



# Shotgun Blasts

The 221<sup>st</sup> Aviation Company – Then and Now



Volume 4, Issue 1

January 2012

# Happy New Year

## The Checklist

Following are excerpts from the book “Checklist Manifesto” by Atul Gawande that were forwarded to us by Hank Collins.

Hank states, “I always thought checklists were always here, and had no idea how it began, read on to learn a bit about it.”

On October 30, 1935, at Wright Air Field in Dayton, Ohio, the U.S. Army held a flight competition for airplane manufacturers vying to build the military’s next-generation long-range bomber. It wasn’t supposed to be much of a competition. In early evaluations, the Boeing Corporation’s gleaming aluminum alloy Model 299 had trounced the designs of Martin and Douglas. Boeing’s plane could carry five times as many bombs as the Army had requested; it could fly faster than previous bombers and almost twice as far. A Seattle newspaperman who had glimpsed the plane on a test flight over his city called it the “flying fortress,” and the name stuck. The flight “competition” according to the military historian Phillip Meilinger, was regarded as a mere formality. The Army planned to order at least sixty-five of the aircraft.

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

**Brothers in Arms – Always**

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A small crowd of Army brass and manufacturing executives watched as the Model 299 test plane taxied onto the runway. It was sleek and impressive, with a 103-foot wingspan and four engines jutting out from the wings, rather than the usual two. The plane roared down the tarmac, lifted off smoothly and climbed sharply to three hundred feet. Then it stalled, turned on one wing, and crashed in a fiery explosion. Two of the five crew members died, including the pilot, Major Ployer P. Hill.

An investigation revealed that nothing mechanical had gone wrong. The crash had been due to “pilot error,” the report said. Substantially more complex than previous aircraft, the new plane required the pilot to attend to the four engines, each with its own oil-fuel mix, the retractable landing gear, the wing flaps, electric trim tabs that needed adjustment to maintain stability at different airspeeds, and constant-speed propellers whose pitch had to be regulated with hydraulic controls, among other features. While doing all this, Hill had forgotten to release a new locking mechanism on the elevator and rudder controls. The Boeing model was deemed, as a newspaper put it, “too much airplane for one man to fly.” The Army Air Corps declared Douglas’s smaller design the winner. Boeing nearly went bankrupt.

Still, the Army purchased a few aircraft from Boeing as test planes, and some insiders remained convinced that the aircraft was flyable. So a group of test pilots got together and considered what to do.

What they decided *not* to do was almost as interesting as what they actually did. They did not require Model 299 pilots to undergo longer training. It was hard to imagine having more experience and expertise than

Major Hill, who had been the Air Corps chief of flight testing. Instead, they came up with an ingeniously simple approach: they created a pilot’s checklist. Its mere existence indicated how far aeronautics had advanced. In the early years of flight, getting an aircraft into the air might have been nerve-racking but it was hardly complex. Using a checklist for takeoff would no more have occurred to a pilot than to a driver backing a car out of the garage. But flying this new plane was too complicated to be left to the memory of any one person, however expert.

The test pilots made their list simple, brief, and to the point – short enough to fit on an index card, with step-by-step checks for takeoff, flight, landing, and taxiing. It had the kind of stuff that all pilots know to do. They check that the brakes are released, that the instruments are set, that the door and windows are closed, that the elevator controls are unlocked – dumb stuff. You wouldn’t think it would make that much difference. But with the checklist in hand, the pilots went on to fly the Model 299 a total of 1.8 million miles without one accident. The Army ultimately ordered almost thirteen thousand of the aircraft, which it dubbed the B-17. And, because flying the behemoth was now possible, the Army gained a decisive air advantage in the Second World War, enabling its devastating bombing campaign across Nazi Germany.

Much of our work today has entered its own B-17 phase. Substantial parts of what software designers, financial managers, firefighters, police officers, lawyers, and most certainly clinicians do are now too complex for them to carry out reliably from memory alone. Multiple fields, in other words, have become too much airplane for one person to fly.



## The Lighter Side

I know how difficult it is to fumble around with no idea what you want to do or resolve to do when the New Year arrives. To take the guesswork out of this I have listed a few Resolutions that I feel you can attain with little or no effort which will eliminate that sense of failure when you are unable to stick to your plans.

