When Eastern introduced the Martin 404 to the fleet it was named The Silver Falcon. At that time planes did not have split configuration, but were either all tourist or all first class. From then on, until we finally adopted split configuration aircraft, all tourist planes were Silver Falcons and all first class planes were Golden Falcons. The logo and the name seemed appropriate for our new organization and we adopted it when The Silver Falcons were first organized.
The opinions expressed in The rEAL Word are the opinions of individual members and do not express the opinions of the BOD or the organization.

The Silver Falcons is a group of former Eastern Airlines Pilots and Flight Attendants who honored the picket line in 1989. It is incorporated and registered as a nonprofit organization in the State of Georgia. The Silver Falcons is also registered as a tax-exempt organization with the IRS.

Dues are $25 per year for Charter members and family members. A life membership may be purchased for $500. Dues and all correspondence should be mailed to: The Silver Falcons, P.O. Box 71372, Newnan, GA 30271.

A quarter page ad for one year (Four issues) is $250. A half page ad, either horizontal or vertical, is $500 a year. Every attempt will be made to put these ads on the outside of the page rather than toward the middle. The back cover and the inside of the front cover will be offered for full page ads only and will cost $1000 a year. If you have a special event that needs attention for a short time, we will accept single issue ads at $62.50 for a quarter page, $125 for a half page, and $250 for a full page (if available). We will not decrease the content of the newsletter, but will increase its size to accommodate our advertisers. Every attempt will be made to insure that there is no more than one ad per page. The editor will have the right to reject any ad that he deems objectionable, although we do not anticipate this as a problem. All ads must be in black and white since we do not have color capability at this time.

It will be the responsibility of the advertiser to supply a print-ready ad to the editor at least 30 days prior to publication of the newsletter. Every effort will be made to accommodate any specific requests you may have.

Publication dates are January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15 each year. All materials can be mailed to The Silver Falcons, P.O. Box 71372, Newnan, GA 30271, or contact Dick Borrelli at this address, by fax at (770) 254-0179, or by E-Mail at conob@newnanpc.com if you plan to participate. Deadline for ads is at least 30 days prior to the publication dates stated above.

In place of a President’s letter in this issue of The rEAL Word our President has chosen to update the continuing efforts to produce an Eastern Pilot’s memorial. Please read the correspondence chain below and let Sandy, Joe, Jerry, or me know your feelings and suggestions. Jerry needs any seniority lists from the 1950s to double check for accuracy. This seems like a practical solution to the problem and will be a one time permanent solution and should put the matter to bed. Anyone can get a PDF of the list from Jerry on request to check it personally.

Ladies and Gentlemen of The Silver Falcons,

Dick Borrelli, Editor

Ladies and Gentlemen of The Silver Falcons,

I am going to defer this issue of the President’s letter to bring a request for help in organizing the EAL Pilots Memorial. If you can help Jerry Frost to proof the seniority list, especially by providing him with seniority lists from the 1950’s, it will be a start in having a definite plan for a final resolution. Many lists had pilots that did not make it out of probation and those in the class would have knowledge of this. There is little sympathy for our airline’s demise so it is up to the surviving pilots to leave our mark for history.

Fraternally,
C.R. Shoop, President

Dick,

To give you a “heads-up”, I think I now have compiled the complete list of every pilot who flew for Eastern up to March 1988. So far 6,741!!

Obviously we are not counting any pilot hired during the strike. I found a data entry company up in Ohio who painstakingly typed in many Seniority lists from 1941 to 1988 with overlapping duplicates for error checking. From those 18,000+ entries I have reduced it down to the 6,767.

I have been in touch with the foundry who will create the bronze plates with these names engraved. I know we are missing pilots as I am still unable to obtain any Seniority lists of the 1950’s but am still looking.

I’ll continue to keep you and the Silver Falcons informed.

Jerry Frost

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As most will recall there has been considerable discussion over the “Eastern Memorial” plaque in the Atlanta North Terminal. It has been a huge financial burden and is now all but out of space, with no room to expand. Smithsonian wants a fortune to host such memorials.

Briefly, the allotted space which the plaque now occupies will be full if or when the pilots who passed in 2008 are added.
No absolute firm decisions have been made, but due to the foregoing it is being considered that the current plaques be “replaced” by an Eastern Pilot List, for the period prior to Lorenzo.

It is hoped to make it as complete a list as possible of all pilots who flew for Eastern Air Lines since E.R. Brown way back in 1928 up through March 31, 1988.

Jerry Frost has been hard at work assembling the names to be recorded on the new plaques that would replace the current ones and not occupy any more space.

Jerry says he already has assembled 6,741 names, but is hopeful that someone may have some seniority lists from the 1950s, that they can share.

This is an Eastern pilot effort, not a Silver Falcons or REPA project.

The plaques will contain just our names with a small third cast plate with appropriate text of honor and history.

United has their Walk of Fame memorial at Dulles.

If you can offer any help with name and date gathering please contact Jerry Frost at: gvfrost@comcast.net

Thanks very much,
Sandy McCulloh

Greetings to all Silver Falcons and best wishes to all for a great 2011.

As we are entering 2011, I want to express my personal thanks to everyone. When the organization was formed in September, 1996, many members donated a good amount of their money to get The Silver Falcons going. This generosity still exists today. Because so many members have donated to the Flower Fund, we have been able to offer charitable donations and flowers to members who have experienced illness or are deceased. At times, the Flower Fund has become depleted causing a negative cash flow.

The Silver Falcon membership has come through with ample donations to offset any shortages in the Flower Fund. This is absolutely wonderful! You have shown the true meaning of caring for your fellow members.

Our 2010 Convention in Atlanta was a huge success! The Marriott facility was really very good and Hank Sanak and Bill Frank did an excellent job in handling our convention.

See you in 2011.

Sincerely,

Joe Zito,
Finance Officer,
The Silver Falcons
Dear Sirs,

I may have the answer to a query that appeared in the Winter 2007 issue of The rEALWord. I’ve posted the query below. I don’t see any way to reach the authors, so I’m sending this to you.

An incident very like this was described in an autobiography of a WWII pilot. Unfortunately I’m out of the house right now and don’t have the book, but I can track it down if they are interested. It includes a different account of what happened to the pilot. (However, it might have been a similar incident that happened to someone else.

Also, I’d like to put a short authors’ query in your newsletter, for a book I’m writing? Is there a way to do that.

Thanks
Roger Bohn

STUDENT PILOTS DON’T JUST DISAPPEAR, MAYBE YOU CAN HELP US SOLVE THIS?

On 3 November 1943, a Vultee BT-13A (s/n 41-22638) was landed without damage 25 miles east of Rocky Point (Punta Penasaca), Sonora, Mexico. Student pilot A/C Maurice Herzog (service number 38428453) was piloting the aircraft on a triangular cross country training flight from Marana AAF, Arizona to Safford, Az and back to Marana. On the third leg, he apparently became lost (having overshot Marana?), ran out of fuel, and was forced to land in Mexico. Cadet Herzog then disappeared (forever?).

The aircraft was not discovered until 14 November 1943. It was not damaged. It was refueled, a “temporary runway” was completed, and it was flown back to Marana. A ground and air search failed to locate Cadet Herzog. The Form I and Form 1A were missing from the airplane, and on the floor of the aircraft was a Mexican Tequila bottle full of water which indicated that “the airplane had been visited by someone who left water for one purpose or another.” USAAF referred the case of the missing pilot to Army Intelligence and the F.B.I.

The Report of Aircraft Accident does not specify Herzog’s date of birth or hometown. He was in Class 62, Training Group 14, Marana AAF. 89.50 total training hours. Visibility was 30 miles on the 3rd. Time of flight was estimated at 4:20 hours.

To add to the mystery, the report states that “within approximately 18 miles from the point of forced landing, there is a revolving air beacon situated in the town of Punta Penasaca which was CLEARLY VISIBLE (emphasis added) from the ground where the student landed. It is felt that this would have been the most logical direction in which the student should have started walking, and he would have been able to reach the town in a matter of a very few hours, as the terrain was a type easily negotiated on foot. In practically only one general direction would the cadet have failed to reach either a highway, railroad, or roadway and this direction referred to was composed of by far the most difficult terrain from a walking standpoint.”

What happened to Cadet Herzog in “Old Mexico” (as the report calls it)?

Tony Mireles and myself have spent two years trying to track down Maurice Herzog’s final whereabouts.

F.B.I. requires proof of death for document release. Or 100 years from date of birth. Or a privacy waiver from the person in question (Maurice himself). No joy there. We have no proof of death, or even a date of birth.

Army Intelligence stated they referred documents 25 years or older to the National Archives (NARA). They did do a MASTER NAME INDEX search for us (including what little personal identifying data we had) and came up with zip.

National Archives (NARA) searched records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Missing Aircrew Report (MACR) Name Index and located a card for Maurice Herzog. The service number on the card matched his number. The only information on the card was the notation “No MACR” (presumably because it was non-combat?). NARA referred us back to Maxwell for the Accident Report (which we already had).

