



Shotgun Blasts

The 221st Aviation Company – Then and Now



Volume 3, Issue 9

September 2011

Delta Birddog Reunion 2011

The Doubletree Hotel San Antonio Downtown stops accepting reservations at our rate of \$119.00 per night with free parking and breakfast included on September 7 at 1600 CST. This is a list of registrations received to date.

Damon & Ann Agee, Shotgun 5
 Dan Aldridge, Swamp Fox 56
 Frank & Son Hae Allen, Shotgun 3
 Gene Alexander, Shotgun 21
 Woody Barnes, Swamp Fox 35
 Brian Bowling, Swamp Fox 27
 Tim & Joanne Brinkerhoff, Shotgun
 Richard & Portia Burns, Swamp Fox 17
 Boyce & Darlene Cates, Shotgun 33
 Monte Caylor, Shotgun
 Charlie & Katherine Chase, Shotgun 24
 Robert Clayton & Kitty Munroe, Shotgun 36
 Hank & Irene Collins, Shotgun 46
 David & Donna Conner, Shotgun 13
 George Cook, Shotgun
 Hal Crites, Shotgun 34
 Bill & Pam Dannelly, Swamp Fox 18
 Timothy Davenport, Swamp Fox 13
 Dennis Doran, Shotgun Armorer
 Virgil & Kathleen Dreffs, Shotgun
 Russell & Myrt Duffin, Shotgun 5
 Sam & Lynne Givhan, Swamp Fox 31
 Arthur & Bow Chu Goto, Shotgun 16

Patrick Grady, Shotgun
 Dellino & Donna Hartman, Shotgun
 Curt Herrick, Swamp Fox 26
 Ray "Doc" Jennings, Swamp Fox
 Brian & Fay Kinderman, Swamp Fox 22
 Bill & Terrie Klingman, Shotgun
 Milton & Bobbi Kramlick, Shotgun
 Charlie & Fran Lewis, Shotgun 32
 Robert & Wannee Lewis, Shotgun
 Don & Kathy Loftis, Shotgun 35
 Amador & Martha Norma Marcha, Shotgun
 Jimmy & Fran McGraw, Shotgun 6
 Bob & Joan McKenzie, Shotgun 36
 Don & John Modica, Shotgun 6
 Ned & Barbara Moore, Shotgun 15
 Eric & Rosemary Nakasone, Shotgun
 Dan & Martha Oates, Swamp Fox 20
 Leigh Ogden, Shotgun 5
 Herb & Susie Phillips, Shotgun
 Thomas & Judith Plott, Shotgun 45
 Bill & Ann Poor, Shotgun 6
 Bob Preble, Shotgun
 Cline Preble, Swamp Fox 24

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This newsletter is dedicated to the men of the 221st RAC who served from 23 March 1965 thru 10 October 1971, to the ladies that stood behind them and to that magnificent flying machine, the Cessna Birddog.

Brothers in Arms – Always

Dear Charlie:

Peek-a-Boo!

Story by SP4 Jim Woolsey

The Vietnamese Communist is not one to keep still. His leaders have mapped out the objective – this hamlet, that airstrip, those minds and lives – and he is charged to stop at nothing till the job is done.

His job requires movement – traveling from Point A to Point B, constructing hooches and bunkers, setting up contacts with fell VC or NVA.

And his movements are what kill him. Throughout the Republic of Vietnam the U.S. Army has men trained in the art of observation. The slightest change in the terrain's appearance registers in the minds of two men who fly daily over a particular sector of ground. When the change is definitely identified as the enemy, the information is passed over the plane's radio.

The answer arrives: "You've got clearance out there all night if you need it."

The plane circles the area and climbs 1,000 feet. The throttle eases back, nearing the "Closed" marking and leaving the plane almost cataleptic over the enemy's position. Angling to one side, the craft gives back the 1,000 feet, faster this time heading nose-first and sending white phosphorous rockets (Willie Petes) on the enemy's head to mark his position for the arriving combat units.

There are several companies in 1st Aviation Brigade designated as reconnaissance airplane. To understand their mission, this magazine observed the pattern of the 221st Reconnaissance Airplane Company, which serves the Mekong Delta. By extending the knowledge gained from the 221st, HAWK is able to pay tribute in this special anniversary issue to the contributions made by all such companies.

