



*Firebird 97 – A year in South Vietnam*

*Aug 1964 – Aug 1965*

By Larry Jefferies

Captain, US Army (RET)

O-5516540

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These are the daily entries from my 'diary' or log book that I kept during my year in Vietnam. At that time, there were no American fighting troops – just us helicopter pilots and some Green Berets assigned to the ARVN<sup>1</sup> units on the ground. The 68<sup>th</sup> Aviation Battalion (aka the "UTT's") was stationed at Tan Son Nhut<sup>2</sup> airport in Saigon (now called Ho Chi Minh City) and were the first to mount quad 30 cal machine guns on the UH-1B helicopters along with 2 pods of 2.75" rockets, which I shall refer to as "Gun Ships"<sup>3</sup>. These were the forerunner of the Cobra gunship and eventually the AH-64 Apache, arguably the world's most awesome fighting machine. Organized into fire teams consisting of a fire team leader and his wing man (whose mission was to protect the leader) with 3 fire teams in the platoon and a platoon leader flying a UH-1B (the 'HOG') armed with 48 of the 2.75" rockets. All of the gunships had a crew chief and a gunner armed with an M-60 machine gun that they deployed out the side doors. Doors on the gunships were removed to reduce weight and to improve the door gunner's ability to shoot back and under the ship. We were the Green Berets private quick response air cover. We provided convoy escort, reconnaissance, and close-in support, 24/7, bad weather or good. Sorry this doesn't read like a story book but that was not my intentions.

I left Wichita on Aug 16, 1964. Flew to San Francisco, then a bus xfer to Travis AFB California. From there it was on to Anchorage AK on a Pan Am Airways contract flight. Pilot warned us just before we landed at 0300 that the runway had just recently re-opened after the Good Friday earthquake<sup>4</sup> and still was not level. Level (?), I've been on roller coasters that were more level than that – but we made it down in one piece. From Alaska, it was the great circle route to Tokyo for more fuel. Since this was a military flight, no one had passports and so we were not allowed off the plane. Forty five boring minutes later we were on our way to Clark AFB in the Philippines. Finally had a chance to get off the plane and stretch our legs after some 18+ hours of flying. If memory serves me correctly, it was mid-morning and the daily monsoon had just ended. Talk about HOT & HUMID! Well, little did I know that I would have to get used to living in a steam bath. From Clark it was a short hop to Tan Son Nhut airport at Saigon. I was picked up by a driver from the 68<sup>th</sup> and delivered to the company area. Met the CO (Maj. Riley) and then to our villa about a block or two outside TSN. The villa was nice, typical center courtyard, 3 stories, bedrooms on 2 & 3 with a day room, dining room and storage on first floor. The wall surrounding the villa was about 8 ft. high and topped with broken bottles embedded in the cement on the top. No windows faced the outside, just gun slits. We had Vietnamese cooks to help our American chef & Vietnamese cleaning staff but they all had to leave at night (not that we didn't trust them). I was given a day to settle in before I started flying.

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<sup>1</sup> ARVN = Army of the Republic of Vietnam

<sup>2</sup> Tan Son Nhut Airport (½military, ½ civilian)

<sup>3</sup> UH-1B armed with four .30cal machine guns (belt fed from 5000 rounds under the crew chiefs seat + 2 pods of seven each 2.75" rockets.

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964\\_Alaska\\_earthquake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964_Alaska_earthquake)

Combat has been described as “long periods of *boredom* punctuated with *moments* of shear panic”. The “*moments*” can be found at 11/20, 12/29, 2/9, 3/3, 4/1 and 6/12. Everything else is somewhat “*boredom*”, except for 4/29 which was a good day.

Notes from the log book follow. They have been copied almost “verbatim” except to correct obvious misspelling and sentence structure. Remember, these were ‘notes’ made in the field.

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First day of flying in Vietnam.

8/22/1964 General orientation & A/C checkout

8/24 (#587)<sup>5</sup> More general orientation & A/C checkout

8/26 More general orientation & A/C checkout

8/27 (#564) My call sign is Playboy 14.

Escort to Phuoc Le<sup>6</sup> then to Phan Nhua Dong –picked up 2 Americans and 5 wounded ARVN. Shot hell out of everything. Final brief at Bien Hoa<sup>7</sup>. Delayed 40 min by WX. Spent 1 hr. chasing ARVN H-34’s and waiting for AF (Air Force) to drop smoke. Playboy-13 took .50 cal hit on way back.

8/28 (#565) Escort to Tan Uyen. Convoy escort from Chon Thanh to An Lo(?). [Note: (?) indicates that the location could not be found on Google Maps. Either it is inadequate or I did not enter the correct name in my log book.] Briefed at Tan Uyen. Landed at Song Be<sup>8</sup>. Refueled. I gave some pennies to little kids. It was just like Xmas in August! Tonight we did STARCOM<sup>9</sup> night recon.

{29.6 hrs. + 31 sorties}<sup>10</sup> in the 6 days since I arrived in country.

8/30 (#565) VIP escort from Phuc Vinh<sup>11</sup> to Phan Viet to Vung Tau<sup>12</sup>. Too bad Phan Viet gets hit so often. It is a nice little beach side resort town.

9/1 VIP escort to Phu Cuong(?) – Absolutely dull. Tonight= STARCOM recon.

9/3 Training flight w/Lt. Reed

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5 (#xxx, copilot) = UH-1B aircraft number and my copilot of the day.

6 10.491391, 107.167939 (Lat/Long)

7 10.975750, 106.818842

8 10.876773, 106.866470

9 STARCOM is a long distance (to USA) radio site but I can’t remember where STARCOM is.

10 {Ft. hrs. + sorties} (sortie = 1 takeoff/landing)

11 10.984643, 106.520994

12 10.375490, 107.096179

9/5 (#655-H Capt. Jobe.) {7.4 hrs. + 10 sorties} since 8/30

Checked on B –Flight. at Thu Da Mot<sup>13</sup>. Poor guys had been there 5 days just sitting around. Then a training flight to gun range for the new gunners. Lt. McGinnis replaced Lt. Hasell in charge of gunners from Hawaii. Still can't believe how close the natives get to our impact area while we are firing. One ship had to check for 'dead' after a couple of wild rocket passes. One of our new gunners put 2 holes in the door behind Woodward. The natives sure like to pick up the brass. It's a wonder a lot don't get killed.

9/6 (#603 Capt. Riley) {3.3 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Left villa 0700. Got briefing (HOG<sup>14</sup>=252.0, Pri=Ch4 122.5,EM=410,Alt 38.1) YELLOW=LZ<sup>15</sup> & friendlies. Took off TSN @ 0905 – went to Special Forces camp for briefing. Departed with Eagle Flight to recon roads for blockages from TSN to Go Dau Ha<sup>16</sup> & return. Rest of flight continued to TSN. No luck, didn't see a thing. Finally got a call from Airborne unit at Cu Chi that was being hit by VC (Viet Cong). Saber 6 (company commander) & I went up and made several passes to help them out. Used all our rockets and almost all our MG ammo. They were pretty well hemmed in even though VC were retreating. ARVN had 30 KIA and 60 WIA. L-19 overhead talked so much we could hardly hear ourselves. On the last pass, lower left gun belt broke & so we landed w/10 ft. of ammo hanging down!

9/7 Went shopping in downtown Saigon.

9/8 (#565 WO Irwin) {7.0 hrs. + 14 sorties}

Left TSN for Ben Cat<sup>17</sup> and landed in a pigpen for briefing. Escorted CU-2 on para-drops. Made two drops of 4 trips each. Shot up countryside when CU-2 took fire. Spent rest of morning escorting green armored bus to a road block and back. Bus outran its tank escort! Escorted convoy rest of way to Ben Cat and on to north. Also squeezed in 2 med-Evac's. During bus escort, got shot at and really tore up the country side this time. – Didn't get shot at any more. Lunch consisted of 2 hot dogs and bread. The Major didn't have anything else. By the end of the day we felt like we were out for hire – probably should have just made a radio call in the blind to that effect. Headed back to TSN @ 1700 – flew formation pretty good. Won \$1.20 at poker which makes a total of about \$20.00 so far this month. Sent 4 rolls of film to be developed – pictures are looking pretty good so far. I am beginning to agree – Viet Nam is a hell of a place to fight a war. Almost drowned in my own sweat today. Worst yet to come.

