 1 September 1968 when he was flying an F-105D over Laos. It was the first time Maj Maier had ejected from an F-105.

Norbert J. Maier died 12 March 2001.

Arnie Clarke's Air Force Cross citation read, "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, takes pleasure in presenting the Air Force Cross to Major Colin Arnold "Arnie" Clarke (AFSN: 0-73845), United States Air Force, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as Pilot of an A-7 aircraft of the 354th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 355th Tactical Fighter Wing, Korat Royal Thai Air Base, Thailand, in action as On-Scene Commander for search and rescue operations over North Vietnam, on 18 November 1972. On that date, Major Clarke directed an extremely complex mission that resulted in the successful recovery of two downed airmen despite adverse weather, mountainous terrain, and intense hostile ground fire. Disregarding these hazards, his own safety, and battle damage to his aircraft, he personally guided the rescue helicopter to the survivors' location, suppressed hostile defenses, and continued to direct rescue efforts even though he sustained additional damage to his aircraft. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Major Clarke reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (<http://www.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/citation.php?citation=10757>)

John O. S. Williams "Dancing Bear", e-mail on Weasel Net, 21 Oct 1997 & "Wrecking Crew" by Jerry Scutts. pp 164-165. The Combat History of the F-105, by Scott Duncan in Aerospace History, Sept 1975, pg 128.

19-Nov-72

2063

"At Korat in Fall of '72, apparently the 388 TFW support folks -- don't recall which -- started bringing their wives to Korat. They took over the O-Club. Bridge games took the tables in the bar and dining room (remember we had no stag bar). One day after a big Linebacker mission we went to the club for lunch; sign on the dining room door read: Officers Wives Club luncheon only! We had to eat sandwiches in the bar -- lousy service. They took over the swimming pool, too; we couldn't even use it after a tough mission -- all the lounge chairs in use.

The final blow came when [561 TFS Wild Weasel pilot] Ken Thaete was picked up after shoot-down on 16 November, brought back to Korat, and wheeled into the bar on a push-cart. What a welcoming party! But the Bridge Club wives were upset with the language in our songs. The Club Manager came in; we "escorted" him out. Next the APs arrived with rifles in hand. We started to throw them in the pool, but a somewhat sober guy held us back. That night we "destroyed the club" -- may have been the night we stacked all the bar furniture to the roof outside the two entrances; took 'em half a day to get into the place. Don't remember who the weak-member Wing CC was ... Merklng had left, I think. But we had zero support from the wing weenies during all that."

Tom Coady <zipgun@EROLS.COM>, e-mail to Weasel Net, 15 Feb 2002.

20-Nov-72

7594

Maj Thomas J. Coady and EWO Maj Kemper J. "Bear" Gleason, 17 WWS, flew Maj Coady's 103rd Wild Weasel mission as "Tile 02".

Kenneth D. Thaete

F-105 History

"... Brief 0900, Tile: Powers/Roen, I/Gleason (theater indoctrination check), Rock/Rumsey, two events: one NW Dong Hoi, another in DMZ. We get three airplanes, wow!

"Wx much better today but solid undercast. The first event called on time, we are right on at the point. B-52 release about one minute late. We watch them on the way in.

"Out to Purple tanker, hold about 45 minutes waiting for next event. Tile 3 RTBs. They're not needed for next one. At 57, they call one minute early. We hit the point right on. It looks like 52s are on time this time. No impacts observed due to undercast.

"We RTB VFR, do some acro and cloud busting on the way, enjoying my last days in the Thud.

"Lt Col Rock discussed Gleason's planning after the flight briefing. He wants to be more 'standardized', i.e. run-in parallel to the BUFFs all the time, no variation. Not good. We should not be stereotyped and should plan our tactics to counter the most probable threat, even though only COAs.

"Lt Col Harry Matthews and Tom Edge get in. I talk with them awhile today.

"Ken Thaete and Norb Maier come to club tonight a bit beat up. Ken's face burned."

Tom Coady's diary entry for Mon 20 Nov 1972.

27-Jun-80

379

The 562 TFS, 35 TFW, flew the last USAF operational F-105 mission from George AFB CA.

Aircrews in the three Wild Weasel F-105Gs were:

Maj William E. Kennedy, lead pilot, with Capt George A. Armstrong, EWO;

Maj Jimmy L. Boyd, pilot, with Capt Thomas F. Tedford, EWO; and

Maj Kenneth D. Thaete, pilot, with Capt Larry M. Ware, EWO.

Maj Thaete flew the F-105 for the last time on 1 August 1980 by which time he had accumulated 1790.4 hours in the airplane.

George AFB Hi-Desert Flyer, July 11, 1980 & F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.

14-Jun-16

7681

Kenneth D. Thaete passed away Tuesday, 14 June 16.

Ed Rock e-mail to Weasel Net, Jun 16, 2016.