Commanded by MAJ Burnum E. Melton, the 221st is known as the "Shotguns" because of the devastating, short-range impact of the O-1 Bird Dog, the principal reconnaissance aircraft. The Shotguns were activated in March 1965 at Ft. Bragg, N.C., and sent to Soc Trang in July of that year to take over the duties of the 4th Platoon of the 74th Aviation Company. Their mission: to become the "Eyes Over the Delta."

Headquartered at Vinh Long, the command is divided into four platoons: 1st at Vinh Long, 2nd at

Can Tho, 3rd at Cao Lanh and 4th at Bac Lieu. These platoons are responsible for a total of 15 sectors, with one pilot patrolling his sector for approximately three hours a day.

The Bird Dog has been used since the Korean War, and pilots find its maneuverability the chief advantage for making reconnaissance runs. Weighing between 2,300 and 2,800 pounds, the plane is a fundamentally constructed craft, without fancy trimmings and specialized equipment. This gives the pilot less bulk to push through the air, allowing him to take it where needed and at the same time giving him more freedom to observe the ground passing underneath. Speed is between 40 and 80 knots, with the plane traveling at the ideal altitude of 1,500 feet – low enough for good visibility and high enough to avoid most small arms fire.

"Strong and rugged and simple...that's it!" said CPT Alfred J. Davis, maintenance officer for the Shotguns.

On an average day, the Bird Dog pilot is in the air three and one half hours, 15 minutes each way between base and sector and three hours of systematic observation. At the end of this period, the Bird Dog pilot's job is finished for the day. He has fired no heavy explosives, sent no troops parachuting to the ground. Yes when he climbs out of his aircraft at Bac Lieu, Chi Lang or wherever, drained of energy by the twin tasks of aviation and observation, his face will be split by the grin of a man who knows he has made his contribution.



VR Photo by Gene Alexander

The importance of that contribution is instilled in the new Shotgun, even before the VIP briefing by MAJ Melton. The wings, cat's eye and crossed shotguns with exaggerated barrels, all against the lush green Delta background, welcome him, and

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he finds his company's symbols everywhere. Above the oversized patch is the statement of his significance: "Eyes Over the Delta."

"The men think and act like a team," MAJ Melton said. "And the worst thing a man in the 221st can hear is 'Son, you've let the Shotguns down.'"

Not everyone in the company is a sector pilot, of course. The crew chiefs, who sometimes occupy the back seat on reconnaissance flights, the mechanics, control tower personnel – all have been given their parts in the mission. And, in a step to make man and mission intertwine, they

have been given the reasons behind their orders. They are the 600 of the Light Brigade, but they will need no Tennyson to interpret their actions. They already know the WHY? Of the Shotguns, and that knowledge adds speed, precision and willingness to their movements.

To the outsider, the surface actions of a visual reconnaissance (VR) team might appear rather simple. "Look," he will say, "you take 15 minutes to get to your sector, fly around for three hours, fly back and that's it. What's so tough?"

In addition to encountering enemy fire, the enormity of communication and dedication merge to make shreds of any Shotgun's complacency. Not only must the pilot and observer know what each is doing, they must, in fact, communicate with the sector assigned to them. No signs of VC or NVA, fin; the men in the Bird Dog reply by doing nothing to damage the terrain. But when Charlie makes a move, communication to the ground is indirect. Shotgun talks to control, who in turn talks to gun-ships, infantry, artillery. The loud, lashing voices of these people relay the message of the Bird Dog to the land and the enemy who is using it.

Bird Dogs have other missions besides VR. They direct Naval gunfire from off the coast, drop C-rations to soldiers in the field and conduct psychological warfare.

The overriding and resounding call, however, is that of reconnaissance, and it is in this field that Vietnamization leaps into sharpest focus.

The man in the observer's seat on many occasions is a member of the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF), and he knows the countryside. SP5 Allen Cacy, crew chief at Chi Lang, said "You've got to memorize the sector once in the

wet season, and then you've got to do the same thing when it's dry." The masquerade games the climate plays with the country are all too familiar to the VNAF. Small irregularities twist and burn inside the VNAF's mind. His finger jabs frantically at the pilot's shoulder. The change is indicated and once again it is time for communication between lead and earth.

When the duel has ended and the Bird Dog is again resting, the smiles of accomplishment will crack two faces, one American and one Oriental – brothers in freedom.