9/9/ (#567 WO-Paxton) {4.5 hrs. hrs. + 3 sorties}

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13 10.992593, 106.656598

14 HOG = nickname for UH-1B with 2 large (48) rocket pods.

15 Landing Zone

16 11.111506, 106.154905

17 11.152329, 106.595093

Spent the morning going around the idiot circle trying to get my 50 hours so I can start logging Aircraft Commander Time. Only need 3.4 more hours. Changed to (#561 WO-Paxton) More time around the idiot circle.

Just got briefed on a big operation up by Tay Ninh<sup>18</sup> on the Cambodian border – should be quite a hairy operation. We'll have VNAF<sup>19</sup> and everybody in on it.

9/10 (#602 Maj Riley) {2.8 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Departed TSN 0630 – arrived Tay Ninh 0715. Raider Platoon and HQ fire team was to escort slicks into 2 LZ's. Troops would then form blocking position while gun boats came up river on squeeze play. We set at Tay Ninh until 1215 – boats got fired at and were still at Tu Da Mot. Finally went out and dropped troops in another LZ to clear a village. Reconned area and drew no fire – slicks started in – drew fire – smart VC – then made pre-strike on LZ, hootches burning – troops landed. One ship took a shotgun hit. We hit the area again - no more fire – must have got him. Our wing ship got shot at but not hit.

Tried some wild coconuts –pretty good but rather slimy inside. Took a picture of 3 little kids that I gave \$1 each. I got a big kick of that. Kids are kids the world over. It's too bad that some have to live in the filth and poverty that these do.

9/12 (#656 WO-Irwin) {1.1 hrs. + 3 sorties}

On standby today – more waiting as we have no missions. There has been a big lull for the past 3 weeks – it's almost too good to be true –things will probably start popping any day now. Have STARCOM tonight so I will get a little flying done. The newspaper articles I sent home are very true – both the good and the bad.

9/13 (#604 WO-Irwin) {1.2 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Pulled pitch at 0830 with load of enlisted personnel for Vung Tau. Spent a couple of hours on the beach. Got called back about 1400 because of coup. All TSN was on alert. Sat at opn shack until 1700 but nothing happened. Ended evening at bar with songs by Lt. Matlick – best one was Ballad of Viet Nam –tells of chopper pilot getting baptized by fire and of dead VC. So True!

9/14 (#557 WO-Irwin) {1.5 hrs. + 3 sorties}

VIP escort to Duc Hoa to Tan An and return. Very Dull!

(#557 WO-Irwin) {1.3 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Now on escort for ARVN H-34's to Phu Hoa Dong (aka Hotsville!) Didn't even get shot at even though we circled overhead for 10 minutes. Dropped in 2 packs of smokes to advisor on the ground. Must really be bad when you are out of smokes. Then went to little town of Chanh Phu Hoa. The 34's got fired at and had to pull back up. At we started to move

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18 11.713830, 106.060700

19 ARVN Air Force

out I got shot at and we returned the fire. This makes the second time now trip got rather IFR<sup>20</sup> - couldn't see other ships for 5 minutes – was on instruments in the T-storm. Ft. Rucker [*Helicopter school*] would turn over in their grave.

9/15 (#556 Dunn) {1.3 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Out tonight on recon of STARCOM and tank farm<sup>21</sup>.

9/18 (#557 WO-Irwin) {2.4 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Went out to Vinh Long<sup>22</sup> (south towards the Delta) to help the 114<sup>th</sup> strike some hooches and sampans. Were supposed to be lots of VC – didn't see one. Refueled at Vinh Long and talked to Lt. MacNamara for 20 min. He has an airlift section now. Clean place there but no place to go.

9/20 (#654-H Capt. Jobe) w/Dunn&Paxton in another ship. {2.5 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Started toward Tan Uyen<sup>23</sup> to help out FireBird-13. Hamlet was getting overrun by VC. Got to Tu Dau Mot (about halfway) and had to go back. Ceiling was <200ft. and besides a battalion was coming from Tan Uyen to help.

9/20 (#654-H Capt. Jobe) {1.6 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Spent 1+50 flying cover for downed chopped from 120<sup>th</sup> near Tan An. Rain got so bad we landed at Tan An pad and waited. Pilot of downed ship did good job of putting it on a tiny road in the middle of a rice paddy. Spent 1+35 more over downed ship. They finally got 6400 rpm and so out it came.

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<sup>20</sup> Instrument Flight Rules

<sup>21</sup> Tank Farm located on Nha Be River (10.700019, 106.745784) where all incoming fuel for VN is stored.

<sup>22</sup> 10.250899, 105.945278

<sup>23</sup> 11.070856, 106.684099

9/21 (WO-Irwin&me, Robertson & Capt. Fudge) {3.9 hrs. + 12 sorties}

Departed TSN 1020 – went to Tan Uyen – was briefed by the American Advisor. We were to recon the area to the NW for VC. G-2 reported a ‘celebration’ was to be held about 1500-1700 by the VC. The Major and ARVN Lt. Col served us coffee! Finally took off 11:30. Went over area once –nothing. PLAYBOY-13 received a couple of rounds and we struck that area. Refueled at Phouc Vinh and ate lunch. After lunch, we found a road block. PLAYBOY-13 fired a few rounds over their heads and they all cleared out. We had the ARVN stop them for questioning. They reported a company of VC in the village. Observer on PLAYBOY-13 called the Battalion CO and verified it. On 2<sup>nd</sup> pass, WO-1 Irwin put a pair of 2.75” rockets in one house and the whole thing blew up. Must have had ammo or mines in it. Total of 5 houses on fire. Rearmed and refueled and back. Struck creek line the ARVN observer wanted. On the way back, the rain was so bad we couldn’t even see the ground. Finally got there in about 10 minutes.

9/23 (#606 WO-Smith) {2.4 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Took 2 new gunners out to range to practice - all we had was a slick. Guns kept jamming frequently – good thing we weren’t fired at. One gunner put a hole thru the door post behind Smith. Second time now! Flew chow up to Phouc Vinh for the platoon. First time I have really been on my own since I got here. Rained on the way back but nothing bad – didn’t even use the wipers.

9/24 (My Birthday today !) (#556-‘slick’ WO-Hunt) {1.2 hrs. + 3 sorties}

On STARCUM night recon. Explained to Mr. Hunt about slick duty. We were at 3000 ft. over Special Forces camp when ‘40 called and told us to expedite that the weather was getting BAD. About a minute later I ran into a cloud bank – completely IRF. Dropped down to 2000 ft. before we got out – increased airspeed to 90 – cloud bank ahead – turn – descend - still IFR – descend to 1000 – finally out in the clear – rain starting now – continued descent to 150 ft. Raining so hard now wipers can’t keep up even at 60 kts airspeed. All lights on full – had copilot switch to VOR. Can’t see ground – lost the other ships in that last cloud bank. Turbulence very bad – hard to fly on instruments –got to – can’t see and VOR needles reverse. Must be over VOR. Can’t see runway from 150 ft. – there it is- 270 deg left turn and started approach. Wind so bad almost impossible to hover. Finally got it parked and shut down. Complete downpour outside. Copilot said I did a good job – must agree – at least the skids are on the ground!