Here we go.

In 2012, I resolve to...

- Gain weight. At least 30 pounds
- Procrastinate more. Starting tomorrow.
- Get in a whole new rut!
- Create loose ends.
- Take a vacation to someplace important: like to see the largest ball of twine.
- Get further in debt.
- Not believe politicians.
- Not swim with piranhas or sharks.
- Stay off the International Space Station.
- Wait around for opportunity.
- Read less. Makes you think
- Never make New Year's resolutions again.



## Letters

Please, send us your feedback so that we know if we are headed in the right direction with *Shotgun Blasts*, we cannot be offended, we've been around far too long.

### 4 Dec 2011

Although I am not a member of your "group", I read your newsletter with interest. One thing bothers me: your newsletter is dedicated in part, "to the ladies that stood behind us". The lady I married in 1964 has stood **BESIDE** me ever since, including two tours in `nam and 28 moves during **OUR** Army service. Thanks.....Dave

*Note: Dave Shriner is a long time member of the Army Otter-Caribou Assn. which receives a courtesy copy of the Shotgun Blasts each month and circulates it among interested members.*

Ed. Replies: Thanks Dave for pointing out an error in the newsletter, I am awed that none of our members pointed it out to me and really surprised that it was not discovered until now.

I have nobody to blame for the oversight and I do hope that all of the wives (particularly mine) will accept my sincerest apology. Please note that the dedication has been corrected for the January 2012 edition.....Don Smith

### 6 Dec 2011

Wow, what a great newsletter! I scan read all of it and some of your articles in detail. This is a great tool for sharing information with your unit guys.

Thanks for sharing.

Bob Brewster  
Head Hunter 37, `70 - `71

*Note: Bob Brewster is a 219<sup>th</sup> RAC Head Hunter and a member of their reunion committee.*



## Chaplain's Corner

*"He is, ... our Elder Brother in the Faith."*

**By Ned Moore, Shotgun Chaplain**

There were many in the First Century who believed that Christians were polytheistic – having more than one god. There are many, down thru the centuries even today who believe the same.

One day, and an Annual Training (Summer Camp), at a Post and date which have slipped my memory, I found myself in conversation with a few young soldiers, who seemed determined to prove their point by getting me to agree that they were correct. So, the discussion went something like this, if I recall correctly:

**Specialist:** "C'mon, Chappy, admit it – you have three gods."

**Chaplain:** "Nope, sorry Specialist. That is just not how it is."

**Specialist:** "Aw Chappy, You do this Father, Son and Holy Ghost thing."

**Chaplain:** "Yup, but let me ask you something. You are obviously someone's son, right?"

He nods.

**Chaplain:** "I see a wedding ring on your hand, so you are a husband – Do you have any kids?"

**Specialist:** "Yes sir, a boy and a girl."

**Chaplain:** "So, you are a father – and hopefully you are a dad too (smiling to the nodding, knowing smiles). You are an Army Reservist and I expect that you are at least one person's civilian employee. You may be a brother as well.

Tell me young man, how many people are you?"

**Specialist:** "I am just me, sir".

**Chaplain:** "Right, but you are seen in several different roles by any number of people, are you not?"

**Specialist:** "OK, sir – I see where you are going with this."

**Chaplain:** "I am sure you do – there are not three gods for the Christian, but just one God who ministers to us in at least three ways – The Fatherhood of God, Creator and Redeemer, The LORD of the universe, the Omnipresence of God.

Jesus, The Son, is the Physical, Visible Presence of God - as St Paul said, He was the one" ... in whom dwelt the fullness of the Godhead ..." (Colossians 1:19, 2:9) and too, He is, as some have called, our Elder Brother in the Faith.

The Holy Spirit who is the Counselor, Teacher and many other titles is in fact the Conscious Presence of God -The Spirit of God - who lives with and in us daily.

Not three gods, but God coming to meet our needs in relationship with Him in three ways.

It all fits into what one of my professors called the Concept of Corporate Personality. Reading of God, Moses and the People of Israel in the desert – God speaks to Moses as if he is Israel. Israel speaks to Moses as if he were God, as does Gideon (Judges 6:22) speak to God's Angel as if he were God.

