



MY FLIGHT CREW

by Jerry Baxter



Left to right - Capt. Gosnell (P), A/IC Clapper (LM), T/Sgt Potrige (AG), Capt. Kammar (Nav), S/Sgt Baxter (FE), 1/Lt Cole (CP), A/IC Andrews (AG)

This was my flight crew when I was stationed at Da Nang Vietnam, 1966-1967.

This was taken just before Lt. Cole received his upgrade to A/C (Lt. Jack Cole Retired as Brig. Gen.)

I hope someday to get some or all of them to visit the Coffee Shop. They all helped to get me home safe.

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Air Commandos



When General of the Army Henry H. "Hap" Arnold created an elite war-fighting unit during World War II, and called them "Air Commandos," he had no idea an Air Force tradition was being set in motion. A tradition few 'bluesuiters' know about today.

The setting was Japanese-occupied Burma, 1943. Geography made a "textbook" frontal assault on the Japanese impossible, and dictated the British take an unorthodox approach to the fight. Their answer was a commando unit that would use unconventional "hit and run" tactics to confuse the enemy, and destroy their lines of communication and resupply.

The concept depended heavily on air support, and with most of their resources committed to Europe, the British looked to America for assistance.

Arnold met with British Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, the supreme allied commander for the theater, to discuss the air support plan. To honor Mountbatten's earlier leadership of British commandos, Arnold coined the phrase "Air Commandos" as a name for the unique unit created to fill the requirement.

The 1st Air Commando Group, as it came to be known, was a self-contained composite force of fighters, cargo planes, light aircraft, helicopters and support people. The 1st ACG, which adopted the motto "Anytime, Anywhere," successfully attacked the enemy from the air, resupplied British commandos on the ground, and airlifted injured out of the battle area, eventually driving the Japanese out of Burma.

So what does any of this have to do with the Air Force?

In April 1961 a unit was created at Hurlburt Field, Fla., by then-Air Force Chief-of-Staff Gen. Curtis E. LeMay to train Air Force members to fight unconventional, "non-textbook" air warfare. This was in response to Soviet-supported insurgencies springing up in Third World countries.

Borrowing the namesake from its Army brother, the unit trained "Air Commandos" and had a two-fold purpose: counterinsurgency training and combat operations. It was the first unit of its kind in the Air Force.

"The Air Commando concept was to have a self sufficient, self-contained force that could deploy anywhere in the world and conduct operations," said retired Brig. Gen. Harry C. "Heinie" Aderholt, a





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commander of Air Commandos in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War.

From air dropping agents deep in North Korea during the Korean War, to commanding clandestine flights into Tibet during the anti-communist guerrilla uprising, to helping plan the Bay of Pigs invasion, Aderholt has had unique experiences qualifying him to talk about operations that were often carried out in secret.

Air Commandos like Aderholt operated in wars at locations worldwide, but it was in the Vietnam War that commandos made some of their greatest contributions.

Initially deployed to Bien Hoa Air Base in 1961 as part of Operation Farm Gate, Air Commandos flew combat missions with South Vietnamese pilots, training them to conduct counterinsurgency warfare from the sky in the AT-28. As a result, Air Commandos flew some of the first combat missions in the conflict.

Operations required specialized equipment, Aderholt explained. Propeller-driven aircraft, like the AT-28, and others like the A-1 Sky raider, were better for the job than fast-moving jets.

"In a jet, you burn fuel at an incredible rate, and you go too fast to maintain sight of a target. In these aircraft, pilots could remain over a target for longer periods, and maintain visual contact," Aderholt said.

In response to requests for support in countering North Vietnam's intrusion into Laos with the Ho Chi Minh trail, Air Commandos trained Laotian and Thai pilots to interdict the supply line in Operation Water Pump.

Counterinsurgency operations expanded to include combat operations directly supporting U.S. ground forces, more of which were being committed to the war.

The need for close air support increased as the Vietcong, the South Vietnamese communist sympathizers conducting insurgency in South Vietnam, attacked and often overran friendly encampments.