From the Spring '71 edition of the 1st Aviation Brigade Hawk Magazine.



I haven't heard from anyone yet that they have managed to get their time to complete the puzzle much below the ten minute mark. No limit on how many tries it takes.

Sit at your computer and enter the following:
www.jigidi.com/solve.php?id=14AUJ7FG

I know that it can become addictive but it is just as much fun as some of the current video game that I have seen...and you can use the site to create some puzzles of your own that you can pass on to family and friends. Let's see some of your puzzle offerings.

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Rick Shoup, Swamp Fox 11
Gary & Georgia Simon, Swamp Fox 16
Don & Renate Smith, Shotgun 8A
Bruce & Deborah Solberg, Shotgun 41
Al & Sandie Spain, Shotgun 8A
John & Darla Stefero, Shotgun 37
Joe and Betty Swift, Swamp Fox 12

Jim & Vicki Strye, Swamp Fox 39
Joe & Betty Swift, Swamp Fox 12
Norm Svarrer, Shotgun 10
Roy & Josefina Talley, Shotgun
Paul & Janice Tanguay, Shotgun 27
Michael Tatom, Swamp Fox
Billy & Andrea Wallum, Shotgun
Norm Wood, Swamp Fox 11

Our Reunion Dinner Dance

As we approach the end of our bi-annual reunion we will once again break bread together at our "Formal Banquet". We use the term loosely, it is indicative that prior to dining we normally wash behind our ears and sometimes we even wash our hands.

All kidding aside, we do dress up a bit, the time for jeans and tee shirts has come to an end for us and our ladies turn out attired as though on the way to the Easter parade less the new bonnets. As gentlemen we can do no less and we move about the room in our business suits and blazers or in some cases decked out in Army dress uniforms.

This evening will be just a bit different that our dinners in the past, tonight we have the services of a disk jockey that will be bringing us some of the sounds of our time with a covering of more recent music. Gentlemen, this is when you once again get to do what we so often missed while in Vietnam, hold your lady close and glide or stumble around the dance floor as if you were 22 or 23 once again.

Our evening will begin as usual with the Presentation of Colors followed by certain rituals that we follow as military men. We will then have a few very brief comments that will lead to our dinner.

This brings me to the important part of my brief message to you. The menu and the decision that you must make and provide to me no later than

30 September follows. Those of you that make no choice will be given the Vegetarian dinner.

Choices are:

Vegetarian

Linguine Pasta

Shaved Seasonal Vegetable and Black Garlic,
Fresh Herbs, Chardonnay Cream

Chicken

Chicken Wellington

Chicken Breast Topped with Wild Mushrooms &
Port Wine Sauce served with Dauphinaise
Potatoes, Vegetables

Beef

Grilled Beef Tenderloin

Pressed Potato, Grilled Asparagus, Forrest
Mushrooms and Tarragon Jus

Please choose one of the entrees and advise me of your choice before the end of September so that we can finalize the dinner arrangements and make our arrangements for table markings.

Your dinner will include a dinner salad, a glass of red or white wine and each table will have a selection of either Strawberry Cheesecake or German Chocolate cake for dessert. Coffee will be available for those that wish it.

Delta Birddog Reunion 2011

Battle Plan

Mission: Plan and execute a superior reunion for the ladies and men of two of the United States Army's finest Reconnaissance Airplane Companies, the 221st and the 199th.

Intelligence and Enemy Situation: The combined enemies *Time* and *Distance* are relentless in their pursuit of the members of these celebrated combat units and can only be held at bay by a periodic effort to assemble and remember the times, good and bad, we had together and to honor our accomplished mission and our Comrades-in-Arms.

Execution: The Advance Party (aka, Reunion Committee) will prepare the landing area for the members of the 221st and the 199th Reconnaissance Airplane Companies to assemble in San Antonio, Texas at the Doubletree Hotel Downtown. The advance party will arrive no later than 17:00 hours on 12 October 2011 to secure the LZ and to ensure the potability of the Class VI rations. Members of the main body will depart their bases at a time that will allow them to be at their assembly point at San Antonio between 12:00 and 17:00 hours on 13 October 2011. At 17:30 hours there will be an assembly at a point yet to be designated where we will undertake the task of becoming re-acquainted and to ensure that *Time and Distance* have not rendered us beyond the realm of recognition to our comrades and to determine if any member of the Advance Party has any idea why they are present. The following 48 hours will be expended in a variety of locations; Golf Courses, Historical Sites, Military Installations, Museums, Markets and an airfield where classic liaison airplanes can be seen and touched, and, weather permitting the greatest little Warbird of all time, the Birddog will take center stage. The combined effort of all members should allow us to stave off the advances of *Time* until we are next able to meet.