In this context, when you answer the phone at your company, you most likely say your company's name first and may add your name. To the caller – you are The Company, and how you conduct yourself reflects directly on the entire corporation – one way or another. If you call another company, only the names not the process are changed.

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Many people look around our world and decide that since they cannot “see” God that God isn’t. Actually, God’s presence lives in His people (Psalms 22:3). You may not “see” God with your physical eyes, but you are indeed seen and He does desire you to see Him with the eyes of Faith.

I see your First Sergeant looking for you. Whether God has sent him to rescue you from me or not, I don’t know, but I would like to visit with you some more – and have you tell me about your journey in this life – because right now, I think you had best hustle, to prevent Top’s wrath from finding you. “

**Specialist:** “So long sir, see you later.”

**Chaplain:** “I will look forward to it.”

Thank you LORD, for questioning, answer-seeking hearts.

Ned



## Recollections at the Yule Log

Several weeks ago, I returned home to hear an answering machine message from Don Smith. He wanted to know if I was the Neil Smart who’d served with the 221<sup>st</sup> Aviation Company in 1971. After 40 years, it was not a call I was expecting. A quick phone chat with Don rekindled four decades of recollections as the last commander of Eyes Over the Delta. For a few minutes, I was 40 years younger and part of a group of remarkable young men spread out over the Mekong Delta serving the various district advisors and their headquarters. Their bravery was legendary and their work was essential to the success of those whom they served. As an Engineer Company commander on the ground with the Delta’s 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in 1967-8, I, myself, had known and gotten support from Shotgun pilots.

I went to my library and spent a half hour with my well worn album of the few photographs I managed to bring home and that survived the dozen more moves. It begins with the unforgettable day I received the Shotgun standard at Vinh Long. It ends with the flight of nearly forty Birddogs- and the Beaver - I lead from Vinh Long to Long Thanh North to turn them over to the VNAF. ( NOTE: I’ve always wondered sadly if it was one of them that we watched ignominiously shoved off the side of a carrier during TV reports covering the flight from Saigon.)

In between the album’s opening and closing photos are familiar faces I’ve perused countless times - but whose names have escaped me one-by-one over the years. Those few moments affirmed,

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## Help Wanted

**We are seeking Shotguns that are willing to give of themselves by participating as active members of the 2013 Reunion Planning and Organization Committee. An Equal Opportunity Employer**

### This Month in Military History

- JANUARY 1*      *GEORGE WASHINGTON UNVEILED THE GRAND UNION FLAG, THE FIRST NATIONAL FLAG IN AMERICA IN 1776*
- EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION FREED SLAVES IN THE STATES REBELLING AGAINST THE UNION IN 1863*
- JANUARY 11*      *ALABAMA SECEDED FROM THE UNION IN 1861*
- JANUARY 12*      *CONGRESS AUTHORIZED THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE AGAINST IRAQ FOLLOWING THE INVASION OF KUWAIT IN 1991*
- JANUARY 16*      *THE FIRST GULF WAR AGAINST IRAQ BEGAN IN 1991*
- JANUARY 23*      *NORTH KOREA SEIZED THE USS PUEBLO IN THE SEA OF JAPAN IN 1968.*
- JANUARY 27*      *U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE VIETNAM WAR ENDED IN 1973*
- JANUARY 28*      *U.S. COAST GUARD CREATED BY AN ACT OF CONGRESS IN 1915*
- JANUARY 30*      *MARKED THE BEGINNING OF THE TET OFFENSIVE BY THE VIET CONG AND NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY IN 1968.*

### Dates to Remember

- JANUARY 1*      *NEW YEAR'S DAY*
- ELLIS ISLAND DAY*
- BETSY ROSS' BIRTHDAY 1752*
- PAUL REVERE'S BIRTHDAY 1735*
- JANUARY 2*      *ROSE BOWL AND PARADE*
- JANUARY 6*      *EPIPHANY OR TWELFTH NIGHT*
- JANUARY 8*      *ELVIS PRESLEY'S BIRTHDAY 1935*
- JANUARY 16*      *MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY*
- JANUARY 17*      *BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S BIRTHDAY 1706*
- JANUARY 22*      *CELEBRATION OF LIFE DAY*
- JANUARY 24*      *STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS*

AND

LEST WE FORGET, THE ENTIRE MONTH OF  
JANUARY HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS:

**NATIONAL VOLUNTEER BLOOD DONOR MONTH**



## Ramblings

...the green eyes of the snake looked very big.