9/25 (#656 WO Irwin) {6.7 hrs. + 9 sorties}

Today was an Eagle flight without troops. Playboy platoon went to Tan Uyen – got briefed on areas & enemy situation. Then we went out looking for a fight -just kept reconning areas until we drew fire and then we zapped the area. Local commander wanted to use artillery – so we did – biggest laugh I’ve had in a long time. Couldn’t find the smoke. Two batteries were firing – we didn’t know which was which. Finally got on target – 45 minutes late. Overall – shot up a lot of hooches but didn’t get into any real good fights. Too Bad. I

was deadly with the rockets today. They are going to try this for a week and see how it goes. Hope it does. This is what the 68<sup>th</sup> likes.

9/28 (#556 WO Hunt) {1.6 hrs. + 4 sorties}

STARCOM duty tonight.

9/29 (#657 Capt. More) {2.9 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Did a test today with a 'black box' sent from CONUS for us to test. Box was mounted in a slick and we 'shot at it'. It works. It tells you when you are being shot at and number of bullets. Sounds like a good idea.

10/2 (#603 WO Irwin) {5.4 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Troopless Eagle flight again today at Tan Uyen and Phouc Vinh. Didn't get shot at. Shot up several hooches and tree lines – but nothing.

10/5 (#562 Capt. Fudge&me) {6.3 hrs. + 9 sorties}

Riding with fire team leader today. Left TSN 0805 and went to Tan Uyen to support a ground operation. The ARVN S-3 (Operations Officer) gave a good briefing and after coffee we were on our way.. They had three battalions closing in on 5 objectives from 3 different directions. We re-conned ahead of Syncapate-51 and took a couple of rounds – hit the area twice. Went to Phouc Vinh to rearm and refuel. Playboy-11 and 12 relieved us on station. We find that our A/C has a hole thru tail rotor drive shaft. Call for another (#561). Finally get back into the air but 16 & 14, under direction of ARVN commander struck the area. No one knew there were a company of friendlies in there. About 20 wounded. Back to refuel. Same procedure all day – quite a few fire fights going on on the ground. Playboy-12 made a Med Evac and we escorted 54 M(?) for a couple more. ARVN H-34 came in for Med Evac but made no contact with us. We did our best but he drew fire and pilot got shot in the leg. Regiment Commander invited platoon to dinner at Tan Uyen. Those people really sold on 68<sup>th</sup>. Noticed a couple of observers wearing 68<sup>th</sup> pins on their shirts. We get some good ones from the 54<sup>th</sup> Div.

10/6 (#606 Dunn) {2.6 hrs. + 2 sorties}

STARCOM duty tonight. Took radio repairman to tank farm at 0100 – sure was quiet out there when we shut down. Expected to see tracers any minute – but nothing.

10/6 (#567 Hunt) {0.4 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Started out to firing range but turned back by weather.

10/8 (#561 Capt. Fudge&Tyler&Bowden) {3.5 hrs. + 10 sorties}

Flew cover for a crash site and escorted sling load ships and Dustoff<sup>24</sup> in & out of the area. Nothing – absolutely nothing left of the ship. Supposedly took a 37mm AA hit or .50cal and crashed and burned. They recovered 5 bodies (4 American) from the wreck. Also found 1 dead ARVN and 1 VC. Poor VC was just stretched out on road on his back in the hot sun. People in the ship never had a chance. VC closed in right on the crash but my guess is they were already dead. At least the VC didn't get them. Expended on one area. Escorted Phanberg (VNAF's Dustoff) to Thu Dat Mot for Med Evac and back.

10/9 STARCOM w/ Capt. Fudge {1.5 hrs. + 3 sorties}

10/10 (#561 Capt. Fudge) {3.9 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Escorted ground troops from crash site to Saigon.

10/11 (#564 Capt. Fudge) {4.3 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Supported ground operation north of Dua Hoa – no fire just a training exercise.

10/12 (#588 WO Irwin) {1.5 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Arrived Bien Hoa. Took off 1020 – orbit at 1500, flyby @ 200 ft.

10/14 (#564 Capt. Fudge) (#653 Maj. Jarrett&WO Irwin) {6.3 hrs. + 13 sorties}

*[Don't have record of what we were doing, just list of places/hours/sorties.]*

Off @ TSN @ 0730 Landed Phouc Vinh 0800 {4 sorties ???}

Off @ Phouc Vinh Landed Song Be @1415

Off @ Song Be 1430 Landed P(?) 1425

Off @ P??? 1610 Landed Song Be 1650

Off @ Song Be 1715 Landed TSN 1815

10/15 (#603 WO Hunt) {3.3 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Departed TSN 1000 and rendezvoused with VNAV H-34's on way to Tay Ninh. Don't know where we are going. Orbit over Tay Ninh for 30 min – no word yet. Finally land and get word that flight is to escort H-34's to pick up 5 ARVN near Cambodian border that are on a patrol and dressed as VC. *[That sounds low risk !]* L-19 is to come – so back up and orbit some more –finally land and tell Phanberg (ARVN call sign) that “we wait on ground”. Still waiting at 1500. Major is getting itchy pants. Now 1600 – we decide to do it ourselves. The Major says he will take the slick in for the pick-up. The 4 of us take off – Saber 6 (the Major) Playboy-6 & 13 fire teams. Make a high recon – at times we are over the Cambodian border. Finally see a white “T” panel on the ground. Saber 6 sends us down to check it – see 5 people – back up and escort Saber 6 in for pick up. Everything OK – no fire

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<sup>24</sup> Dustoff = Med Evac call sign

received – head home. Major calls for food and booze for them. One had cuts on his neck from being captured by VC. Their radio antenna was shot off. They had been there for 5 days and were sure glad to get out. They thanked us and shook hands with everybody.

10/17 (#587 Capt. Fudge) {1.6 hrs. + 3 sorties}

On slick escort to Thu Dot Mot – set on ground for 2 hours and then back. After we were released, we went down to a new free fire zone south of Nha Be (Tank Farm) to expend. Found 5 sampans. Tore up 1 and saturated the area around the 4 – didn't see anyone though.

10/18 (#605 Capt. Fudge&me) {1.0 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Secondary flight today. Only 1 flight out of primary committed by 0900 so it looks like a slack day. Good thing – am trying to shake a case of the common cold. STARCOM again tonight. (#556 WO Hunt&me)

10/20 (#657 Capt. Fudge&me) (Murray&Hunt) {4.1 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Flew cover for ground unit at Ben Luc. No fire received.

10/21 (#557 Roche&me)+2 more A/C, {2.0 hrs. + 5 SORTIES}

Escort to Nha Be & return. STARCOM tonight.

10/23 {3.3 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Supported ground opn at Bao Trai(?) – struck many areas to include one large village. The rest was just shoot em' up ! Saber 6 (Company CO) joined in on the fun.

10/26 (#564 Capt. Fudge&me) {2.2 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Scrambled to Suoi Da<sup>25</sup> to help unit under ambush. Everything under control by the time we got there. Made Med Evac for 1 KIA and 1 WIA ARVN. The KIA had hole in shoulder and hole in neck. Really looked bad – bled all over the ship. He really died in agony – the look was still on his face.

10/27 (#564 Capt. Fudge&me) {6.6 hrs. + 13 sorties}

Platoon went to Soc Trang<sup>26</sup> for Eagle flight. Most screwed up thing –no briefing to speak of – sat on ground for several hours. Finally struck a couple of areas after ground troops went in. O-club there very nice – have a UH-1B seat mounted on a pedestal at the bar. It is marked "For relating war stories only" !

10/29 (#562 Capt. Fudge&me) { 5.9 hrs. + 12 sorties}

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<sup>25</sup> 11.456589, 106.299008

<sup>26</sup> 9.641340, 105.970642

Departed TSN 0700 for Ben Cat<sup>27</sup>. Coordinated with Maj. Baird for cover of convoy moving from Chau Than (Tây Ninh Province) to Thu Dau Mot. Expended once. Also escorted slick in to Phu Hoa Dong twice – no fire received there.