The "gunship" was born out of this requirement, and Air Commandos were the ones to turn its heavy firepower on the enemy.

The AC-47, was a modified C-47 firing three multi-barrel mini-guns out side windows, was the first gunship. The AC-119 and later AC-130 brought technological advances and increased effectiveness to the gunship idea, including night-vision equipment and heavier armament, some of which are still used today.

"The gunship was an amazing airplane, not a single friendly fortress was ever given up to the enemy when a gunship was overhead," Aderholt said. "I think we should have gotten them sooner and made more of them. It would have changed the outcome of the war in my opinion."

While "truck kill" statistics generated by Air Force leadership showed Air Commandos were more effective than conventional forces at interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail, Aderholt said he met more than his share of resistance from all-jet force advocates while trying to get the resources required to fight.

At the peak of their strength during Vietnam, the Air Commandos never accounted for more than 5 percent of the total Air Force effort. Yet five of the 12 Medals of Honor awarded to Air Force people during the war went to Air Commando/Special Operations people.

In July 1968 the Special Air Warfare Center at Hurlburt Field was redesignated the USAF Special Operations Force. Subordinate units were redesignated special operations wings and squadrons, and all reference to "Air Commandos" was dropped.

Aderholt, who was the last general officer to leave Southeast Asia, remains a strong advocate for special operations.

"Special operations seems to be one of those areas that nobody wants to talk about, until it's really needed, that is - then it gets called on big time.

"Look at special operations today, for example; these people are gone TDY a majority of the time. There is obviously a need."

by Capt. Timothy Bailey





Happy Birthday Wishes to everyone who had a birthday in September.

Remember, the day you were born God saw you and it was love at first sight!

Cheryl Ann

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ARMY OCS

Army Officer Candidate School (OCS) is a 14-week program which graduates commissioned officers in the United States Army.

Army OCS was established in 1941 to provide Infantry officers for World War II. Through all of the years OCS has remained an important commissioning source for the Army. Officer Candidate School (OCS) is located at Fort Benning, GA and is the Army's only active duty Officer Candidate School, commissioning over 800 lieutenants annually. An additional 650 National Guard candidates train there each summer.

by Daniel R. Cauthen

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NEW OFFICER CANDIDATE

I will be summarizing Daniel's letters weekly and emailing out a Newsletter. It will be called the DAN Weekly Report (Daniel's ARMNewsletter). Cute, huh?

Here is a short summary of what he will be doing...

His wish list (1st picks) consists of being stationed at Fort Bragg and being branched Infantry.

His schedule...

- 9 weeks- Basic Training Course (BTC)
- 14 weeks- Officer Candidate School (OCS)
- X weeks- Advanced Individual Training (AIT)
- hopefully- Infantry Officer Basic Course (IOBC)

The DAN Weekly Report

The following message is Daniel's (Daniel Cauthen) first letter after officially leaving for the ARMY. Me (Jennifer Honeycutt), Daniel's Mom and Dad (Lynn and Ray) took Daniel Wednesday, March 14th to the MEPS (Military Entrance Processing Station) at 4:30 am. We watched as they shouted the rules of the MEPS to the soldiers and watched Daniel walk through the doors. Initially we thought Daniel was riding in a bus all the way to Fort Benning, GA, but since it was only him and another guy, they were allowed to fly. Daniel's first week at Benning will be processing.

Wednesday 3/14/07

Well, so far so good! The day is going surprisingly well. I am sitting in a leather recliner sipping on a cold Diet Coke at the USO in Charlotte Douglass Int'l Airport! It's about 3:50 pm and my plane leaves in about 3 hours for Atlanta. We will then take a Bus from there to Ft. Benning. Here at the USO, which is a lounge for those in the Armed Forces, they have snacks, drinks, computers, and extremely nice volunteers. I've already talked to Jennifer and emailed her twice and I haven't even left yet! God bless the USO!