Finally, a letter to National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis produced the most perplexing reply. They stated that Maurice Herzog’s search resulted in an Army personnel record that they could not locate. Their letter states “the file was removed from its location in October 1988 and has not been returned. The file location did not indicate where the record was sent.”

Also, no death certificate records exist for Herzog with Arizona’s Vital Statistics Department... Does anyone, anywhere, know what became of Cadet Maurice Herzog? What was his final disposition? Was he put to rest by his family?

Any suggestions on where to proceed from here? Thank you very much for your help.

Chris Baird and Tony Mireles

Request for Comments by experienced pilots on a book chapter:

HOW THE ART OF FLYING BECAME (MOSTLY) A SCIENCE
Roger Bohn Rbohn@ucsd.edu Phone: 619 995-5630

I’m a professor at the University of California, San Diego, and I looking for experienced pilots willing to take a look at a book chapter I’m finishing that describes the evolution of flying. My claim is that flying was initially a pure art, learned by experience, while now it’s mostly a science. Of course I have to explain what that means. I break the changes down into five principal stages, with names like Rules + Instruments (1930s: Artificial Horizon made IFC flying possible for the first time), Standard Procedures (1940s: Invented in the U.S., and helped train pilots in WW II), and Computer Integrated Flight (1980s: Digital logic that could handle multiple sensors and controls simultaneously). I discuss how airplanes were controlled in each period, what key problems were solved, how pilots learned, and other topics.

This chapter is part of a larger book that looks at how all important technologies tend to evolve from art to science. The book shows that medicine, too, can make this shift, but right now medicine is just at the start of the Standard Procedures stage. The chapter I need comments on right now is just about flying. Ideal readers will probably be former commercial or military pilots who have experience of how flying has changed in the last few decades.

Now the bad news: the manuscript is about 120 pages. It has stories and analysis from each of the five periods, plus a long concluding section that looks for common patterns. BUT if you have time to read only one of the historical sections it’s still useful for me. One of my claims is that at least four of these five types of flying are still in use today, because when things go badly the skills of individual pilots again become paramount. So the issues discussed in each section are still around.

If you want more information before deciding, there’s a very short version of the paper, How Flying Got Smarter, which was published in a conference on Intelligent Vehicles. You can find it at: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2sj362fh9.

I can take your comments as email or by phone interview. If you are interested, call/write and I’ll send you the manuscript, with my thanks!

Roger Bohn: Rbohn@ucsd.edu or 619 995-5630
Professor of Technology Management
Director, Global Information Industry Center
UC San Diego, School of International Relations and Pacific Studies
Office (858) 534-7630 Blog: http://Art2science.org
Come to San Antonio and enjoy the color and excitement of the Alamo, the world famous River Walk, the Market Square, the Mission District, the Hemisfair Park, and La Villita, and the many other historic venues that make our city a prime tourist destination. Ride the river barges on the San Antonio River, including the new Museum Reach section with it’s dams and locks and interesting architectural works.
The Convention will be held in the Menger Hotel which was established in 1859 when the city was known for it’s wranglers, six guns, fast tempers, and faster draws. The hotel has been expanded several times and is now a 350 room, elegantly restored hotel that is unique, filled with priceless art and antiques. It sits directly across the street from The Alamo ad about one hundred yards from the river walk. Directly behind is the River City Mall, the largest shopping center in the downtown area.

Buddy Davison will be hosting the golf tournament and the details will be published just after the first of the new year.

The pre-arrival dinner will be held at Luciano’s Restaurante Italiano on Riverwalk. The setting is delightful and the cuisine is outstanding. The spousal luncheon will be held at Mi Tierra at Market square.

Many Silver Falcons will remember layovers at the hotel when San Antonio was an Eastern Airlines destination. We hope this will become a nostalgia experience and a trip down memory lane for the Pilots and Flight Attendants who were fortunate enough to experience the old San Antonio and the old Menger back when Eastern Air Lines was the undisputed best Air Line in the World and when to be an Eastern Crew Member meant pride in company and pride in profession.

So put this on your calendar for 2011. Pack your best turquoise jewelry, cowboy boots, ten gallon hats, chaps and spurs and come prepared for the western party of your life.

In 1909 the hotel was enlarged with an addition to the south side. Architect Alfred Giles altered the main façade, adding Renaissance Revival details in stuccoed brick, pressed metal, and cast iron; he also designed an interior rotunda that provided light and served as a circulation hub. The hotel was a center of San Antonio social affairs and a meeting place for visiting celebrities. It declined during the Great Depression, but in the mid-1940's the building was reconditioned, and the more celebrated dining rooms were restored. By 1951 a new wing had been added, and the building had been completely modernized. In 1976 the hotel was added to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Alamo Plaza Historic District. The Menger was again renovated in the 1980's.
In addition to its significance as a historical landmark, the Menger offers unparalleled amenities which continue to include the famous Colonial Room Restaurant and the Menger Bar along with 316 guest rooms and suites. Many rooms overlook the Alamo, pool or Alamo Plaza and all retain the furniture, art, and accessories from the hotel’s earlier days, including four-poster beds, velvet-covered Victorian sofas and chairs, marble-topped tables and period wall coverings.

As to its resident ghosts, the historic Menger Hotel is said be called home or visited regularly by some 32 different entities. Seemingly, they don’t mind sharing the old hotel with the living, as they pleasantly go about their business.

The Menger's most famous spiritual guest is that of former President Teddy Roosevelt. It was here, in the Menger Bar, that Roosevelt recruited hard-living cowboys fresh from the Chisholm Trail, to his detachment of Rough Riders. Reportedly, Teddy would sit at the bar and as the cowboys came in, he would jovially offer them a free drink (or several) as he worked his recruiting strategy upon the unsuspecting cowpoke. Many sobered up the next morning to find themselves on their way to basic military training at Fort Sam Houston before joining in the Spanish American War. Over the years, Roosevelt has reportedly been seen having a drink at the dark little barroom off the main lobby.

The most often sighted spiritual guest is a woman named Sallie White. Long ago, Sallie was a chambermaid who worked within the hotel and one night after an argument with her husband, she stayed overnight. The next day her husband threatened to kill her and some time later, on March 28, 1876, he attacked her inside the hotel. Badly injured, she held on for two days before dying of her injuries. According to the hotel’s ledgers, it paid for her funeral at a cost of $32.00.

Today, Sallie apparently continues to perform her duties within the Victorian wing of the hotel. Sallie has been seen numerous times wearing an old long gray skirt and a bandana around her forehead, the uniform common during her era. Primarily, appearing at night, Sallie is generally seen walking along the hotel hallways, carrying a load of clean towels for the guests.

Another apparition that is often reported is that of Captain Richard King, one time owner one of the largest ranches in the world – The King Ranch. A frequent visitor to the Menger Hotel during his lifetime, he had a personal suite within the hotel. When he learned of his impending death from his personal physicians, Captain King spent the last months of his life, wrote his will disposing of his great wealth, and bade farewell to his friends in his suite at the Menger. On April 15, 1885, King’s funeral was held in the Menger’s parlor. Today, the room in which he stayed is called the "King Ranch Room." He is often seen entering his old room, going right through the wall where the door was once located before it was remodeled. Display cases and photographs on the walls of the first floor lobbies provide a glimpse into the Menger’s colorful past.

Another ghostly spirit of a woman is often spotted sitting in the original lobby of the historic hotel. Wearing an old fashioned blue dress, small wire-framed glasses, and a tasseled beret in her hair, she sits quietly knitting. On one occasion a staff member stopped to ask her, "Are you comfortable...may I get you something?", only to be answered with an unfriendly "No" before the woman disappeared.

Adjacent to the Alamo, some of these ghostly visitors to the hotel are attributed to the many that died during the battle of the Alamo. Often heavy footsteps and kicking are heard and old military boots are spied by the guests and staff.

Other spiritual guests are said to have been some of the many who have stayed there over the years, as well as those who were recruited into the Rough Riders. Though the number of entities counted at the historic Menger Hotel is high, all are said to be harmless to staff and visitors, doing nothing more than sometimes startling a guest or an employee.

The first choice of San Antonio ghost hunters, the hotel is located downtown, immediately adjacent to both the Alamo and the Rivercenter Mall.
“Family is very important to us.” We are passionate about sharing with your family an authentic Italian experience.

You could say our story began in a small town outside Naples, Italy. That’s where our mother, Lina, operated a trattoria and where we would learn the valuable skills we would later put to use in our Italian restaurants. Most importantly, we learned to use only the finest and freshest ingredients straight from the heart of Italy.

Authentic Italian family recipes since 1971.

When the Centofanti family left Italy for America in 1971, we brought with us a tradition of hard work, a passion for excellence and—just as importantly—Nonna Lina’s authentic Italian recipes. These priceless original recipes are still on our menus today.

The Luciano’s experience—inspired by Nonna Lina & Nonno Salvatore.