{1.5 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Platoon & Saber-6 went to Bear Cat for night training at fire team level. Fire team leader dropped the flares and then became wing man. Playboy-11 did real good – then we went up but were forced down because of WX. It was so black we were IFR whenever we turned away from Saigon. (Note: there are NO lights in the country side anywhere – only in Saigon) After the storm we finally got up. Made two perfect passes and impressed Saber 6. He said it was the best he had seen yet.

10/30 (#603 w/Capt. Fudge) {1.5 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Scrambled to Bao Trai for 300 VC in the open. Checked 3 areas but nothing.

**TOTALS SO FAR SINCE IN COUNTRY = 152.3 FLIGHT HRS AND 245 SORTIES.**

11/1 (Capt. Fudge&me, Murray&Hunt) {6.0 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Today was really a bad day. Started last night at 0100 -sound asleep when company scrambled. Bien Hoa was under attack & getting hit hard. Within 20 minutes, company was ready – PLAYBOY-33 already there could see everything. SmokeyRed had flares all over – rounds landing in 118<sup>th</sup> compound & on runway. There were 4 Americans KIA & 25-30 WIA – all seriously. One WIA died today – A1-E crashed of end of runway during scramble – demolished. Walking wounded were flying & driving & on duty today. Two cooks killed – one was blown out of hootch & into another – came down thru roof. We pulled pitch at 0700 to support ground opn there to clear the area. Got diverted enroute to Tan Uyen which was under mortar attack. Still under attack when we got there. Reconned several areas & expended on suspected area. Got word that Maj. Whitlock (who gave dinner for Playboy platoon) was KIA. He & Capt. Floyd heard first rounds land in compound – rolled out of bed & onto floor. Next round landed in their room. Tore stomach out of the Maj. & part of Capt. Floyds foot blown off. Never knew what hit – Capt. passed out with many shrapnel wounds. The Major is the first to be killed that I thought I knew.

Spent day covering a clearing opn north of Bien Hoa – no fire received. Expended on suspected VC battalion location SE of Phouc Vinh – no fire received even though G-2 reported many automatic weapons in area. Whole platoon on standby tonight. They think maybe Tan Son Nhut might get hit.

11/2 {1.0 hrs. + 3 sorties} STARCOM tonight.

11/4 (Fudge&Hunt, me&Dunn) {5.1 hrs. + 7 sorties}

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<sup>27</sup> 11.102779, 106.589598

Went to Ca Mau<sup>28</sup> way down in the delta (Another 20 miles and we would be in the Gulf of Thailand.) for an Eagle Flight. Sat on the ground most of the day. Finally escorted troop ships on a pick-up. There were 30 VC bodies stacked like cordwood on the ground. !!

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**Capt. Riley now CO since Major Irvin punched the Battalion XO in the eye !!!**

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11/7 (Fudge&me, Dunn&Hunt) {6.7 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Re-conned road from south of Tan Uyen to Phouc Hoa and covered convoy move along same road. Expended on a couple of suspected .50 cal positions.

11/8 (Col. Smith + me with Capt. McNamee as door gunner) WOW! What a crew.

Made STARCOM recon and then got diverted to XT544150 near Bao Trai. Compound supposed to be under attack - negative results. What a fire team for first time in command! PLAYBOY-14 also had a Lt.Col. flying with him.

11/10 (Fudge&Dunn, me&Hunt) {7.8 hrs. + 10 sorties} Long day!

Flew cover for ground opn at Tan Uyen – briefings there are #1. The Col. is pretty sharp and always has coffee for the “UTT”.

11/11 (#562Fudge&Hunt,#561 me&Dunn) {3.5 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Re-conned area SE of Ben Luc for ground opn. Got fired at 3 times but no hits. Had to fly under a 150 ft. ceiling so most of it was at 10 ft. off the deck to be safe.

11/13 {1.8 hrs. + 2 sorties}

One escort to Bien Hoa and return. One escort of 3 ARVN H-34's to Nha Be (tank farm) & return.

11/14 {6.0 hrs. + 6 sorties}

11/17 {1.8 hrs. + 6 sorties}

11/18 {2.2 hrs. + 2 sorties}

*[No notes as to what we were doing during 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>.]*

11/20 (Capt. Fudge&Irwin, #565 me&WO-Hunt) {1.3 hrs. + 1 sortie}

*[I guess it was 1 sortie. I did the take off but NOT any landing.]*

Left Tan Son Nhut about 1030 to relieve PLAYBOY-21 on station. First lift of troops taken into LZ northwest of Phou Hoa Dong<sup>29</sup>. Orbited at 2000 ft. – dropped to 1000 and started checking on location of ground troops. PLAYBOY-13 received fire – place fire under him anyway. PLAYBOY-13 receiving it again – and again. Hunt tells me we are under

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<sup>28</sup> 9.177391, 105.175495

<sup>29</sup> 11.020407, 106.563488

continuous fire. Loud bang in the cockpit – thought crew chief dropped something at first then shoulder hurts – large hole in right sleeve & blood all over. I tell Hunt to take controls – I’m hit. Can’t get the seat moved back so I climb over the console dripping blood all the way. Finally get the flak jacket & shirt off and crew chief gets a bandage on it. Pretty good sized hole – about 3” long, 1 ½” wide & ¾” deep ! Mr. Hunt takes it on in to soccer field in Saigon [*normal landing place for Med Evacs to hospital*]. Ambulance gets there about 1 minute after we land.

The round came thru a gap in the armor plating on the seat, hit my pistol belt ammo pouch & armor plating of side of seat and into arm. Dr. Holloway says it just missed my spine.

I hear that Mr. Hunt was somewhat relieved to get it back to TSN.

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Released from Hospital on 12/5/64. I will spend 2 weeks on ground duty until Flt Surgeon says I am ready to fly again.

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To be transferred to 3<sup>rd</sup> Aviation Battalion at Bien Hoa. Big party tonight to pass out plaques. There are 6 of us going to the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

12/16 (#556 me&Elmore) {1.3 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Made a chow run to Vung Tau. **First day back at flying since getting shot.**

12/17 (#588 me&CWO Robertson) {2.3 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Spent morning on standardization ride. Quite a while since I have had to do an autorotation. Robbie was at his best – as usual. New way for low level auto-rotation. I like it better than the Ft. Rucker school method.

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*1500: I am being re-assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon, Company A, 501<sup>st</sup> Aviation Battalion in Bien Hoa (about 15 miles northeast of Saigon). Capt. Stone (ex-Raider) is new platoon leader. Saw WO’s Paxton & Gault (ex-68<sup>th</sup>) and Lt. Dorsey from flight school class.*

*NOTE: I should explain that Company A - 501<sup>st</sup> contains 2 platoons of ‘slick’ ships for carrying troops and our platoon {call sign Firebird} of gunships.*

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12/18 (#922 me&Ginter, #924 Butler&Banaszak) {1.9 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Made recon and 2 strikes NW of Phouc Vinh. Made visual recon and strikes NE of Tan Uyen.

{2.6 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Made simulated night rocket passes. New fire team still very rough & doesn't follow SOP and not enough things are SOP ! Looks like a lot of work to do.

12/19 (#924 me&Ginter, #922 Butler&Albert) {1.7 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Went up to Tan Uyen and flew overhead cover for Syncapatge-52. Expended on one area. Observer was surprised and happy to see the 'Playboy' patch on my flak jacket. "Playboys" have a widespread reputation.

12/20 (#934 me&Albert) {0.5 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Picked up a load of 'party people' from Saigon.

12/21 {4.6 hrs. + 5 sorties}

More practice lifts and some night firing at Tan Uyen.

12/22 (#923 me&Albert) {4.7 hrs. + 10 sorties}

Still more practice lifts. Made 3 lifts today to old range and another to Bear Cat at night. Finished up with some night firing on the range.

12/25 **Merry Christmas** {3.7 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Got up at 0400 – took off 0630 for Tay Ninh. Seemed like everyone from the 145<sup>th</sup> was there. Big operation to south of Tay Ninh. Supposed to be 4 American prisoners there. We laid a tear gas screen to the east side to block movement. Put in several lifts of troops but couldn't find anything. Ended up by striking area and covering it with tear gas and vomit gas. Merry Xmas VC ! Tomorrow we go operational. Formation at 0800.