By Bob McKenzie, Shotgun 36, '65 - '66

As we all know, the 65 – 66 Shotguns set the stage and broke the trail and established the standards for all others to follow. There were the trying times, the good times and even some times that showed even we “the best” were not infallible. I present two instances where there was some doubt, some fear, some second thoughts and yes lessons learned.

One day, Greg Colliton and I left Vinh Long for a flight, the reason buried in an old mind. Everything was going well and I think Greg did some flying from the back seat. All of a sudden the engine started to cough and sputter. I had to keep moving the gas lever to and fro to keep the engine running smoothly. I called the tower and asked for a precautionary landing. **NO EMERGENCY WAS DECLARED.**

When we finally got to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon area a crew chief came running over to see what had happened, after it was explained he asked, “**DID YOU SWITCH FUEL TANKS?**” With hesitation I answered “**NO**”. When I looked at the fuel handle, it was not directly on either tank. **AS AN IP, I HAD A VERY RED FACE** and wondered how that could have happened. Did I or Greg switch the fuel handle incorrectly; was it moved to check either one of us out?? I do not know. What I know is that as an IP, I should have automatically moved the fuel lever from one to the other tank; **I BEAR THE SHAME AND RED FACE.** I however learned that no matter how much you know about flying or the aircraft that even though being well trained such things can happen.

On another day two of us left Vinh Long for Soc Trang, I will not name the other pilot as he also was an IP. As we were flying and coming on the river and soccer field we had been talking about different maneuvers you

could do in the O-1. Part of the discussion dealt with the spin and how tight you could get and the best way to recover.

We climbed to 2500 feet and put the baby into a spin (both of us had controls) and it got very tight. The normal recovery did not seem to work. Then both of us were on the controls but still no response, I would not say panic set in, but sweat appeared on our brows. Together we pushed the sticks forward then back with full rudder and the ground was rapidly approaching. I am not sure what specific maneuver of both sticks working together started the recovery but I can tell you as we were coming out of the spin that the green eyes of the snake looked very big...Oh, it was a very small snake.

Neither of us mentioned the incident for a long time as we came to grips with the fact that even two of the Army's best (we thought we were) could be fully challenged...and that overconfidence can bring the worst situations or endings.

My hat is off to all members of the 65 – 66 **EYES OVER THE DELTA.** You are the heroes.

Bob



**Note:** The error, of course, was two IP's in the same aircraft.

## Final Flight

It appears that we have made it through another month in which we did not have to report a loss. It is such a relief when these all too brief moments arrive.

### The Fallen Soldier

by Patricia Krull

Don't weep for me  
O' Land of the free  
When it was my time to fall  
'Twas for my country's call  
'Twas for the land that I loved,  
I did freely give  
And in her freedom  
And her courage  
I'll continue to live

*Note: Written in 1993 and dedicated to the brave men who died in Somalia but applicable to any time and any war.*

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once again, that my Shotgun experience, though brief and unconventionally ended, was an unforgettable highlight of a life in the military.

The first issue of Shotgun Blasts was December's. Don sent it within moments of our phone call. The list of e-mail addresses brought good news with addresses for names I could not forget. One was a Company Ops Officer any commander would have wanted on his team. One was our Phu Quoc sector pilot, as I recall. Also there was a former Shotgun who later became one of my flight instructors in Birddog phase. My wife still speaks fondly of his lovely wife. There was sad news, too. The Honor Flight included the fellow who checked me out in the Beaver. I'm sure that with Don's help, more names will return. I also hope that any whose names may have slipped my memory will mail or call and bring me up to speed on how things turned out for you.

Don's e-mail included an invitation to join other previous commanders in sending Yuletide greetings to all – belated, though, they might be. These initial ramblings constitute that effort for 2011. It sends to all Shotguns Diane's and my best wishes for a Happy and healthy 2012.

Neil Smart, Shotgun 6, 1971



**Ed. Note:** We located Neil a bit too late to get his Christmas greeting in last month's *Blasts* so here it is. Hope all of you join me in a "Welcome Back" for our final Six.