From our complimentary bruscetta to our comfortable family atmosphere, you can see the influence of our loving parents. It was our late father, Sal, who taught us attention to details and keeping the customer first.

Our mother, Lina, created authentic, Italian specialties in the kitchen and is still our inspiration today.

When people come back again and again, they become like family.

We love return customers, and we have a lot of them. Having customers enjoy our authentic Italian food and our atmosphere makes us feel good about what we do. It’s like having family drop in for lunch of dinner.

From our family to yours: “Make yourself at home.”

There are plenty of good Italian restaurants. But very few combine great food, friendly service and affordability all in a comfortable family atmosphere. At Luciano’s, we put them all together, so you can relax and feel right at home.
The following Silver Falcons and family members are currently under the weather and would appreciate calls, cards, and visits from friends. A card or a friendly voice can do wonders when a person is really hurting!

It’s easy to get on the Lay-A-Bed list. All it takes is a bad headache and a big mouthed friend. Getting off the list is another matter altogether! No one ever tells us when they get well!

Therefore we have had to make rules to control this situation. In the future:

1. When the flower dies, take your name off the lay-a-bed list whether you are sick or not.
2. If you are still sick, put your name back on the list and we will send you a new flower!
3. When the new flower dies, go back to rule one!

Capt. Jerry Fradenburg  
3 Fenway Court  
Newnan, GA  30265  
(770) 502-0451

Capt. Bob Ramsey  
3173 Inman Park Court  
Marietta, GA  30062  
robjet@bellsouth.net  
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Capt. Curt Whaley  
945 Gondolier Blvd.  
Gulf Breeze, FL  32563-3017  
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Adeline Wolbert, wife of Capt. Joe Wolbert, 360 Hickory Cove Rd., Canton, GA  30115  
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LAyABED

CAPTAIN WILLIAM “BILL” LOREN ROGERS

Captain William “Bill” Loren Rogers, age 77, of Gainesville, passed away on Tuesday, December 7, 2010 at Northeast Georgia Medical Center following an extended illness. Funeral services were held Friday, December 10, 2010 at 1:00 pm in the Chapel of Memorial Park Funeral Home with Reverend Terry Walton officiating.

Captain Rogers was born August 7, 1933 in St. Mary’s, West Virginia to the late William V. Rogers and Mildred Camphire Rogers. He called Alaska, Japan, Florida and Suches, Georgia home until settling in Gainesville. Bill graduated from Ohio State University before following what would become his lifelong passion for flying. He began his career as a commercial airline pilot with Pacific Northern in 1960 and went on to fly for Continental, Riddle, Eastern, and Ryan International before retiring after 39 years in 1999. During his time he logged tens of thousands of hours and once successfully crash-landed an Eastern Air Lines Boeing 727 in Miami in 1983 after experiencing a landing gear malfunction. After retiring, Bill loved to fish with friends, but also continued to fly gliders until recently. Bill also served in the Navy during the Korean War.

Bill is survived by his wife of 40 years, Janice Spangler Rogers of Gainesville, daughters & sons-in-laws, Kim & Rick Parker of Gainesville and Kelli & Judd Smith of Watkinsville, grandchildren, Bradley Martin, Emily Parker and Katie Smith.

A long time member of The Silver Falcons, Bill and Janice were fixtures at our annual conventions and were frequent members of the motor home caravans that travelled the country to attend.

You have received your departure clearance, Bill. Clear skies, fair winds, smooth air, and this time—three green for landing! There is an Eastern Captain at the controls!
CAPTAIN FENWICK E. LIND

Captain Fenwick E. Lind was born in Pontiac, R.I. on March 5, 1923, and passed away Monday, Dec. 27, 2010. He was a retired Captain in the Marine Corps, a retired Captain for Eastern Airlines, an EAA lifetime member 197443, a Quiet Birdman member 38866 and a Willow Creek Church member since 2000. Fen’s career in aviation started at age 10, when his dad bought him a 45-minute ride in an Aeronca C-2 at the local airport. The Depression year of 1933 meant the $5 ride was a sacrifice on the family budget, but each time Fen heard an airplane, he had to run outside to watch. His father was far from wealthy, but he knew someday his son would sprout wings. The pilot of the C-2 was a splinter of a man, probably weighing 95 lbs. dripping wet, so Fen easily slipped in beside him in the narrow cockpit. His career was clear after that ride! Fast forward to Dec. 7, 1941, with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Fen had logged 75 hours flight time flying in the civilian pilot training program (CPT), and then with the U.S. at war, he entered cadet training with the Navy, gaining his wings in July 1943, at age 20. He promptly signed up as a fighter pilot with the Marine Corps. Flying F4U Corsairs, he survived three campaigns of island hopping in the Pacific from Bougainville all the way to Leyte, in the Philippines. Antiaircraft shot him down in 1944 near the Jap-held Rabaul Harbor, and after paddling four hours in his rubber raft, he was rescued by a Navy PBY, “Dumbo.” Forty plus ‘missions’ later and two DFC’s, he returned home in 1945 to find no steady flying jobs available. So Fen went back to college (University of Miami), where he earned his degree in 1949 in aeronautical engineering. Finally in 1950, Eastern Airlines recognized his worth and placed him in the right seat of a DC-3. In six years, he had his fourth stripe, and was a captain for the second time, but as a civilian. During his 33 years with Eastern, he typed on most all the airline offered from the Martin 404, Convair 440, Douglas DC-6B, DC-7B, Lockheed L-49 through L-1049G, L-188, Boeing B-707, B-720, B-727, and his favorite, the L-1011 wide body, when he retired at the mandatory age of 60. Following retirement, Fen continued flying his own Twin SeaBee off beautiful Cobbets Lake in southern New Hampshire. After selling the Twin SeaBee in 1997, Fen and his wife, Lilli, moved to the Village of Huntley, 50 miles northwest of Chicago. Three years after their move, Fen lost Lilli, his love of 33 years, to cancer in May 2000. One year later, Fen found another love and Christian lady, Theresa, whom he married in July 2005, and moved into Del Webb Sun City Huntley, with his new bride. Fen was active in aviation circles, even in his 80s and continued to volunteer his services at EM Oshkosh for over 15 years. His last logbook entry in 2010 lists a total of 26,342 hours flown. Fen was awarded a Master Pilot Award in October 2005, having qualified in part, with no violations or accidents filed for 50 consecutive years of flight from 1943 through 1993. Surviving is his loving wife, Theresa; and numerous cousins, nephews and nieces. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to St. John’s United Church of Christ- Harmony, 11821 E. Grant Highway, Hampshire, IL 60140 or the Experimental Aircraft Association, P.O. Box 3086, Oshkosh, WI 54903. Semper Fi, Marine! Fly on!

CAPTAIN OEL L. FUTRELL

Captain Oel L. Futrell, 83, passed away on October 9, 2010, after a two year battle with lung cancer. He was born December 27, 1926, to O. L. Futrell and Jewel (Holder) Futrell. He was an airline pilot for Eastern Air Lines for 35 years before he retired. He joined the U. S. Navy in 1944 where he learned to fly. He spent two seasons searching for hurricanes in the Caribbean with the Navy Hurricane Hunters. Oel graduated from Choudrant High School, the University of Miami, John Marshall Law School, and he also studied computers at Lowell University Graduate School. While he was with Eastern Airlines he became a senior captain on the European and South American routes. Captain Futrell’s first flight for Eastern Airlines, as recorded in his log book, was made December 24, 1951, in plane number 344, a DC-3 now hanging in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D. C.

Captain Futrell is survived by four children, six grandchildren, two great-grandchildren, his sister, and his loving companion of thirteen years, Mary Dement.

Oel loved traveling. He visited all seven Continents and 84 countries (many of them several times). He and Mary traveled the globe together, seeking new adventures and finding many.

Oel was a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians and was a member of the Order of Merlin Shield (thirty-five years of continuous membership). He held I. B. M. number 26725M and had been a member since 1974. He was a member of the experimental Flying Midshipmen group in the late 1940’s. 192 of his fellow flying midshipmen died fighting the Korean War.

He believed that God is real, a loving spirit to be worshipped. Oel asked that his remains be turned to ashes and spread from an airplane over South Texas.

With a ready smile, a friendly handshake, and respect for his fellow crewmembers, Oel was a true pleasure to fly with. He was one of those lucky Captains who practiced Cockpit Resource management long before anyone even knew what it was. The job always got done and everyone enjoyed doing it. Thanks, Oel!
MINUTES OF THE SILVER FALCONS BOD MEETING

PICCADILLY CAFETERIA
2449 Godby Road
College Park, GA 30349

January 5, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 pm.

Members present were, Joe Zito, Joe Wolbert, Dave Ingle, Mary Hutchinson, and Philip Hutchinson. President, Ron Shoop was not present due to illness.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Joe Zito gave the financial report, stating that the Silver Falcon Organization was solvent, and had no Outstanding bills or debts. He also reported that the Convention was totally paid for. The Christmas dinner left a plus balance of $.44 (Really!)