12/27 (#921 me&Ginter, #922 Butler&Albert) {1.5 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Went to Thu Dau Mot to cover a convoy. Convoy never left ! Typical ARVN operation.

12/28 (#931 me&Albert, #932 Butler&Banaszak) {7.3 hrs. + 10 sorties}

Spent the entire day at Bien Gia north of Ba Ria<sup>30</sup>. Hamlet had been under attack all night. Reconned area but found nothing. Flew overhead cover for 2 companies. They became heavily engaged and had to withdraw. Didn't draw any fire all day.

12/29 (Ginter&Butler, me&Albert) {4.0 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Started lifting troops into Bien Gia – total of 6 companies. Two ships shot down from the 118th. One was lifted out and the other was repaired. There were five .50 cal positions in the area and 3 more 30 cal positions. The 68th (my old unit – the Playboys) had Raider-23 shot down. Lt. Paul Murray had a broken ankle and a bad cut. Mr. Sullivan went out thru the windshield when they crashed. Tail rotor failed and the tail boom came off. Ship burned but everyone got out. Crew chief had 9 broken ribs. A1-E's bombed the 50 cal

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<sup>30</sup> 10.509551, 107.181589

positions and got 2 of them. Two ARVN companies gave up and 6 Americans were killed. Last transmission we heard was "They have us surrounded. My company is surrendering. It looks like we are going to be captured." That was the last we heard from 2-8-Alpha Watertown.

12/30 (Ginter&Albert, me&Banaszak) {4.2 hrs. + 8 sorties}

They shipped Lt. Murray home today. We took in two more lifts (5 companies). Stood by rest of AM. Went to Ben Luc for a visual recon and SF (?) in the PM. Nothing. Found out tonight that the 50 cal ship from the 68th blew up & burned midair. Killed Roy Azbill, Mr. Morgan, Sgt. Porter and a new gunner. They didn't have a chance.

12/31 (Ginter&me, Butler&Albert) {2.0 hrs. + 5 sorties}

More support for yesterday's troop lift. What a way to end the year.

## Happy New Year – now 1965 !

1/1 {3.7 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Back to Bien Gia with more troops. We have now put in some 1500 – 2000 ARVN troops in there now. The VC have carried off some 600-700 dead according to a priest in the village.

1/3 {1.1 hrs. + 1 sortie} On standby all day.

1/4 {1.8 hrs. + 3 sorties} On standby all day.

1/5 (#920 Ginter&Albert,#921 me&Banaszak) {3.9 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Started out with a CA [*Don't remember what "CA" stood for. Maybe someday I will remember and update this.*] in Bien Gia area. No fire received. Landed Vung Tau & stood by all day – released @ 1800. While on way back to Bien Hoa, 9-3 reported that Sgt. Kitchen had been shot in the hand & they were enroute to Saigon. Landed Bien Hoa and received mission to escort a slick back into Bien Gia with 2 medics. Took off from Bien Hoa @ 2100 – so black we can hardly see the horizon – almost IFR. Slick made it in OK. ARVN dropped 2 flares overhead and silhouetted us. Lucky we did not get any 50 cal fire. Made a couple of firing passes for the ground commander and then home.

1/6 (#921 Ginter & Albert, #926 me & Banaszak) {4.7 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Took off 0600 & went to Vung Tau. Received briefing and then made 4 lifts from strip near Bien Gia to the mountain north of Vung Tau. No fire received. Released @1200. Off all afternoon but got scrambled after dinner. Long Than near Bear Cat was under attack. Firebird 91 picked up an observer. Then we got a call that a VNAF L-19 (small fixed wing observation plane) was down in the area. We found the area and Firebird 96 went down to check on fire. Wreck confirmed. He got out and checked – but no pilot. We covered the entire area with searchlights but no sign of a parachute. Lucky we didn't draw fire because

we had the searchlights on for about 30 minutes. I got shot at once but not hit. Some ground troops in the area. We couldn't find anything and went home.

1/7 (Me&Albert,Butler&Banaszak) {1.7 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0930. Went to B.H. soccer field for briefing. Convoy moving along road next to river north of here. Departed & reconned road from destination to convoy. Then over for a look at a fort that VC had taken to see if they had built it up any. No sign of anything. Covered convoy to destination north of airfield – no fire received & nothing sighted. Landed 1130. Spent rest of day loafing around opn shack. Shotgun-6 got burned on face when test fire pit exploded from excess gas. Nothing real bad. The idiot fired 150 rounds straight and ruined the barrel!

1/9 (#920 Butler&Ginter, #922 Me & Albert) {3.7 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0650 for Tay Ninh. Landed and went to MAAG post(90) for coffee. Set around for a couple of hours until weather improved some and then we went out west near the Cambodian border to recon some possible LZ sites. Back for lunch & nothing until 1500. Then out NE of Tay Ninh Mountain for some more recon of LZ's and VC areas. No fire received. Shot up 1 sampan & strafed an old hamlet that the VC had improved. Refueled and headed home – all told – a dull day almost.

1/11 {1.3 hrs. + 2 sorties}

VVBH [*Don't know what "VV" stood for. Maybe someday I will remember.*] to Vung Tau & return. First day of the company at Vung Tau. (?)

1/12 (me&Capt. Stone) {3.7 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Made a lift into area just north of Vung Tau on the mainland. Stood by rest of day.

1/13 (me&Dorsey) {0.5 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Went up to Ba Ria to check on ammo storage possibilities. On standby all day.

1/14 {2.8 hrs. + 5 sorties}

1/15 {1.2 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Received word from 68th – they had another ship crash – ran into power lines and then into a house and burned.

Capt. Irwin – KIA

Mr. Byers – critical with broken legs & head injury.

Crew chief – 2nd & 3rd degree burns.

Gunner – KIA

1/16 {0.7 hrs. + 1 sortie}

1/17 {2.0 hrs. + 2 sorties} [NOTE: no record in log book as to what we did. Must have been VERY busy not to be able to make entries.]

1/19 (#926 Ginter&Butler,#924 me&Albert) {3.7 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Spent day on standby until noon – then a short recon east along the coast. No action. Made another recon & struck same area on side of mountain that we struck in the morning. About 2200, we got word at the hotel to scramble. Threw on a jump suit, grabbed the Majors jeep and away we went. Phu My-31 was under mortar attack and Lt. Dorsey with Firebird-97 was already there. We relieved him on station. Smokey Red was working away and A1-E's came in & worked over area (bombs). We struck a target and they said it was right in there. They had 20-25 wounded to include a few Americans. No real good account yet.

1/20 (#925 me&Capt. Stone, #927 Freeburg&Obyrne) {1.7 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Made recon at 1700 up into operational area. Checked several areas at low level. Found 2 road blocks but no action. Went on up to Binh Gia & expended on area across road to the west.

1/21 (#924 me&Albert) {1.3 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Took #924 to Bien Hoa for P.E. Returned to Vung Tau about 2100 to find rest of platoon in middle of a fire fight east on the coast. Sneaky petes finally found something! Set at opn shack until 0100 & then went back to hotel.

1/22 (#924 me&Stanford) {0.9 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Made a lift into area where fire fight took place. No fire received at LZ. Took off and started back when 2 air bursts went off. Some dumb crew chief had thrown out 2 hand grenades. Firebird-96 just about shot up some friendlies because he thought we were receiving fire !

1/22 {08 hrs. + 1 sortie} Night recon.

1/23 {2.3 hrs. + 2 sorties} Escorted five VNAF H-34's and six slicks in for a troop pickup.

1/24 {1.3 hrs. + 2 sorties} Escorted two H-34's in for troop pickup.

1/26 (#921me&Butler, #920 Ginter & Albert) {1.7 hrs. + 2 sorties} CA north of Binh Gia.