I have also met a guy that's going with me to Benning. His name is Brent Miller and he's a really nice guy. He's going to OCS as well and starts when I do so we will be together for a while. He graduated from UNC back in May of last year and wants to branch MI (Military Intelligence). I am very excited about meeting him and feel lucky to have someone going through the exact same thing as me. Miller and I are going to go grab some food with our \$16 meal vouchers at Chili's here in the airport. I would like to get a beer but if I show up in Columbus, GA with beer on my breath they might make me start digging my own grave, so I better not drink that beer.

All in all I am feeling lucky right now. Things are going great! I'm sure the real fun will start when I get to Benning later tonight. More to come on that tomorrow! It was hard walking into MEPS this morning with my Mom, Dad, and Sweetheart watching me go, but everything is working out just fine so far, as if this is what's meant to be. I believe it is and I know that God will be watching over me all the way.

I hope this was some-what informative and thank you for supporting Daniel,

Jennifer (more to follow)





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When You Just Have to Trust Your Pilot



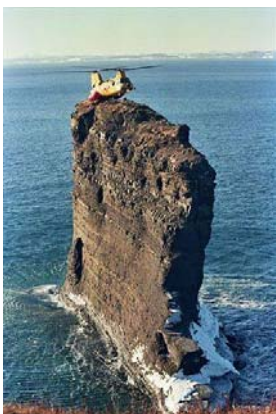
Tioman Island, off the coast of Malaysia



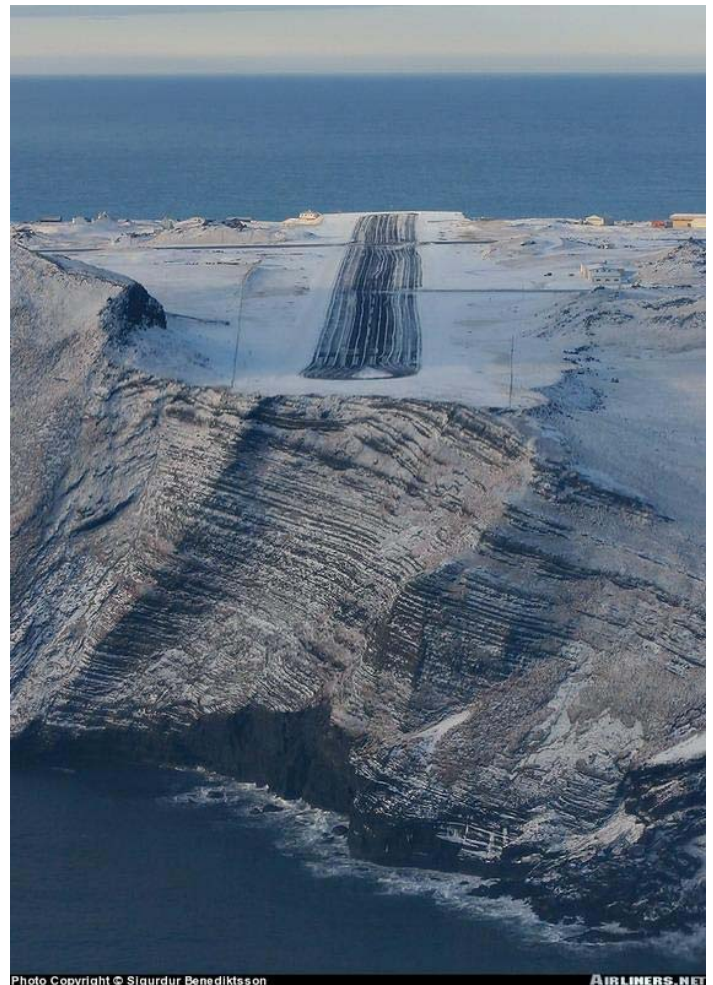
Wake Island, Pacific Ocean

A rock, off the coast of Greenwood (Canadian Military Labrador Helicopter)

Thanks to Anne McCutcheon for the email.



Macao International Airport



Kuujuaraapik, Quebec