Logistics: Virtually all commercial airlines have flights into San Antonio International Airport and Stinson Field is available to those of you traveling in your private airplanes. Members driving or renting a car will find the assembly point readily accessible and we ask that all vehicle owners be prepared to "car pool" to ease transportation costs. A contract has been executed with the Doubletree Hotel to hold 40 rooms for us. They will only hold the rooms until 7 September 2011, so make your reservations early. You can contact the hotel at 210-224-7155 (between 0800 and 1600 hours) to make your reservations; make sure you mention you are registering for the Delta Birddog Reunion and that your group code is DBD. Make sure that you complete the registration form and send it to the designated member of the Advance Party, Tim Brinkerhoff.

Command and Signal: The advance against Time and Distance will commence on 13 October. Upon reaching the LZ proceed to the noisiest place in the Doubletree, that should place you in contact with a large gaggle of "20" year old, bulletproof, invincible Bird Doggers. Continue to watch the web sites, www.221st.org and www.SwampFox199thRAC.com for information and updates.



A Note of Caution for the Reunion

At previous reunions we have asked participants to bring their souvenirs and mementos for display in our Hospitality Suite. I would like to discourage folks bringing anything other than photo collections or other items of this nature. There will be another reunion taking place at the same time as ours and the security of your personal items might become an issue. I do encourage folks to bring any photos that you have that you would like to see in the newsletter or on the web site, we can arrange to copy them and return originals.

This Month in Military

History

- SEPTEMBER 1 *HITLER'S ARMIES INVADE POLAND STARTING WW II IN EUROPE IN 1939*
- SEPTEMBER 2 *SHERMAN'S ARMY CAPTURES ATLANTA IN 1864*
- V-J DAY PROCLAIMED BY PRESIDENT TRUMAN IN 1945*
- HO CHI MINH PROCLAIMS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM IN 1945*
- SEPTEMBER 11 *THE WORST TERRORIST ATTACK IN UNITED STATES HISTORY OCCURRED IN 2001*
- SEPTEMBER 17 *THE BLOODIEST DAY IN UNITED STATES MILITARY HISTORY OCCURRED AT ANTIETAM WITH 26,000 DEAD, WOUNDED OR MISSING IN 1862*
- SEPTEMBER 18 *UNITED STATES AIR FORCE IS ESTABLISHED AS A MILITARY SERVICE IN 1949*
- SEPTEMBER 29 *CONGRESS CREATED THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN 1789*
- SEPTEMBER 30 *THE BERLIN AIRLIFT IS FINALLY CONCLUDED AFTER 277,264 FLIGHTS IN 1949*

Dates to Remember

- SEPTEMBER 5 *LABOR DAY HOLIDAY*
- SEPTEMBER 7 *LAST DAY TO REGISTER AT THE REUNION HOTEL AND RECEIVE THE SPECIAL REDUCED RATE*
- SEPTEMBER 11 *PATRIOT DAY IN REMEMBRANCE OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF 2001*
- SEPTEMBER 17 *CONSTITUTION DAY AND ALSO CITIZENSHIP DAY*
- THIS IS THE START DATE FOR THE WORLD'S LARGEST FAIR, THE OKTOBERFEST IN MUNICH, GERMANY WHERE SEVERAL MILLION GALLONS OF THE AMBER BREW WILL BE CONSUMED IN THE NEXT THREE WEEKS.*
- SEPTEMBER 25 *GOLD STAR MOTHER'S DAY*
- SEPTEMBER 28 *ROSH HASHANAH OR JEWISH NEW YEAR BEGINS AT SUNDOWN*
- AND
- LEST WE FORGET, THE ENTIRE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER HAS BEEN DESIGNATED A CELEBRATION OF BOURBON AS AMERICA'S "NATIVE SPIRIT"*

Chaplain's Corner

"MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN"

By Ned Moore, Shotgun Chaplain

While talking with a good friend about Sep 2011 and it being the tenth anniversary of "9/11", this scripture came to mind:

²⁵ "This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN". (Daniel 5:25 NIV)

As you most likely recall, this is part of the story of Daniel's conversation with Belshazzar, son and successor to Nebuchadnezzar, his father, and how since Belshazzar had not only had defiled Israel's temple altar goblets by using them as his party ware, but had in fact set himself against God, as described by Daniel in the rest of the story.