At least our Green Tape matched the paint.

## *Shotgun Blasts*

### Missing

Need some help folks. It seems that one of our members has gone missing...again. Looks like **Tracy W. Forehand** has finally retired and left his home in Daleville, AL where he lived for some time.

Like so many folks do, I am sure he let the telephone company, the power company and even the cable company have a forwarding address...but he forgot to let the Shotgun Blasts know where he was off to.

If you have any information as to his new whereabouts please let us know so that we can get him back on the roster and we can stay in touch with Tracy, our Comrade-in-Arms.

Thanks

### Birthdays

Our Shotgun Brothers and Sisters that will be turning another leaf in their personal calendars and, rapidly approaching that always magical number 29.

January 1	Catherine Shafer	Lewiston, ID
January 4	David Dillman	Freeland, WA
January 4	Knight (Mike) Tuttle	West Linn, OR
January 5	John Leonard	Orlando, FL
January 8	Chuck Chase	Houston, TX
January 17	Lou Sokowoski	Commerce, GA
January 20	Sarah Mulcahy	Erwin, NC
January 21	George Williams	Pinetop, AZ
January 22	Richard Pribnow	Marysville, WA
January 24	Charles Calvert	Fairborn, OH
January 24	Bobby Gee	Lakewood, WA
January 31	Don Modica	Springfield, MO

## Links

A few sites that you may want to check out.

- 74<sup>th</sup> RAC     [www.aloft74th.org](http://www.aloft74th.org)  
183<sup>rd</sup> RAC    [www.183seahorse.org](http://www.183seahorse.org)  
184<sup>th</sup> RAC    [www.184rac.com](http://www.184rac.com)  
185<sup>th</sup> RAC    [www.angelfire.com](http://www.angelfire.com)  
199<sup>th</sup> RAC    [www.219headhunters.com](http://www.219headhunters.com)  
219<sup>th</sup> RAC    [www.219headhunters.com](http://www.219headhunters.com)  
220<sup>th</sup> RAC    [www.catkillers.org](http://www.catkillers.org)  
221<sup>st</sup> RAC    [www.221st.org](http://www.221st.org)

And

**1<sup>st</sup> Aviation Brigade**  
[www.1stavnbd.com](http://www.1stavnbd.com)

**OV-1 Mohawk Association**  
[www.ov-1mohawkassociation.org](http://www.ov-1mohawkassociation.org)

**Army Otter-Caribou Association**  
[www.otter-caribou.org](http://www.otter-caribou.org)

**International Bird Dog Association**  
[www.ibdaweb.com](http://www.ibdaweb.com)

**Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association**  
[www.vhpa.org](http://www.vhpa.org)

**Army Aviation Association of America**  
[www.quad-a.org](http://www.quad-a.org)

Take a few minutes to check out the **new IBDA** web site, a real improvement. While there you can join the organization that has helped us with our reunions in the past and will no doubt continue to do so. Check out the Bark, one of our own, **Chuck Chase**, is shown this month.



## The Last Shot

Oh well, I am now down to my last round and am hoping that there will be some input from you, the reader, for the next issue of your newsletter. There are tales out there that really should be told and take my word for it, we will not chide you for telling those tales now. Just put them on paper, Word format if available to you and e-mail to the Shotgun Blasts at:

[Shotgun-8A@hotmail.com](mailto:Shotgun-8A@hotmail.com)

or send them by Snail Mail to:

Don Smith

17815 Yellow Birch Trail  
Humble, TX 77346

**Next Item:** If you are an IBDA member please send me an e-mail to let me know. I just don't have the time to go through the membership roster to find you and I believe our participation helps to keep the group alive.

**Nostalgia:** I know that many of you, like me, are children of the 40s and as such you still enjoy the music (?) of the 50s and 60s. Check out this site for some of the sounds of **OUR** time.

<http://www.the60sofficialsite.com>

You need to work your way to the juke box and the music selections but the price is right.

**Noteworthy:** Norm Wood, our Brother from the 199<sup>th</sup> RAC brought the following site to our attention. It does have some notes of interest but the address is a long one. Take a look at it.

<http://talkingproud.us/Military/Birddog/BirddogIntro.html>

**“Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy.” Benjamin Franklin**