MEMBERSHIP REPORT:

Joe Zito gave a brief membership update as to the year end, 500 total memberships, 13 non renewals.

OLD BUSINESS:

Discussion of reasons and prohibiting costs for not considering, and dismissing the idea of a cruise for the 2012 convention.

Clarification of BOD President appointment tabled Due to Ron Shoop not being present.

NEW BUSINESS:

Joe Wolbert suggested a web site to commemorate the greatness and history of EAL and its people, with contributions from EAL employees and members of their families.

2012 CONVENTION LOCATION:

Several future convention sites were discussed, with the city of Savannah, GA prevailing as the favorite, most convenient, and promising of all cities mentioned. Meeting was adjourned at 2:00PM

USAF LOSS REPORT ON VIET NAM

Saturday, December 18, 2010

AFA Members, Congressional Staff members, Civic Leaders, DOCA members, Dr Richard P. Hallion, former AF historian, sent me the information below. In it, he describes—by aircraft type—US Air Force losses in Viet Nam. A few quick observations.

1. Low and slow is dangerous. We lost 150 Skyraiders, 34 C-130s, 22 A-37s, 21 C-123s, 47 OV-10s, 82 O-2s, and 122 O-1s. That's a lot of CSAR support, political risk via POWs, and general projection of vulnerability. Are we planning for this sort of attrition with our buy of C-130Js, C-27s, and even the C-17?

2. We need to plan for attrition on high-end systems. We lost 382 F-4s, 198 F-100s, 283 F-105Ds, 37 F-105Gs, 76 RF-4s, and 33 RF-101s. What sort of fleet do we have today with mostly 4th gen aircraft and other legacy systems? Are we in a position to execute effective combat ops against a near peer? Do we have the industrial base capacity to replace combat losses in a timely fashion (we lost 15 B-52s in 12 days during Linebacker II—today, that would be over 20% of the fleet)?

3. Numerous aircraft were lost for other non-combat reasons—including 2 SR-71s. While there are few guarantees in combat operations … we do know we will suffer unexpected accidents. We need to plan for an inventory that accounts for this basic reality. These losses will be increasingly hard to sustain as we stretch small fleets over increasingly longer service lives.

It is easy to point out that many of the losses in Vietnam were due to the ROE, etc. While that is true, I think it is also important to anticipate that war is generally muddled, and ROE is often constrained by numerous factors that are hard to predict (note the two current conflicts). This further highlights the need to plan for redundancy and a flexible range of options.

This list reminds me of a quote from General (Ret) Richard E. Hawley:

"But institutions can have short memories too. And in the early 60s we entered another Asian war, this time in Vietnam, without a capable air-to-air fighter—without pilots schooled in the fine art of air-to-air combat—and without weapons to neutralize the emerging threat of surface-to-air missiles—and we paid a terrible price against a third-rate power.

In the six months from 23 August 1967 to 5 February 1968, Vietnamese MiG-21 pilots racked up a 16 to 1 kill advantage. In all, we lost 2,448 fixed wing aircraft to a third world military whose Air Force deployed fewer than 200 aircraft.

How easily we forget."

For your consideration.

Mike
Michael M. Dunn
President/CEO
Air Force Association
We have begun a new year and I find myself with no axe to grind. Our organization is stable financially and our membership rolls are solid. Our convention and Christmas dinner were successes both socially and financially, dues are rolling in at an acceptable rate, and only the flower fund needs help. Our flower fund has always been replenished by voluntary contributions and our membership has always been extremely generous with their contributions. Over the years the dynamics of the organization have changed and the base for these contributions has grown smaller as the expenditures have grown. As we age we tend to be ill more often and more of our members are dying. We currently have about fifty widows on the roster where once we had fifty dues paying members and we have about fifty life members who have paid their dues in advance and do not have the opportunity to contribute with their annual dues check.

What I would like to suggest is that, as the new year begins, each of us make a deliberate effort to send a check to the flower fund. The amount is anything you would like to contribute from one dollar to one hundred dollars and the amount of your contribution will be kept confidential. If each of you were to send ten dollars the fund would be healthy for the entire year. Think about it and do what you feel is right. Remember, when you are ill and receive one of the infamous Silver Falcon indestructible trees, it is not a get well wish from The Silver Falcons, it is really a get well wish from all your friends.

I see that the Captain of one of our nuclear aircraft carriers has been relieved of his command and will probably be forced to retire because of risqué videos made for the crew while on deployment off Iraq. Granted, the videos were in poor taste and, as the executive officer of the ship (which he was when the videos were made), he should have had the dignity and restraint not to make them or at least to let them be made by someone else, but they were made as a morale booster for the crew of a combat vessel in a combat situation. They were made aboard ship for shipboard consumption and should never have been released to the public, and certainly not four years after the fact. Reading the comments on Facebook, the crew supports the Captain and the pilots he flew with have nothing but good things to say about him. Remember, he was not the commanding officer of the ship when the videos were made! In the old Navy this would have been resolved at the local level and would never have been in the press!

As a young Lieutenant in the Marines in the 1950’s we had Happy Hour every Friday after work. At 3:30 in the afternoon the junior officer in the squadron was sent to the officers club to reserve tables for the squadron and at four o’clock everyone went to the club where we proceeded to party until the club closed. Occasionally we had strippers as well as other forms of entertainment, we played poker dice for drinks, and generally we unwound after a week flying single engine overwater missions. Generally the party progressed to one or more homes and continued on through the weekend. Our commanding officer was always the man in charge and was liked and respected by all the pilots in the squadron, but at happy hour he was just one of the pilots (Although we still called him Skipper or Sir!) We were a close knit, rock solid group and were ready and willing to die for each other. Today there is the probability that officers clubs will be closed, happy hour on Friday no longer exists and, if you are foolish enough to buy more than one drink at the club, you will be called in for career counseling and it will definitely be reflected in your fitness report. Officers clubs now have drink counters who watch what you consume. Political correctness in the military is destroying the very thing that has always defined a military pilot—a love of life and excitement, a rebel ready to stretch the envelope, and a willingness to take risks to get the job done combined with the profound knowledge that the pilot on your wing will do everything in his power to see that you both survive so that you can go to the club that night to lie about your exploits while you get gloriously drunk together.

In a more refined sense Eastern was a lot like that. We flew together, we partyed together, we all knew each other, and we supported one another when it was necessary. I remember one day when I flew an A-300 from Seattle to Atlanta. This was after Lorenzo had come on board, aircraft maintenance had sunk to an all time low, and we were carrying multiple pages of Continued Items. The plane had several mechanical problems and I told the Second Officer to write it up so that it couldn’t possibly leave Atlanta without being fixed. When we parked at the gate and deplaned we found Ned States and his whole family about to board the plane to fly his last trip
and I had just cancelled his flight! I have never felt worse! About that time Clancy McKinney (Another Marine) walked down the concourse on the way to his plane. He stopped, we all talked, and Clancy looked at Ned and said “Hell Ned, take my trip, I didn’t want to fly anyway”. Ned took the flight, Clancy went home, and I was off the hook! Clancy saved the day and it had all been done by friends helping friends who made it work! The Captain had the authority to make these decisions at Eastern and the vast majority of us practiced CRM long before anyone even knew what CRM was. Ned and Clancy, by the way, are both Silver Falcons! Let’s all remember that no one wanted to stop work at Eastern, but when it became necessary to do so we supported each other and we did it together. All of us would rather have been flying the line instead of walking the line but there was a moral choice to be made and we reluctantly made it as a group! Eastern was always “A pilot’s airline” and Eastern Captains were always decision makers! I’ll drink to that!

Dick Borrelli
Editor

AIRPLANES USUALLY KILL YOU QUICKLY

Airplanes usually kill you quickly; a woman takes her time.

Airplanes can be turned on by the flick of a switch. Airplanes don’t get mad if you do a “touch and go.” Airplanes don’t object to a pre-flight inspection. Airplanes come with a manual to explain their operation. Airplanes have strict weight and balance limitations. Airplanes can be flown at any time of the month. Airplanes don’t come with in-laws. Airplanes don’t care about how many other airplanes you’ve flown before. Airplanes and pilots both arrive at the same time. Airplanes don’t mind if you look at other airplanes. Airplanes don’t mind if you buy airplane magazines. Airplanes expect to be tied down. Airplanes don’t comment on your piloting skills. Airplanes don’t whine unless something is really wrong. However, when airplanes go quiet, just like women, it’s usually not good.

THE MILITARY AVIATOR AS SEEN BY...

THE MILITARY AVIATOR AS SEEN BY HIMSELF:

An incredibly intelligent, tall, handsome, innovative, and highly trained professional killer, idol to countless females, and Gentleman Adventurer, who wears a star sapphire ring, carries a hair-trigger .45 automatic in a specially designed, handmade quick draw holster along with his trusty survival knife, who is always on time thanks to his ability to obtain immediate transportation and the reliability of his Rolex watch.