I have no desire to launch into a geopolitical tirade describing all the perceived evils perpetrated in the name of Islam – nor invite comments concerning all of the excesses of injustice perpetrated on humanity by those claiming to be led by the banner of the Christian church, whatever its name happened to be at the particular timed event. Humans have been visiting atrocities upon other humans since humanity began, however it fancies you to conceptualize that event. Suffice to say Islam is the antithesis of Christianity is the antithesis of Islam.

Therefore, in the light of the approaching 10th anniversary of "9/11", my question is:

WHY?

Why are we so willing as a species, nay, eager, as a species, to go out of our way to deprecate, lambaste, shout down, beat up, injure, maim, kill and molecularly destroy those who disagree with us – and it doesn't have to be in a religious fervor – it can be socioeconomic, racial, political, national or globally positioned.

Predatory organisms, be they animal, vegetable or mineral kill to feed and survive. (I don't want to get into inorganic chemistry, but I give HCl, HNO₃, H₂SO₄, HF bad boys a very wide berth).

Do plants have feelings and/or awareness? I have often wondered if a tomato "screams" as I begin to slice and dice Do they see us as predators? Humans are the most predatory of creatures, in the main because we do not kill each other to eat to survive.

I don't know what the best answer is to all of this. I do think that it is only a matter of time before God puts the writing on our "wall", as in the above scripture, to wit:

"You have been measured, weighed in the balance and found wanting."

St. Paul thought that Jesus would come back in his lifetime. He didn't, apparently, nor have I seen sure signs that He will return in ours. We are to hope and act expectantly. We function in "Chronos" time, as I mentioned before, and God works in "Kairos". That could be as different as Local time vs. Geological time vs. Cosmic time is but a figment of tick-tock time. We can measure time in light year or nanoseconds (or less). But God's time has no human measurement – except in our capacity for sin – and therein lies the rub. It seems nearly eternal.

This kind of questioning as been going on a long time. Habakkuk (1:13 NIV) asks, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"

Each of the religions of humankind, as well as those who say they hold to no religion (but that of their own making) has its own characterization of "Righteousness". Any human on the street can tell you what they think is wrong with (fill in the blank). Everybody measures everybody else – often against themselves.

In 9/11, we scream they are wrong to do that. They say it screams at us that we are wrong.

Was 9/11 a "Writing on the Wall"? Some say yes, some say no, some say "Ppbbttt".

Of it all, I have one thing to say: "Maranatha!" (1 Corinthians 16:22b) Come, O Lord! (NIV)

Ned





The Governor's Palace in San Antonio



The Japanese Tea Garden in San Antonio

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Looks like Colin Kimball might have come up with just the item. His Legacy Portraits lay out your career as you would like to be remembered and you can pass it on along with your "war" stories and personal history.

Colin will be with us in San Antonio at the start of the reunion but you don't have to wait to talk to him.

George (Corky) Cook has once again put together a deal for us on the purchase of Unit Wear and Collectible items for the upcoming get together in San Antonio. Now is the time to get your orders in to him. Check out the site for his items.

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A Letter Home

A bit of explanation – recently my Mom found this letter that my Dad managed to get reproduced by using a mimeograph machine so that he could do a mailing to all of his friends back home from his basic training location. I thought it might bring back some memories of earlier days, Privates are the same no matter the generation.

Don

GREETINGS FROM CAMP WHEELER,
GEORGIA

Dear

First off, let me assure you that although this letter has been run off on a machine, it is being sent as a personal message to you.

When I was an unfortunate civilian and writing to friends in the service, I often wondered why it took so long for a reply to come back. I'm wondering no longer - - I know now.

In the past I was always fond of writing long letters and I intend this to be the longest I have yet written or expect to write as a soldier. Yes, I'm a soldier now - - I've fired my rifle.

I'm not writing this with the purpose of trying to induce you to write any letters to me because I know from experience that if you are not a letter writer at heart, you just can't do it. My idea is to send at least one good letter to everyone I can so that no one is slighted.