(#921 Capt. Stone&me) (7.5 hrs. + 9 sorties) [no notes in log book as to what we did.]

1/28 VVVT to VVBH (?) {0.6 hrs. + 1 sortie}

1/29 VVBH to VVVT (?) {0.6 hrs. + 1 sortie} Friday night alert at Vung Tau.

1/30 (#920 me&Bishop) {1.2 hrs. + 4 sorties}

1/31 (#924 Capt. Stone&Bishop, #925 Maj. Henderson&me) {3.2 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Went to Thu Dau Mot and stood by most of the day. Finally made a lift near Phu Ha Dong.

2/2 (#924 Capt. Stone&Albert, #925 me&Clapp) {0.6 hrs. + 1 sortie}

2/3 (#924 Capt. Stone&Albert, #925 me&Clapp) {2.9 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Spent preceding evening (2/2) at Vung Tau. Next day during G-2 recon, we spotted many VC flags. The other fire teams had already gotten several so we figured it was our turn. Reconed area and I went down while Capt. Stone covered me. It was on a pole over an archway on the road just north of Binh Gia<sup>32</sup>. No Problem! *[I recorded map coordinates as "48PYS450950. When I convert MGRS coords to lat/long, it places it in middle of a field but in about the right place in the country. Probably didn't get correct coord's to start with.]*

2/4 (#924 Capt. Stone&Clapp, #925 me&Albert) {2.5 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Went down to Thu Dau Mot to drop off a ground advisor. On the way over, we spotted several VC flags. Capt. Stone picked up some more on the way back. Relieved Firebird-93 at Vung Tau and when FIREBIRD-97 relieved us in PM, we went east along the coast looking for flags. Spotted several at same area where we got some before. Capt. Stone covered me & I picked up 1 more flag for the gunner. Total for the platoon is 18 flags & 3 banners & 1 Russian carbine. (48PYS480650)

2/8 (#920 Ginter&me,#921 Butler&Albert) { 1.6 hrs. + 3 sorties}

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VVBH – VVVT and G-2 recon *[still haven't figured out what the "VV" stands for. BH is Bien Hoa and VT is Vung Tau]*

2/9 {4.2 hrs. + 10 sorties}

Two lifts west of Binh Gia. The 2nd LZ was burning – Capt. James ship went IFR after taking 5 rounds and crashed. Gunners leg was broken and ship burned. Everyone else out OK. Raider-21 (Lt. Reed) draws fire at same time and Mr. Urban was KIA & gun ship went down. Capt. Johnson (68th) was WIA in arm and had to be shipped back to States.

2/10 (#927 me&Rhodes) {0.9 hrs. + 1 sortie}

2/11 (#927 me&Rhodes) {1.3 hrs. + 2 sorties}

2/12 {8.5 hrs. + 12 sorties}

Covered Redhot 4,5,6,7 in gnd opn west of Binh Gia – (same as 2/9) Moved west to Phouc My & dropped in water & beer to them and then covered them during convoy move back to Dot Do & Vung Tau.

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<sup>32</sup> 10.649616, 107.263898

2/13 {2.6 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Had the Firebird-93 fire team today. Started day on standby. Got scrambled to Tan Uyen to help Special Forces unit that had been overrun and split. Got sent to Ben Luc with Firebird-97 and covered airlift to same town that Playboy-13 & 14 saw VC flag on 11 Nov. No action this time.

2/14 (#924 me&Robinson) {1.0 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Got scrambled to cover lift of Special Forces out of Tan Uyen – 3 lifts.

2/15 (#922 Dorsey&Patton, me&Gault) {3.3 hrs. + 3 sorties}

VVBH – VVVT – checked around Ba Ria on way down. Had report of being attacked. Found Nothing. Made recon around Binh Gia and found nothing. Ran into first rain shower. Looks like the wet season (monsoons) is coming back. On standby at Vung Tau at night.

2/16 (me&Gault, Dorsey&?) {1.8 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Scrambled for downed A/C but – false alarm.

2/17 ASSIGNED TO FIREBIRD 93 FIRE TEAM.

(#920 Ohlenburger&Rhodes, #927 Paxton&me) {2.9 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Went to Xuan Loc and reconned road to east for tax collectors. Expended on several areas. Went on to Vung Tau for night standby. Capt. Ohlenburger seems to run a good fire team. Just couldn't work with Capt. Ginter & Butler. Ginter too slow and sloppy and Butler too smart alec & know-it-all. He just does not do what I tried to teach him – has his own ideas – not too good.

2/17 (#920 Ohlenburger&Rhodes, #927 Paxton&me) {1.7 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Firebird 93+97+96 hid behind mountains east along the coast while Navy shelled area. Then we went in & checked it. Caught 7 VC running down road and made several passes at them. Only 1 got away.

2/17 {1.3 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Escorted slick along coast & round Binh Gia. Contoured along beach on way back.

2/18 (same) {0.7 hrs. + 1 sortie} VVVT to VVBH

2/19 (#920, me & Sgt. Shumaker&SP4 Carpenter&Autrey) {1.0 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Went to Bear Cat to perform duties of Armament Officer – in other words – bore sight & zero a ship.

Returned to villa & had dinner. Just starting to relax when scrambled. We had been on alert all afternoon as Saigon was having another coup. But this time they were reported to be bombing Tan Son Nhut. The ARVN hauled out all the big stuff – quad 5's, rocket launchers, & 20 mm's. They had the front gate to Bien Hoa AFB barricaded and nobody went out without 5 people and a machine gun in the truck. We manned the truck and made it to the flight line. Set for a while and finally went back. Called again about 2130 to maybe relieve Firebird-91 at Vung Tau. Chopper picked us up in the rice paddy next to villa. Too slow and risky going thru town.

2/20 VVBH – VVVT – VVBH – Tan Uyen {1.9 hrs. + 4 sorties}

2/21 Party !

Had a steak & beer party out at flight line for the Firebirds. Mess hall brought own steaks, salad, beans & a ¼ ton trailer of beer. We cooked steaks right on the flight line. After dinner the crew chiefs threw Sgt. Shumaker in the trailer of water, then the pilots put Capt. Stone in. He was followed by Capt. Ohlenburger (Firebird 93) & Capt. Ginter (91) & Lt. Dorsey (97) & Lt. Reynolds (leaving for USA). Then everything broke loose and everyone went in to include Capt. Cary (Opns), Capt. Stanford (Intel Officer) & Capt. Crouch (XO). The Major just made it away but XO says he will get Maj Henderson next time for sure. After party, the pilots all went to the Jupiter for a while and then to the 118th Club. Everyone had on their red Firebird hats. The next day during the ceremony, Colonel Cunningham gave us the twice over & now no more red hats except on flight line. Sorry 'bout' that ! At least we will still wear the Firebird patch.

2/22 {1.3 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Reconned area north & east of Bien Hoa. Lots of weapons positions dug. Could be they are getting ready for another attack. !

2/23 {2.5 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0720 for Vung Tau. Arrived 0800 and after waiting around & having coffee, we went back to Phu My to wait for convoy. Waited in the heat until 1400. Ate C-rations for lunch. Cranked up & took off to find the convoy. No more convoy – the rest of it had already gone past. Finally got released so back to Vung Tau to pick up 2/Lt Thorne from Airlift platoon – new man for training. Then home by way of Saigon.

2/24 (#924 Paxton&me, #925 Capt. Ohlenburger&2/Lt.Thorne) {2.4 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Went over to Thu Dau Mot to check on a road block and didn't find anything. Friendlies moving in so we left. Went to Tan Uyen and picked up a target and took new gunner out for some practice. Made several passes expending all our ammo. But we couldn't seem to draw any fire.

1500 – Picked up 3 slicks from 118th and made a recon to the east of Bien Hoa with some new troops who had never been in choppers before. Landed troops to check some

workers in the field but didn't find anything. Tonight the fire team is going to take Capt. Ohlenburger to Saigon and show him around.