AS SEEN BY HIS WIFE:

A disreputable member of the family who comes home once a year all bruised up, driving a stolen jeep up to the back door carrying a B-4 bag full of dirty laundry, wearing a stained flight suit, smelling of stale booze and JP-4, wearing a huge watch, a fake ring, and that damn ugly beat-up pistol in that stupid holster, who will three months later go out the front door, thankfully for another year.

AS SEEN BY HIS COMMANDER:

A fine specimen of a drunken, brawling, jeep stealing, woman corrupting liar, with a star sapphire ring, fantastically accurate Rolex watch, an unauthorized .45 in a non-regulation shoulder holster, and trusty survival knife.

AS SEEN BY WING HEADQUARTERS:

The embodiment of a drunken, brawling, jeep stealing, woman corrupting, lying, zipper-suited Sun God, with a ring, a proscribed 1911A1 .45 in a non-regulation shoulder holster, a Rolex watch, who for some reason carries a survival knife.

AS SEEN BY THE DOD:

An overpaid, rule-ignoring, over-ranked tax burden, who is unfortunately totally indispensable simply because he has volunteered to go anywhere, and do anything, at any time, only so long as he can booze it up, brawl, steal jeeps, corrupt women, lie, and wear a star sapphire ring, Rolex watch, and carry an obsolete handgun and a survival knife.

AS SEEN BY THE ENEMY:

The implacable face of death!

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Once again we had a wonderful time at The Silver Falcons Christmas dinner. There were forty attendees including a few new folks. Petit Auberge, as always, served a delicious meal, and, with a choice of five entrees, everyone had the dinner of his or her choice. This year the dessert was baked Alaska and even though the servers had a bit of a problem flaming it, it was delicious. We have had the dinner here for the last five or six years and the quality of the food and service never ceases to amaze me. Chuck “the candy-man” Taliaferro was there along with his lovely wife Grace and his never empty bag of goodies. It’s sort of like having your own Santa Falcon. Sandy and Leah McCulloh did an outstanding job as usual coordinating and planning the dinner and there were sufficient free goodies for everyone to take home a souvenir. Our dinner next year will be on December 9 at the same place. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend.
Phil and his Harem

Leah & Sandy McCulloh

Ken & Rachel Anderson

Oh boy! Free stuff!

Ron & Judy Shoop
They could hear it before they could see it!

Not all that unusual in those days as the personnel at Station 131 gathered around the tower and scattered hardstands to await the return of the B-17’s sent out earlier that morning.

First comes the far off rumble and drone of the Cyclones. Then a spec on the East Anglia horizon. Soon a small cluster indicating the lead squadron. Finally, the group.

Then the counting. 1-2-3-4-5…..

But that would have been normal. Today was different! It was too early for the group to return.

“They’re 20 minutes early. Can’t be the 398th.”

They could hear it before they could see it! Something was coming home. But what?

All eyes turned toward the northeast, aligning with the main runway, each ground guy and stood-down airman straining to make out this “wail of a Banshee,” as one called it.

Not like a single B-17 with its characteristic deep roar of the engines blended with four thrashing propellers. This was a howl! Like a powerful wind blowing into a huge whistle.

Then it came into view. It WAS a B-17!

Low and pointing her nose at the 6,000 foot runway, it appeared for all the world to be crawling toward the earth, screaming in protest.

No need for the red flares. All who saw this Fort knew there was death aboard.

“Look at that nose!” they said as all eyes stared in amazement as this single, shattered remnant of a once beautiful airplane glided in for an unrealistic “hot” landing. She took all the runway as the “Banshee” noise finally abated, and came to an inglorious stop in the mud just beyond the concrete runway.

Men and machines raced to the now silent and lonely aircraft. The ambulance and medical staff were there first. The fire truck…. ground and air personnel….jeeps, truck, bikes…..

Out came one of the crew members from the waist door, then another. Strangely quiet. The scene was almost weird. Men stood by as if in shock, not knowing whether to sing or cry.

Either would have been acceptable.

The medics quietly made their way to the nose by way of the waist door as the remainder of the crew began exiting. And to answer the obvious question, “what happened?”

“What happened?” was easy to see. The nose was a scene of utter destruction. It was as though some giant aerial can opener had peeled the nose like an orange, relocating shreds of metal, plexiglass, wires and tubes on the cockpit windshield and even up to the top turret. The left cheek gun hung limp, like a broken arm.

One man pointed to the crease in chin turret. No mistaking that mark! A German 88 anti-aircraft shell had exploded in the lap of the toggler.

This would be George Abbott of Mt. Lebanon, PA. He had been a waist gunner before training to take over the bombardier’s role.

Still in the cockpit, physically and emotionally exhausted, were pilot Larry deLancey and co-pilot Phil Stahlman.

Navigator Ray LeDoux finally tapped deLancey on the shoulder and suggested they get out. Engineer turret gunner Ben Ruckel already had made his way to the waist was exiting along with radio operator Wendell Reed, ball turret gunner Al Albro, waist gunner Russell Lachman and tail gunner Herbert Guild.

Stahlman was flying his last scheduled mission as a replacement for regular co-pilot, Grady Cumbie. The latter had been hospitalized the day before with an ear problem. Lachman was also a “sub,” filling in for Abbott in the waist.

DeLancey made it as far as the end of the runway, where he sat down with knees drawn up, arms crossed and head down. The ordeal was over, and now the drama was beginning a mental replay.

Then a strange scene took place.

Group CO Col. Frank P. Hunter had arrived after viewing the landing from the tower and was about to approach deLancey. He was physically restrained by flight surgeon Dr. Robert Sweet.

“Colonel, that young man doesn’t want to talk now. When he is ready you can talk to him, but for now leave him alone.”

Sweet handed pills out to each crew member and told them to go to their huts and sleep.

No dramatics, no cameras, no interviews. The crew would depart the next day for “flak leave” to shake off the stress. And then be expected back early in November. (Just in time to resume “normal” activities on a mission to Merseburg!)
The blast had torn away the top and much of the sides of the nose. Depositing enough of the metal on the windshield to make it difficult for either of the pilots to see.

“The instrument panel was torn loose and all the flight instruments were inoperative with the exception of the magnetic compass mounted in the panel above the windshield. And its accuracy was questionable. The radio and intercom were gone, the oxygen lines broken, and there was a ruptured hydraulic line under my rudder pedals,” said deLancey.

All this complicated by the sub-zero temperature at 27,000 feet blasting into the cockpit.

“IT was apparent that the damage was severe enough that we could not continue to fly in formation or at high altitude. My first concern was to avoid the other aircraft in the formation, and to get clear of the other planes in case we had to bail out. We eased out of formation, and at the same time removed our oxygen masks as they were collapsing on our faces as the tanks were empty.”

At this point the formation continued on its prescribed course for home—a long, slow turn southeast of Cologne and finally westward.

DeLancey and Stahlman turned left, descending rapidly and hoping, they were heading west. (And also, not into the gun sights of German fighters.) Without maps and navigation aids, they had difficulty getting a fix. By this time they were down to 2,000 feet.

“We finally agreed that we were over Belgium and were flying in a southwesterly direction,” said the pilot.

“About this time a pair of P-51’s showed up and flew a loose formation on us across Belgium. I often wondered what they thought as they looked at the mess up front.”
“We hit the coast right along the Belgium-Holland border, a bit farther north than we had estimated. Ray said we were just south of Walcheren Island.”

Still in an area of ground fighting, the plane received some small arms fire. This gesture was returned in kind by Albro, shooting from one of the waist guns.

“We might have tried for one of the airfields in France, but having no maps this also was questionable. Besides, the controls and engines seemed to be OK, so I made the decision to try for home.”

“Well over England, LeDoux soon picked up landmarks and gave me course corrections taking us directly to Nuthampstead. It was just a great bit of navigation. Ray just stood there on the flight deck and gave us the headings from memory.”

Nearing the field, Stahlman let the landing gear down. That was an assurance. But a check of the hydraulic pump sent another spray of oil to the cockpit floor. Probably no brakes!

Nevertheless, a flare from Ruckel’s pistol had to announce the “ready or not” landing. No “downwind leg” and “final approach” this time. Straight in!

“The landing was strictly by guess and feel,” said DeLancey. “Without instruments, I suspect I came in a little hot. Also, I had to lean to the left to see straight ahead. The landing was satisfactory, and I had sufficient braking to slow the plane down some. However, as I neared the taxiway, I could feel the brakes getting ‘soft’. I felt that losing control and blocking the taxiway would cause more problems than leaving the plane at the end of the runway.”

That consideration was for the rest of the group. Soon three squadrons of B-17’s would be returning, and they didn’t need a derelict airplane blocking the way to their respective hardstands.

Stahlman, supremely thankful that his career with the 398th had come to an end, soon returned home and in due course became a captain with Eastern Airlines. Retired in 1984, Stahlman said his final Eastern flight “was a bit more routine” than the one 40 years before.