Now let me point out a fact or two to give an idea of the lack of time during basic training - - I received a package from home on Wednesday which I opened on Saturday night. On a Friday morning I received six letters which were read on Saturday night.

Personally, I think it is a good thing that we are kept really busy because time certainly seems to go by in a hurry. Army life isn't at all bad - - it is only what one makes of it. One can notice that those that do most of the squawking are those that do the least work - - you know the term, "Goldbrick".

I've sent a few cards and letters our and received a lot of nice ones in return and I may tell you something in this letter that I've written before. That can't be helped though.

I'm writing this on a Sunday, my day off, - - Did I say I liked Army life? - - I most certainly do because I think it is doing me a lot of good. I've e=ached lots of times, just like millions of others but when the pain leaves I generally feel a lot better.

I've finished five weeks of training so far which have been pretty well packed with different phases of learning. It is interesting because there is always something new to look forward to - - for instance, although it will be over when you receive this, there will be parades all over the country on May 30th - - I'll be marching too, 15 miles to be exact, with full pack, etc. up until now my longest walk was only half that.

I like to walk but I hate like anything to take these speed marches - - they are the ones where you walk for a distance and then run - - and keep that up for from two to four miles. I'm too short-winded and on my first run the pounding of my feet burst two blood vessels in my legs - - oh well.

Even my turn on KP turned out almost qualifying me for a Purple Heart. I was lifting a tub of water and bent the wrong way or some other fool thing and the result was that I pulled something out of joint in my back. I was taped up for a few days and took some treatments at the hospital until I was better.

Lots of funny things happen around here. They don't seem funny at the time, though. Take the night I was out visiting in another barracks - - I'd just been transferred to a new barracks myself that day - - I looked at the time and found that I had about five minutes before bed check so I ran back to my barracks, up to the second floor and in to bed just in time. The only thing was, my cot is on the first floor.

Right now I'm thinking about my wife and two kids because they are coming down to visit me soon - - Oh! Boy.

At anytime at all here, if one drops his rifle for any reason or other, the penalty is to sleep with it at night. I've never yet had that pleasure. However, I wrote home and told my family about it and so Donnie, the oldest boy, aged five, took his toy rifle to bed with him a few nights and said that was because his daddy was doing that.

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I've done a few camp shows the largest audience being about 2500 men and three women (I don't know how they got in). I also do quite a bit of small close-up magic for the officers, non-coms and enlisted men - - I don't know why they call us "enlisted men" - - I was drafted. I enjoy doing those things because it helps keep me in practice and keeps my hands limbered up.

I have been in Camp Wheeler for six weeks and have left it only once - - on a Sunday, to a lake. It was crowded with G.I.'s who were swimming, boating, dancing, or just plain wolfing - - me, I was different - - I kept on writing letters.

Things can't be so bad in the Army. After all, we have a party at least once a week. It is called the G.I. party. There are no refreshments and no women unless one has a very vivid imagination and can picture a broom or mop as a member of the fair sex - - need I say more?

Now we have the G.I. haircut. I thought when I left home that I wouldn't like it a bit - - now I get one about every two weeks. It isn't necessary after the first one, though. It is wonderful to crawl out of bed a 3:00, 4:00, 5:00 A.M. or whatever time the schedule calls for, run to the latrine (finally getting your eyes open) and throwing water on your face, run your hand through your hair and it is combed. If we don't have much time, which we seldom do, I don't bother running my hand through - - I figured I save about three and a half seconds that way.

Every morning the C.Q. (charge of quarters) comes in and blasts his brains out hollering, "Let's hit it and go" - - that's a short way of saying, "Get up." Of course, if you don't have the energy to hit the floor you don't have to worry. The C.Q. will see that you hit it, only your bed is on top of you. Some fun. That's another enjoyable experience I haven't had.

When we are marching we are to always stay in step. If you don't, you fall to the rear of the platoon - - later you also fall into the kitchen for some special training (?), only not in marching.

We have boys from all walks of life in here. There are those who have very little education and can read and write a bit, but not much. They make good soldiers, though. I think we have lots of swell boys in our platoons and our training cadre (that's the non-coms) are tops.

Some people write now and then and ask me to outline the details of training, such as weapons, etc. That I cannot do. Sorry.