2/25 {1.8 hrs. + 2 sorties} VVVT – TSN

2/26 {2.7 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Went to TSN in the morning for a meeting for all armament officers. There were representatives from all Corps areas. We were told about the new 40mm grenade launcher (XM-5) and were shown the latest in body armor and we gave them suggestions on how to change the XM-14 (50 cal) so that it would be worth using. Spent the rest of the afternoon on the range zeroing a ship while the rest of the company was on a CA to the north east of Vung Tau & 2 lifts into Binh Gia. Got lucky tonight and managed to 'odd-man out' for the night alert. Gave me a chance to get in a little TGIF for a change. Wheee !

2/27 (#934 me&Paxton) {0.5 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Departed Bien Hoa at 0630 to go to TSN to pick up Sgt. Schumaker and SP/5 Lewis who were having their "night out on the town". Had coffee at snack bar and returned 0710. Set at villa until noon waiting on word from Vung Tau where rest of company is on a big CA.

2/28 (#927 Capt. Ohlenburger&me, #920 Lt. Thorne&Paxton) {0.6 hrs. + 1 sortie}

VVBH to VVVT

{2.2 hrs. + 3 sorties} Covered mass med-evac caused by our own bombers had 4 KIA and 15 WIA. Set rest of morning at Vung Tau – ate lunch & returned to Bien Hoa to standby there. Very hot today even thou the past several days have been rather cloudy. You can definitely tell that the rainy season is getting closer.

**TOTALS SO FAR TO 1 MAR 65 = 352.6 FLIGHT HRS AND 557 SORTIES.**

3/1 {5.1 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Spent the entire day out at Bear Cat range trying to zero a couple of ships. Not too much luck or speed. Had one case of 'drifting guns' and another of rockets that wouldn't go where you wanted them to. Right now, three of the ship are actually worse than when I started. Sorry 'bout that. The HOG will have to go out one of these days. Right now they are rigging up the 19 rocket pods until we get our regular 24 rocket pods.

3/2 Didn't do any flying at all today. Spent most of the day taking care of a report of survey, a job order request for lighting at the flight line and putting a canvass cover on the ammo trailer. Capt. Stone brought in #920 with NO hydraulics. Finally got the Firebird sign up at the villa complete with flower pots and beaded curtains. We also had the first rain of the season here this afternoon. Now I will have to find some way of covering my motor scooter.

*[Not sure when I bought it, but I acquired a Vespa motor scooter (very used – but it runs). I will use it to get to/from the AFB and the villa and into town.]*

3/3 (#920 me&O'Byrne) {7.4 hrs. + 12 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0640 for Vung Tau. Refueled and went to Dot Dau to pick up troops. Went northeast along the coast and put them on the beach. Made 3 lifts - 68<sup>th</sup> Playboys made the prestrike and we received no fire. Back to Vung Tau on standby for a couple of hours. Then we went up to an LZ northeast of the beach and started shuttling troops up to the mountain near Xaun Loc<sup>33</sup>. On the first lift up, my aircraft had tail rotor failure. There was a violent shudder & yaw to the right. Called FIREBIRD-93 and told him what had happened. We started back to Bien Hoa. There were several more bad vibrations on the way back. I was just hoping that the tail boom would stay on. Couldn't tell what was happening. We made a low level approach across the active runway to runway 15 for a running landing. Started to put it down on the dirt but a small road with ditches on both sides made me put it down on the PSP<sup>34</sup>. Before I could get back on the dirt, we landed. Airspeed about 40 kts and we hit straight on. Started to yaw right but got it stopped. Then it started to yaw left and went off the PSP, across a very shallow ditch and on to the dirt where we wanted it. But as it crossed the shallow ditch, the nose just scraped the ground. It cracked the right cheek bubble and tore a small hole in the radio compartment. Nothing bad at all. It seems that some bearing was put on wrong and failed.

3/3 {1.2 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Night of 3/3. Got called out of dinner on a scramble. Small hamlet to north of Tan Uyen was under mortar and small arms attack. Saber 6 & 7 were there plus some Bandits who were expending to the north & west. A large T-storm to the NE forced everyone to the west. Saber 6 & 7 got into it and went IFR. Saber 7 called that he was getting vertigo and was going to try to head home. Everyone made it back OK but things were pretty bad for a while. The attack finally stopped at 4 KIA and 19 WIA.

3/04 {0.3 hrs. + 1 sortie} Bore sighting one gun ship.

3/04 {1.4 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Called to Phouc Vinh during dinner. Supposed to have a couple of companies of VC up there and they wanted a fire team to make a VR (visual recon). Looked over a couple of areas but didn't see anything (as expected). Ended up by just running around shooting up everything. Hit an old village and burned up several hootches. Set several fields on fire with smoke grenades. Didn't exactly please the Major on board because we shot up the wrong area. Serves them right for calling so late and then not telling us what we were to do until we got there. Made for a lot of rushing around for nothing.

3/5 {0.7 hrs. + 1 sortie} Bore sighted #926 and then messed around the rest of the day. Went to town and had new handle grips put on motor scooter. Ordered 2 new shirts and

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<sup>33</sup> 10.941791, 107.375611

<sup>34</sup> PSP is "pierced steel plank" or Marston Mat. Developed in WW II.

a cover for the roll pillow for my bed. Now I have a matching pillowcase and cover out of what looks like leopard skin!

3/6 {4.4 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Departed VVBH @ 0640 for Vung Tau. Refueled there and then escorted the company as they started carrying civilians & baggage & children from Binh Gia to Ba Ria. We made 3 trips – troops up and civilians back. Refueled Vung Tau & returned for 3 more trips. Refueled Bien Hoa and then made a lift of troops from Tan Uyen to Phouc Vinh. On the way back, the Firebirds broke off and hit a “suspected VC printing plant” that Tan Uyen gave us.

3/7 On standby all day and all night until 0500 of 3/8.

3/9 No fly.

3/10 (#921 Me&Thorne) {2.3 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Took 2/Lt. Thorne (145<sup>th</sup> Airlift Platoon – TDY for training) out to the range and went thru bore sighting and zeroing an armed ship and some of the trouble shooting. Then dropped him off at Vung Tau. He was called back early because his platoon is moving to Nha Trang<sup>35</sup> in about a week.

3/11 (#922 Capt. Stone&me) {5.0 hrs. + 11 sorties}

Long day with Firebird-97 fire team !

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0645 for Tu Dau Mot. Sat at soccer field until 0930 when we were scrambled. One of the boats in the river convoy had hit a mine & was sinking & they had several wounded. We reconned area around them & FIREBIRD-96 drew fire a little further up the river. We expended on the area. Escorted two Dustoff<sup>36</sup> ships in for the med-evacs + 1 slick. Back to Phu Loi<sup>37</sup> to refuel and lunch. About 1430, we were scrambled again for a reported company of VC in the open at the ground operation we were also covering NW of Go Dau Ha. Looked all around but couldn't see anything. Struck one area where they were supposed to be. Lots of people moving out of the village the friendlies were in so Firebird-97 (Lt. Dorsey) picked up one and took him to the HQ for questioning. Refueled, ate dinner and went back over convoy on river. Drew fire over the Iron Triangle<sup>38</sup> and acknowledged it with some fire of our own. Reconned river ahead of convoy and 96, 97, 98 all drew fire from south bank of river to the south of Ben Suc. The convoy pumped in 20mm, 40mm & 81 mm mortar all along it and we expended all along the area. Departed shortly after dark and returned to Bien Hoa.

3/12 (#924) {2.3 hrs. + 1 sortie}

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<sup>35</sup> 12.245219, 109.189058

<sup>36</sup> Dustoff = Med evac ship's call sign

<sup>37</sup> 10.991517, 106.682600

<sup>38</sup> 11.111793, 106.565134

Took ship to Bear Cat and zeroed all 3 systems. Slept rest of day & worked on a report of survey that evening. Spent a couple of hours talking to Lt. Mike Bartelme (Red Hat 5) who was in the ground opn west of Binh Gi on 2/9 – 2/12. He was the one that we had tried to para-drop water into.