DeLancey and LeDoux received decorations on December 11, 1944 for their parts in the October 15 drama. DeLancey was awarded the Silver Star for his “miraculous feat of flying skill and ability” on behalf of General Doolittle, CO of the Eighth Air Force. LeDoux for his “extraordinary navigation skill”, received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The following deLancey 1944 article was transcribed from the 398th BG Historical Microfilm. Note: due to wartime security, Nuthampstead is not mentioned, and the route deLancey flew home is referred to in general terms.

TO: STARS AND STRIPES
FOR GENERAL RELEASE
AN EIGHTH AIR FORCE BOMBER STATION, ENGLAND

After literally losing the nose of his B-17 Flying Fortress as the result of a direct hit by flak over Cologne, Germany on October 15, 1944, 1st Lt. Lawrence M. deLancey, 25, of Corvallis, Oregon returned to England and landed the crew safely at his home base. Each man walked away from the plane except the toggler, Staff Sergeant George E. Abbott, Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, who was killed instantly when the flak struck.

It was only the combined skill and teamwork of Lt. deLancey and 2nd Lt. Raymond J. LeDoux, of Mt. Angel, Oregon, navigator, that enabled the plane and crew to return safely.

“Just after we dropped our bombs and started to turn away from the target”, Lt. deLancey explained, “a flak burst hit directly in the nose and blew practically the entire nose section to threads. Part of the nose peeled back and obstructed my vision and that of my co-pilot, 1st Lt. Phillip H. Stahlman of Shippenville, Pennsylvania. What little there was left in front of me looked like a scrap heap. The wind was rushing through. Our feet were exposed to the open air at nearly 30,000 feet above the ground the temperature was unbearable.

“There we were in a heavily defended flak area with no nose, and practically no instruments. The instrument panel was bent toward me as the result of the impact. My altimeter and magnetic compass were about the only instruments still operating and I couldn’t depend on their accuracy too well. Naturally I headed for home immediately. The hit which had killed S/Sgt. Abbott also knocked Lt. LeDoux back in the catwalk (just below where I was sitting). Our oxygen system also was out so I descended to a safe altitude.

“Lt. LeDoux who had lost all his instruments and maps in the nose did a superb piece of navigating to even find England.”

During the route home flak again was encountered but due to evasive action Lt. deLancey was able to return to friendly territory. Lt. LeDoux navigated the ship directly to his home field.

Although the plane was off balance without any nose section, without any brakes (there was no hydraulic pressure left), and with obstructed vision, Lt. deLancey made a beautiful landing to the complete amazement of all personnel at this field who still are wondering how the feat was accomplished.
My Last Combat Mission
November 5, 1967

I flew my 145th and last combat mission 5 Nov ’67, not by choice. I had arrived at Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base on March 15, 1967 after completing the Wild Weasel School at Nellis. I talked to my boss, Lt Col Obie Dugan, who was commander of the 357th Tactical Fighter Squadron and our deal was that I would fly 100 missions as a Wild Weasel and then complete another 37 missions as a strike pilot. This would make me one of the first guys to get 200 missions in North Vietnam in an F-105, since I had flown 63 missions in ’65 when the 563 TFS had been at Takhli for 4 months. In fact it would make me one of the first to get 200 in anything, since Carl Richter at Korat would be the first to finish 200 in September. My Boss sent me up the command chain. The Deputy for Operations for the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing (355TFW/DO), Colonel Bob White agreed as well. My next stop was with the Wing King of the 355 TFW, Colonel Bob Scott, Colonel Scott also agreed and I was off to the races.

By late October ’67 I had flown 77 missions as a Wild Weasel and Carlo Lombardo and I had become a hell of a fine Weasel Crew. In October of ’67, Colonel White was reassigned to Saigon to become the Director of Operations for all Out-Of-Country missions. He was the first director to have ever flown in the North and that, along with his excellent other qualifications, made him the best man for the job. All of us who flew in North Vietnam really needed someone who could walk and chew gum without gagging in that shop. We needed all the help we could get and Colonel White promised to be an absolute treasure. The only problem was that he needed an Electronic Weapons Officer (EWO) in his shop and wanted Carlo. Carlo Lombardo was easily the best choice for the job, but it would break up our team and I was selfish enough to want to keep him. Colonel White actually asked me, a lowly Captain, if he could take Carlo. I was forced to smile and be a nice boy. I became an instant Strike Pilot and also “D” Flight Commander instead of “E” Flight (Weasel) Commander.

Colonel White took me in to see our Wing Commander, Colonel Giraudo, who had replaced Colonel Scott in the summer. Colonel Giraudo, AKA The Great Kahuna, reluctantly agreed to let me finish out my remaining 60 missions for the magic 200. Carl Richter had been killed recently with only a couple to go for 200 and the all of the Brass were a bit nervous about allowing anyone to try for the 200 mark. I would rather have been a Weasel, however, Captains take what they can get. I took over “D” flight and started to relearn how to lead a Strike Flight. I flew my first Strike Flight Lead to Kep Airfield and my second to Phuc Yen. My third was to Kep again and I was back in the saddle. Three Route Pack Six missions in three days are a good way to get back in shape.

I managed to slow myself down in the Takhli Stag Bar by dislocating my right shoulder while rolling for drinks. A “Roll” consists of several staid, sober, careful folk looking at each other and yelling, “Last one with his feet on the bar-rail buys!” Everyone does a front roll and the last one to whack his feet on the bar rail buys a round for the mess. I tripped, dislocated my shoulder, AND had to buy for the bar. Not a very swift way to “Roll” for drinks. Ted Moeller took me over to the Hospital and had my arm taped to my side for 10 days.

I spent the next fortnight being Supervisor of Flying (SOF), a job that ranks somewhere near dental work without anesthesia. I also heard a whole bunch of my “Friends” offer to “Roll” for drinks. I finally got the shoulder working at about half speed and flew an engine change test hop to prove I was ready and went back on the schedule.

One of the reasons I had been reassigned as a Strike Pilot was that all of the Squadrons were short of Mission Commanders. My Squadron, the 357 TFS, had only two, Lieutenant Colonel Tom Kirk, our boss, and Captain Neely Johnson. Neely and the Boss were both outstanding; however, we really needed at least 2 more to keep the workload down. While I was SOF for 10 days, Tom Kirk was shot down over Hanoi, not recovered, and Neely was the sole Mission Commander in the Squadron. I was scheduled to become a Mission Boss after my first 3 missions, but the dislocation put that on hold. I was scheduled for two more to see if the shoulder would work before I would be certified as a Mission Boss.

I led a flight to Kep the first day back and the next day, November 5, 1967, I led to Phuc Yen again. My call sign was Marlin and we were to be the last flight to roll in (Tail End Charlie). Flying a raid against Phuc Yen is about like being in hell with your back broke. The only thing worse is to be Tail End Charlie at Phuc Yen. The bad guys kept all of their MIG-21s there and objected rather firmly when we hit the airfield. As I remember, there were over 1,000 37 mm and larger guns surrounding the place and it was covered by between 6 and 16 SAM sites. Not exactly the best spot for a sight seeing trip.

The briefing for Marlin flight was a bit different on that day because I was checking out Major Frank Billingsley as an element lead. Frank was over 40, had come to the F-105 from C-141s, and had never flown any single-seat aircraft since he went through pilot training. Frank had been one of our students at McConnell and I had given him a couple of check flights before I went to Weasel School. He asked me to cover Rescue Procedures (RESCAP) during the mission briefing at the squadron. I asked why and he told me that if he were to really be an element lead, he might have to run a RESCAP. I told him that I would run the RESCAP if required. He said, “Not if you’re the one on the ground.” I covered
RESCAP for at least 15 minutes and asked for questions. There were none and we suited up.

All of the ground routine went smoothly. Taxi, takeoff, join-up, refueling, pod formation, and all of the other aspects of an RP-6 mission were routine. The Strike Force held a good pod position as we made our way through Laos and North Vietnam to the Red River crossing point about 10 miles downstream from Yen Bai. From there toward Phuc Yen, the Strike Force flew at about 6,000 feet and 540 knots until we neared the MiG base and started our afterburner climb to roll-in altitude. For some reason the 3rd flight hung it high and waited way too long to start their attack which caused Marlin to be almost at 18,000 before we could head down the slide. Our attack heading was almost east instead of southwest because of the delay and it seemed as though it took a week to fly down to release altitude of 7,000'. Since our target was the last standing hangar on the airfield, it was easy to spot. The normal problems caused by the flack bursting in layers caused us to lose sight of the hangar two or three times, but it didn’t move and was there when we got to our release parameters of 7,000', 45 degree dive, and 540 knots. The pass looked good at the time and, the next day when I saw the Bomb Damage Assessment photos (BDA), we had put 18 of our 24 M-117 750# bombs through where the roof had been. Not too shabby for manual bombing.

I reefed my bird hard up and left at 5+ “G” and did my normal roll right and then left to allow my wingmen to see me for the rejoin. Our problem was that we were now headed almost directly toward Hanoi and really had few options to avoid the vast amount of flack. I took the easiest way out by flying a loose left, jinking turn around Phuc Yen in order to fly on the north side of the complex and head for Thud Ridge. There were fewer guns on the north side. It took over a minute to rejoin. Before the flight could get into pod formation for SAM protection, we had 3 missiles launched at us from our six o’clock.