Instead I'll talk about chow and mail call. Those are about the only two times when a soldier who thinks he is about dead finds out that he was only kidding himself - - boy, you should see them run then. I know, 'cause I always get there first. I think they will soon condemn sun glasses here. A large percentage of the boys are wearing them, mainly so they can sleep in classes out in the sun. I know, I have a pair myself.

Packages from home are another blessing. It is well to save the wrapping from it so that 10 minutes after you open it you can still remember that you had it. All in all, though, it is a lot of fun and we do get our share of laughs. At least I do.

I am lazy in one respect and so it costs me a bit more to live here. We have our laundry done once a week, but we also have two sets of fatigue suits (working clothes of a G.I.) which we must wash ourselves. I generally pay someone else to do mine.

Of course, we have our P-X, Service Club, Recreation Hall (where I am now), Theatres, and Gymnasium. What else, outside of family and friends, is there at home?

I think I have now covered everything pretty well.

All I ask now is that you don't look forward to a letter like this again. This is it.

Bye now,

From a Private in the
Greatest Army in the World.

Chuck

Guess I need to explain, when my Dad was drafted he was working, in addition to his day job, as a professional magician, hence the references to shows and audiences.

Thoughts

Author Unknown

Come to me, all who are weary (and having a bad day) and rest...on me! Matthew 11:28

It was an interesting day. I hadn't felt "on my game" if you know what I mean; I felt clumsy and out of sorts.

I left home in Oklahoma City to travel to Women of Faith. It seems like wherever I am traveling I have to go through Atlanta. Bill Gaither used to tell this joke: "When you die and go to heaven, you'll have to go through Atlanta first."

I arrived at the Atlanta airport and searched the screens for my next flight's gate. Realizing I had a bit of extra time, I decided to stop and get some coffee at Seattle's Best. Perhaps this would wake me up and help me feel a little less "off."

I placed my order and as I waited, I reached for a coffee cup sleeve only to knock all 100+ of them onto the airport floor. I bent over to begin to gather them up. The nice lady handed me my coffee – at which time I dropped it and it exploded all over the same floor. I felt horrible and began to get napkins to sop up the mess. One of the workers came out with a mop and bucket and began to clean up BOTH my messes.

I quietly slithered away and began to head to my gate thinking to myself, "Just get to the gate and sit down. Just don't touch anything else".

As I was trying to sneak away, I heard a voice behind me saying, "Ma'am? Ma'am?" I didn't want to think he was talking to me because honestly, I thought if he was talking to me he would probably scold me for being so careless. Finally I couldn't ignore him any longer since he was right behind me.

He was out of breath from running and said to me, "Ma'am? Why don't you come on back...come back and have one on us". I almost cried right there in Atlanta airport. I followed him back and they fixed me another mocha "on them" and he quietly said to me, "Ma'am, believe me, this happens all the time. It's no problem. Just enjoy your drink and have a nice day."

I've been thinking all day about that phrase "Come on back and have one on us." That's really how grace should feel. When we mess up and make mistakes, when we are having an off day, God isn't standing by ready to shake his finger at us in

rebuke. He chases after us and probably says, "Believe me; I see this all the time. Come on back and have one on me."

I love that about our God.

Note: This was forwarded us by our Angels in New Mexico, Peter and Mary Jane Bish who have been instrumental in efforts to send more than 150 care packages to our troops in Afghanistan since January 2011. They also took time from their schedule to visit with George and Margaret Cook during his stay in a recovery home recently.



Majestic Theatre

San Antonio Sights

2011



Bridge on the Riverwalk

Final Flight

I cannot begin to explain how relieved I am that I have not come across any new names to add to our list during the past month. It matters not when they passed, only that they are gone and that I have lost a Comrade-in-Arms.

Final Flight

By Harry Purcell

The ranks are getting thinner
with each passing day.
Faces drawn and wrinkled
our hair has turned grey.

The Wing is but a Squadron
and the Squadron just a Flight.
We dream of days of glory,
when we were young and bright.

For duty, honor, country
the words ring out so clear,
the ever present danger,
so imminent, so near!

As I gaze into your face,
your eyes are growing dim,
yet patriotic passion fires
are still aglow within!

Farewell my good comrade.
I loved you best of all.
For you carried out your orders
and answered to the call.

Our Forgotten Mechanics

Through the history of world aviation many names have come to the fore. Great deeds of the past in our memory will last as they're joined by more and more.