My choices were not very good. I could turn right and over-fly the north railroad and dodge the missiles while in the flack from the rail lines, I could turn left and fly back over Phuc Yen dodging missiles in even worse flack, or I could put the flight down in the weeds supersonic and haul for the ridge below 50’. I chose to mow the grass. Red-Dog, the Weasel flight, called the launch and told me which SAM site it was from. I jerked the bird around enough to catch sight of the first SA-2 Guideline missile and watched it hit the deck. My wingmen were almost in formation by now as I saw the second missile loose guidance commands and go up out of sight. At about the time I heard Red-Dog 3 call that he was hit and burning, I caught sight of the 3rd missile as it went into some houses and exploded. I decided to come up out of the grass and started a climb as Marlin Flight got into good pod formation. We were at 750 knots and were below 100’ above the rice paddies as I came out of after burn and continued to climb.

As I passed through about 100’ altitude, I saw several rounds zip by me and three hit my aircraft. I took three 57 mm hits almost simultaneously. The rounds came from a 57 mm site almost a mile north of us and were optically fired. These were the same guns that had hit Red Dog. One round hit the afterburner section just above the right slab, one was in the bomb bay directly under my feet, and one was in the Air Turbine Motor (ATM) compartment just in front of my right knee. I kept climbing at near military power and the cockpit instantly filled with smoke. I heard Red-Dog 3 calling that he was on fire and also heard his element lead tell him that he was in “Great Shape”, a big fat lie.

Red-Dog 3, Dutton and Cobiel, bailed out over a rail yard less than 20 miles away and were put in the Hilton. Dick made it out in ‘73; however, Ed Cobiel died from torture he received from Fidel, the Cuban torture specialist at the Hilton.

I couldn’t see anything because of the smoke and decided to blow the canopy. I flat could not find the canopy ejection handle on the left console and pulled some knob off trying, so, I flipped the manual canopy unlock lever under the canopy rail and the canopy went like it had been blown off. I was now in a convertible at 695 knots, still supersonic, climbing through 300’. I got two or three radio transmissions out before the radio died and everything else decided to quit. It was probably a good thing the radio failed or everyone could have heard me squealing. The fire from the AB section caused the Fire and Overheat Lights to both come on and then quit. I checked the circuits and they didn’t test (just like the good book says can happen when a big fire is on board). All three hydraulic gauges started down, bounced a few times, the utility gauge went to zero followed by primary flight gauge #2 (P2). P1 (primary Flight #1) went slowly down and then dropped to zero. The oil pressure gauge went to visit the hydraulic gauges and every light on the peek and panic panel came on and then all of them quit.

Shortly after the radio quit, I had a complete electrical failure followed by the failure of all pitot static flight instruments. The only thing in my Thud what worked was the Whiskey Compass and I think it was leaking alcohol.

I was still flying and heading up Thud Ridge away from Hanoi. I still had smoke coming into the cockpit and swirling around before the truly tremendous slipstream sucked it out. I caught myself reaching up and fanning the compass mounted on the canopy to see what heading I had. Now that is very stupid. I am in a 450-knot convertible fanning a compass. If my arm had gotten caught, I would have been sans arm. I started to laugh at my stupidity until I noticed that the right front quarter panel of the windscreen was starting to melt. I reached as far forward as I could and felt extreme heat from the fire in the ATM compartment. I am sure that the utility hydraulic reservoir had ruptured and was burning. The right quarter panel melted almost completely and shortly thereafter the right rudder pedal collapsed and dangled from the cables. I was now over half way up Thud Ridge and had turned for the Red River crossing. That was pure reflex, I guess. I then had an explosion in the bomb bay, which blew the doors off and a small amount of fire came into the cockpit below my left foot. I had to hold my left foot up to stay clear of the flame. It wasn’t all that hot due to the suction from the canopy area.
I had a couple more minutes to get to the river. I held what I had, trying to be the smoothest pilot in the world since I didn’t have the foggiest how much hydraulic fluid I had in P2. The fire burned up from the AB section and the aft fuel tank blew leaving only the aircraft struts showing. The fire also burned up the right side of the aircraft, out into the right wing and the right main tire blew causing the right main gear to smash down into the slipstream and be ripped off the aircraft. All three of my wingmen looked like the Thunderbirds at an Academy Graduation. I had no right rudder pedal, no right gear strut, my bomb bay doors were missing, no lid on my cockpit, a melted hole in the windsreen, my left foot up, sundry other things disastrously wrong, BUT, I was coming up on the Red River. I found out afterwards that I had been called out as a SAM twice by another aircraft as I burned my way up the ridge. Marlin Three only said, “That’s no Sam, that’s Sparky” I started to think I had it made until the controls went and I became a passenger.

I still had 5 miles or so to go to cross the river when all of the controls went south. The bird pitched up, shuddered, rolled right like it was going to spin, and the started another pull-up. It was still going my way, so I held on to the stick to keep my arms from getting outside and stayed with my Thud. It would pull up sharply, shudder, shake, and snap right as if it were going to spin, and then start another pull-up. It did this three times until I was over the Red River. The last time it did snap into a inverted spin entry and I decided that it had taken me as far as it could go and pulled the handles up and squeezed the triggers. Only an F-105 could have taken that amount of punishment for 7 ½ minutes and deliver the driver to the river.

I still had one of my wingmen trying to fly formation and saw him flash by as I ejected. I had no idea what my altitude, airspeed, or attitude was since nothing worked except the Whiskey Compass. I learned that I was at 24,000’, 270 knots and entering an inverted spin, BUT I was over the Red River. Being over the river was wonderful since the rescue Jolly Green Giants were not allowed to cross the Red River for a rescue.

I fell about a week subjective time waiting for the ‘chute to open at 10,000’ and remembered that the last time I had ejected I had caught the risers under my chin and really put a Raspberry on my neck. I was at least not going to do that again. I stabilized on my back in a head down position that didn’t spin and when I heard the spring motor in the parachute whir, I snapped my chin down just in time to catch the risers under it. I put another Raspberry on my neck. When I looked down I was not quite across the river, so I hauled on the front risers and slipped across. I then saw that I was going to land near a small group of houses, so I went back up the risers and turned the ‘chute and headed down stream. I pulled the front risers down and then got my knee in the riser “Y” and did front riser slips to put as much distance between me and the houses until I was at about 200 feet or so above the jungle. I had come almost 4 miles and had two ridgelines between me and the nearest house or road. I looked down and decided that I needed to stop the slip and land in what I thought was “Elephant Grass”. I landed in 75’ tall bamboo.

I smashed into the bamboo and the ‘chute caught with me at least 40 feet up. The bamboo broke and I fell the last 40 feet and landed like a sack of feed on a fairly steep hillside with no place to do any kind of a parachute landing fall (PLF). I didn’t even do a Fighter Pilot PLF of heels, ass, and head; instead I just crumpled into a mound of goo. I broke my right patella, chipped a bone in my right elbow, dislocated my right shoulder again, had hairline fractures in several small bones in both feet, and landed on the family jewels with a mighty thump. I was down and across the river.

I moaned some, cursed even more, and managed to get the beeper from my parachute and shut it off. I pulled out my primary survival radio and found that the radios were very weak. Not to worry, I had two survival radios, three sets of batteries, the ‘chute beeper, and a partridge in a pear tree. I drank one of my 6 baby bottles of water, contacted Frank Billingsley who was running the RESCAP in an exemplary fashion, and started to move down the hill and find a place I could see the sky.

If you have never been in bamboo, don’t go. It is not a nice place. I would end up several feet in the air trying to squeeze through the bamboo and have to break my way back down. I moved about 200 yards in about 15 minutes and worked my way into 25 foot tall ferns that made the bamboo look like a good place. It took another 10 or so minutes to wiggle out of the fern thicket and get under a huge tree. I tried to find a better place and gave up since the whole area was bamboo and/or ferns. I talked to Frank and vectored him in to my tree and asked him to check his fuel. He informed me that he was running this show and to shut up. He also told me that he had a better view than I did, had sent the wingmen out for fuel, and was about to have to leave for a while. I found out that he left my tree, 75 miles northwest of Hanoi, with less than 2,000 pounds of fuel. He went to a tanker and was back in 29 minutes. The tanker could not have been in Laos. Everyone was trying his best to pick my worthless butt up.

I sat under my tree for almost 20 minutes; it seemed like a week, until I heard a burner light. I came up on the survival radio and had a call from Ozark; a flight of four from Korat who had my cap until Frank got back. I vectored them into my tree and they set up a cap away from me to keep the bad guys guessing. I vectored them into my tree and they set up a cap away from me to keep the bad guys guessing. Frank called back a few minutes later with the rest of Marlin Flight and took back the RESCAP duties. I was starting to get lonely and had finished two of my baby bottles when Frank told me that the Sandies were inbound. I had been on the ground for only a bit over 2 hours clock time or a month subjective time. I started to believe I had a chance. I inventoried my stuff and put everything I was going to take out of fuel. He went to a tanker and was back in 29 minutes. The tanker could not have been in Laos. Everyone was trying his best to pick my worthless butt up.

The Sandies called shortly thereafter, at about 1630 local time, and I managed to vector them in to my tree. They left to set up an orbit away from me and I waited very anxiously for the HH-3 to arrive. I listened to the Jolly call in and then all hell seemed to break loose. Some MIG-17 showed up and the Sandies became most nervous.
The Jolly tried to calm things down and the Low Sandy came by to mark my position with a Willy Pete (White Phosphorous) bomb. The Sandy then marked another location for some reason and the Low Jolly went there. I had 17 aircraft in my CAP and everyone started to talk at once. The Jolly went to the wrong place and then headed back to me. All this time I could see a little patch of sky only about 30 feet in diameter. Frank made a pass at the Low Jolly and turned him towards me and shouted for me to, “Do something!” I pulled out my pen-gun flare and fired and reloaded as fast as possible. I bounced a flare off his canopy and saw the pilot jump and then hover in my tree.

The radio went absolutely Able Sugar with people shouting out MiG calls and as I watched the penetrator come down towards me. I had stowed my radio and did not hear a transmission from Harry Walker who was told that there were MiGs in the area. His answer was, “Keep them off my ass, I’ve got better things to do!” and stayed in the hover with his rotor blades whacking the tree well below the top. I backed out to see the cable operator, but the open space was so small I couldn’t see squat. The cable stopped a few feet above me and then came down some more and was level with me a bit down a steep slope. I couldn’t jump because of my ankles and knee and then it swung towards me and I let it hit the ground and discharge a huge spark. I then unzipped the straps, pulled down on the folding seat, put my legs around the penetrator, really tightened the straps around my body, and yanked on the cable as hard as I could. I was pulled off the ground and up about 50 feet or so. The HH-3E pivoted 180 degrees and started to pull me up and through the tree as it accelerated to his max speed. It was a very wild ride for a while. I broke out of the canopy at top speed for the Jolly as the winch hauled me up. The door gunner was firing his mini gun at something; so, I whipped out my 38 and shot the jungle. I figured I could get off six rounds and make everything lighter.

I was pulled in the door and hugged by the crew. I thought I would be the happiest man in the world, but the crew of Harry Walker’s HH-3E were happier than I was. The whole crew was laughing like mad, so I asked what was funny and was told that Harry had just said, “Tell the SOB not to die until we get him to a hospital. We need a live one for a change.” I had problems standing and the Paramedic (PJ) sat me down and started to check me out. The first thing he did was to strap a parachute on me. I sure as hell didn’t want to use one of those again for a while. He asked if I was hurt and I told him I had some small problems. He then put me on a stretcher and gave me a good once over. It was noisy as all hell in the Jolly and since I didn’t have a headset I had real problems hearing. He pulled out a Morphine Syrete case and I said NO. He grinned and showed me a miniature of Jack Daniel’s Black Label that was in the tube. It was exactly what the doctor ordered.

I guess I was beat up worse than I thought since I went into shock for a while. The whole crew took off their jackets and piled them around me to keep me warm. I straightened out in time to watch the Jolly refuel on the way back. The PJ and the flight engineer helped me up to the cockpit and I sat on the jump seat as the C-130 came over us, stopped just in front and then let down until the hose was only 50 feet or so in front. We were in Laos with all of the Low Level Fuel lights on, it was just after sunset. There were layered clouds that were black with a blood red sun shining from below up through and between them. It was incredible. Harry moved the big HH-3E up to the hose, stuck it, and took gas. It was all very smooth, very easy, and very beautiful. I was the second furthest north rescue in the whole war. The whole crew of very brave men had risked their lives to pull me from the jungle. Harry did understand what “We Band Of Brothers” meant.

We went to Nakon Phanom (NKP), AKA Naked Fanny, and landed about 2100 hours. I was on a stretcher and really couldn’t walk. I was treated like the crown jewels and rushed to the hospital for a check up. I was on the x-ray machine that was broken when Brigadier General McBride came in. Willy P. had been my Wing Commander at Spangdahlem and was a very nice and very funny man. He went into a routine about having given me a perfectly good F-105 and I had dumped it! He was not going to give me any more. He also brought a bottle of Old Overshoes Rye Mission Whiskey and a six-pack of warm Miller beer. We both sat on the x-ray and drank the Old Overshoes neat with warm beer chaser. He also told me that The Great Kahuna had sent the Takhli Gooney Bird for me and it was inbound.

I was taken from the Hospital, never having seen a Doctor, and loaded on the C-47 in my stretcher. When we were airborne, the pilot came back and put my going home ration from Colonel Giraudo on my chest, a bottle of Chivas Regal, a glass, and a bucket of ice. The Chivas was to get me back to Takhli in good humor. It did a very good job. When we landed the crew turned the stretcher so I could see what was happening. I was met by the fire suppression helicopter, fire trucks, over 1,000 folk, and was treated to a Hundred Mission Parade at near midnight Takhli time.

When we stopped, the doors of the Gooney Bird swung open and The Great Kahuna jumped into the C-47 and hollered, “Throw her up!” A very shapely female came flying through the air and landed in Colonel Giraudo’s arms. He came over, dumped her on me and said, “Welcome Home Sparky, look what I brung ya!” The lady, Vicky Nixon, had just arrived that day and was the first female on the base. She was his brand new secretary, very sharp, and she was scared spitless. I was laughing like a hyena and decided to try and calm her down since she was actually shaking. I whispered in her ear, “I just fell out of a tree, landed on my jewels, and there isn’t a thing I could do to you!” She looked at me, started to cry, really hugged me, and said, “You poor baby!” We were placed in the back of Colonels G’s pickup, still on my stretcher, and given a tour of the base. Neely Johnson who I was supposed to relieve as a Force Commander, met me with the Flight Commanders for the morning go and saluted me from the C-47.

I was grounded and that was my last combat mission. I tried to talk the Boss out of his decision, but I went home. I was the first guy from Takhli that was picked up from North Vietnam in over nine months that made it back to Takhli. Frank Billingsley did a perfect job the first time he ran a RESCAP and I am the most fortunate person in the world. I never did get to help Neely out. He finished his tour after having led over one third of his total missions into Route Package Six.

Bill Sparks

Once A Thud Driver
The Civilized Sky

Salon · Saturday, Aug. 14, 2010
Well-written article in The National Post, Saturday 14 August 2010.

When I began my career as a flight attendant, I was a 21-year-old with a BA in English and stars in her eyes. I wanted to see every city in the world. I wanted to have adventures that, I hoped, would fuel a writing career some day. Flying was glamorous then, and as I wheeled my suitcase through airports from Chicago to Cairo, kids still pointed and adults still smiled at me. Deregulation had just passed, and I watched as fares began to drop and flying became more accessible to everyone. Yet that did not change our level of service or the passengers’ attitude. A mutual respect existed, and despite the occasional grumpy businessman or harried mother or someone who was just a jerk, I went to work eagerly and left happy. I think it’s fair for me to say the passengers felt the same way.

By the time I hung up my wings in 1986, change had begun. Corporate raiders were buying up airlines, slashing salaries and fares, and cutting amenities. I cannot deny that a job that combines physical labour, standing up for long hours, dealing with people and jet lag is tiring. But the changes in work rules turned tired into exhausted, and the changes in pay turned comfortable into barely able to make mortgage and car payments. Smiling became harder. But passengers still expected the service they’d grown used to. Simple pleasures like cream for their coffee and pillows on their seats disappeared. Before long, they were paying for food and to check their luggage. They sat in seats with less leg room and had fewer choices of flights, and those flights had more connections than ever before. Flight attendants stopped smiling and passengers started grumbling.

Last summer, I used my hard-earned frequent flier miles to upgrade on a United Airlines flight from Honolulu to Chicago. For several years I’d endured long flights with no food, cramped...
So Steven Slater, a flight attendant for 20 years, the son of a flight attendant and a pilot, finally had enough. His dramatic exit from the airline business made a point that he probably didn’t intend. If we had the choice, we’d probably all evacuate these crowded planes. Those slides are meant to be used in emergency situations. When is the industry going to realize that we are all—flight attendants and passengers alike—in an emergency situation?

I understand we can’t return to a time when flying was an unforgettable experience—for positive reasons. When girls like me imagined putting on a uniform and a smile and striding down the aisles of a jet with purpose. When the passengers on that plane felt coddled and safe and cared for, if even for just a few hours.

On Dec. 17, 1903, the Wright brothers made their first flight, an amazing and celebratory achievement. Over a hundred years later, that sense of wonder and celebration is almost completely gone. Maybe Slater will remind us of that. Maybe he’ll remind us of a time not so long ago when the sky really did seem limitless, and those of us up there together still felt we were a part of something extraordinary.