When man first started to labor in his quest to conquer the sky, he was designer, mechanic and pilot and he built a machine that would fly. But somehow the order got twisted, and then in the public's eye the only man that could be seen was the man who knew how to fly.

The pilot was everyone's hero, he was brave, he was bold, he was grand. As he stood by his battered old biplane with his goggles and helmet in hand. To be sure, these pilots all earned it, to fly you have to have guts. And they blazed their names in the hall of fame on wings with bailing wire struts.

But for each of these flying heroes, there were thousands of little renown, and these were the men who worked on the planes but who kept their feet on the ground. We all know the names of Lindbergh, and we've read of his flight to fame. But thin, if you can, of his maintenance man. Can you remember his name?

And think of our wartime heroes Gabreski, Jabara, and Scott and all the acclaim that they got. Can you tell me the names of their crew chiefs? A thousand to one you cannot.

Now pilots are highly trained people, and wings are not easily won. But without the work of the maintenance man, our pilots would march with a gun. So when you see mighty jet aircraft as they mark their way through the air, remember the grease-stained man with the wrench in his hand; he is the man who put them there.

Author Unknown



www.221st.org

We have come to the end of another month and there are only six weeks remaining until we once again gather to reminisce about those days so long ago when we were united in our own form of a "Band of Brothers". As each of our reunions draws near I am filled with questions that will only be answered once I arrive...Will my old friends be there this time? I wonder if there will be anyone new in San Antonio? What ever happened to, you know, the guy that...? The list goes on and on and I know that each of you has different questions to ask.

I know that Don Smith has mentioned that he would like all of you to bring your old photos with you to the reunion so that we can look at them and perhaps talk you into letting us borrow them to copy for use in Shotgun Blasts or on the Web Site. I would take this a step further, consider taking a few minutes or even a couple of hours to draft up your stories about the interesting and amusing

tales that you have from your time while serving with the 221st or while in Vietnam in general. We need to preserve our history and have it told in our words, not those of some individual who did not experience those times that we had in Southeast Asia.

I have located some additional historical records and will soon get into searching them to add more information to the site. While at the reunion I hope to speak to you as a group and explain what needs to be done and I am not proud, I will be asking for some volunteers to assist in putting it all together. Prepare yourself for my assault.

Feel free to contact me at any time with your questions or suggestions by e-mail or telephone.

Monte Caylor
221st Web Master



The Mission San Jose Church on the Mission Trail, San Antonio

Mekong Delta Vets Reunion

Once again, the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion Vietnam is sponsoring its:

Mekong Delta Reunion

Hosted by:

1-13th Aviation Regiment

1st Aviation Brigade, Fort Rucker

The reunion will be held at Fort Rucker , AL on Armed Forces Day weekend; **May 17 to 20, 2012...**

In the past our Fixed Wing units, the 221st RAC and the 199th RAC have not shown a lot of interest in this reunion due to the emphasis that was placed on the helicopter units of the battalion. It is now time that we put forth an effort to demonstrate that we were there with those Fling Wing units and carried our fair share of the load in the fight against the VC and NVA in the IV Corps region.

All of us need to return to our "home", Fort Rucker occasionally if only to view the change that has taken place in the nearly half century since we received our flight training. This may be the best opportunity we will have to do just this and to meet with friends from the helicopter units that responded so rapidly to our requests for assistance.

Please at least consider organizing as the Delta Birddogs and presenting a united front at this reunion. It would be impressive to see twenty or more Birddog pilots at this event representing all of us and telling the tales of the greatest little war bird ever built, the Cessna L-19/O-1 Birddog, to the folks gathered at Fort Rucker on this special weekend.

More information will be published in the next issue of *Shotgun Blasts...*

Links

A few more sites that you may want to check out.

74th RAC www aloft74th.org

183rd RAC www.183seahorse.org

184th RAC www.184rac.com

185th RAC www.angelfire.com

199th RAC www.swampfox199thrac.com

219th RAC www.219headhunters.com

220th RAC www.catkillers.org

221st RAC www.221st.org

And

1st Aviation Brigade

www.1stavnbde.com

OV-1 Mohawk Association

www.ov-1mohawkassociation.org

Army Otter-Caribou Association

www.otter-caribou.org

International Bird Dog Association

www.ibdaweb.com

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

www.vhpa.org

Army Aviation Association of America

www.quad-a.org