3/13 {6.0 hrs. + 12 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0615 with the entire company. Arrived Tan An<sup>39</sup> @ 0650. Company loaded troops and we made two lifts from Tan An to an LZ east on the river. Company with Firebird-97 returned to Bien Hoa. Firebird -93 & 96 stayed for overhead cover. After refueling we waited near Tan An. Got a call to go pick up a POW He was in complete uniform w/maps & documents & weapons. After they questioned him, he told them how they had watched us make the recon but when we dropped the yellow smoke to mark the LZ, they started to hide because they knew they were in for some trouble. Later in the morning, we caught a VC trying to swim across the river. We set up a daisy chain and had ourselves a regular shooting gallery. He was carrying his field pack w/rifle and I could even see an entrenching tool. Every time we put a pair of rockets beside him, he would pop up out of the water a couple of feet. We finally gave up on the rockets and just kept using the machine guns. We really tore up the water. Finally one of the door gunners put a burst right in him. Then we strafed along the bank where there were supposed to be some more. When the ARVN troops moved in later, they found 10 dead. On the way home, we went by Bo Bo Canal in the Plain of Reeds. We started making passes along the canal and left about 7 miles of hootches in flames.

3/14 No Flight.

3/15 {2.3 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0745 for Tan Uyen. We were briefed on the ground operation and waited over coffee. About noon, III Corps called us to Thu Da Mot 'ASAP'. As usual, they didn't need us. Finally returned to Bien Hoa for lunch. About 1700, we escorted the company on the extraction from just north of the Iron Triangle to Phu Loi.

3/16 (#925 Ohlenburger&Paxton, #924 me&Obyrne) {7.3 hrs. + 17 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0720 for Han Quan. Arrived, were briefed, had coffee & made recon to the west. Refueled at Phouc Vinh & went to Chan Thanh – made recon to southeast & checked roadblock. Refueled, ate lunch & joined Firebird-96 at Phouc Vinh. III corps called us to XS740700 to cover a lift. The LZ was near the river to the west & was between two burning towns – compliments of the 68th pre-strike. Put in 2 lifts, refueled at Tan An & returned. Had a brief wait on ground and then assumed overhead cover. Village to east had just been hit by A1-E's and was burning. Hundreds of refugees moving away from area. Firebird-93 drew heavy fire. They took 1 round thru windshield and out the top. Just missed Paxton. Expended on a couple of areas and set 3 houses on fire. Then Playboy-16

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<sup>39</sup> 10.533166, 106.403231

(Capt. Jarrett) showed up in his HOG and he and Firebird-96 leveled two villages where 93 got fire. Total of 5 villages & 10 houses on fire when we left. Refueled & re-armed at TSN and headed home by way of Tan Uyen where we expended on a target they gave us.

3/17 No flight.

3/18 (#926 Ohlenburger&me, O'Byrne&Paxton) {4.5 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0720 for Xuan Loc. Received briefing. We were to cover a train convoy from Bien Hoa to Phan Thiet. We called "Railroad" and told him we were his. He said "Gosh, that's great. That is really good having you guys up there." We made a recon ahead of the 3 trains and on our next trip back to the rear he called us and told us "you guys sure look good up there – that's nice". We covered him almost all the way to Phan Thiet where we left him with a couple of A1-E's. When we told him we were leaving for fuel, he said "I sure appreciate having you guys up there. I'll probably never see you but thanks a lot – it sure is nice." Something like that just makes everything seem worthwhile. He was so glad to have us that he was literally bubbling over with joy. The rest of the day we sat at Xuan Loc doing nothing. They had us and just didn't want to turn us loose. We went out once and checked on a suspected VC road block but couldn't find anything but some women at the location.

- All the "Firebird" heads are up outside the rooms now. (??)

3/19 (#926 Ohlenburger&O'Byrne,me&Paxton) {7.3 hrs. + 10 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0720 for Phouc Vinh. Refueled & went on to Loc Ninh where we picked up an observer and a VC prisoner who was going to point out the area where HQ was and the big wheel who had killed 3 Americans. He even had brought back a picture of the chief wearing one of the American's pistols. We expended on the area and then were called to Xuan Loc. We covered a convoy from Xuan Loc up Hiway 20 to Da Kai. The friendlies had all moved out of town and the VC were burning it. The Bandits caught them all trying to get in the sampans & annihilated most of them. We got about 15 coming out of one building after I put a rocket into the building. We got a couple more hiding in the sampan. Before we left, I went in low level and sunk about 20 sampans.

3/20 {38 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0720 for Xuan Loc. Refueled and went up to Da Kai & flew overhead cover for "Bowling Ball" for a while. Village was about 98% destroyed – nothing going on. Friendlies in the village and refugees moving in to collect personal goods. Refueled @ Xuan Loc and ate lunch. Set around the rest of the afternoon until 1700. Then off to cover the convoy returning to Long Thanh & Phou My. Quiet trip. Finally got back at 2000. Got another big lift tomorrow just north of Cu Chi.

3/21 (#926 Ohlenburger&me) {3.3 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Spent morning on standby for a lift. Tried to get #926 zeroed in the PM but were called on the lift. Escorted company just north of Cu Chi. Bandits had received fire so we suppressed on the left side of LZ. Refueled at Phu Loi & returned for overhead cover. Drew fire all afternoon. Shot up one place and then troops claimed we wounded 3 friendlies. Must have drawn fire at least 15 times. I saw 2 tracers go past once. One got the rotor blade but we didn't know it until we landed. The people on the ground were really bad – they didn't know where anybody was and couldn't mark their position right. We finally just pulled away from the area and orbited at 1500 so we wouldn't confuse them anymore.

3/22 {4.8 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Spent 4 hours at the range getting #925 zeroed. At last I have found a way to standardize the ships. I use the radio tower at the soccer field to set the sights and put 6 deg or 105 mils elevation on the pods. Now I can boresight everything to the bottom post that sticks out from the tower. The new 10 pound warheads do a real good job with the super quick fuse. It explodes outward instead of upward. Made airfield recon and spent the night on night alert.

3/23 {3.2 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0730 for Xuan Loc. Starting to cloud up like the rainy season. Escorted two trucks down the highway to a hamlet. They were carrying rice. Then we went over east hunting for a VC Battalion Headquarters. We drew fire out of one place & expended on it. Refueled and went to another village to escort a convoy of Lambretta's but could only see 4 or 5 instead of the 26 that there were supposed to be. So off again to make matchsticks at a suspected supply dump. Slept all afternoon and tonight the company is going night flying – as if we needed it. {Another 1.0 hrs. + 2 sorties.}

3/24 {1.8 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Picked up observers at soccer field and went south toward Vung Tau where the swamp starts. They had a couple of companies moving thru the area and a force on board sampans looking for a VC hospital. Looked all over the area but didn't see anything.

3/25 (#922 me&O'Byrne, #920 Paxton&Coyan) {1.8 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Set around on standby until 1400 and then I took the team to Thu Duc which is the ARVN Infantry and Armor School. They wanted us to look at an area to their south that was supposed to contain a hard corps VC platoon. We spent about an hour but couldn't find anything. Ate dinner and went back for the night alert standby. Had a very peaceful evening.

3/26 (#926 Capt. Ohlenburger&Coyan, #927 me&Paxton) No flight. Set around all day waiting for a CA but it never came.

3/27 (#926 Capt. Ohlenburger&Paxton, #927me&O'Byrne) {4.2 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0600. Stopped at Phu Loi to pick up troops and then went on to Tay Ninh. Company received some fire on the way up just after sunrise. Just about caught the Firebirds off guard. Most of the pilots were sleeping and letting the co-pilots do the flying. Refueled at Tay Ninh and made 2 lifts to the north east of the mountain. The area had been worked over for 30 minutes by B-57's and 15 minutes by A1-E's and finally the 68th or rather the 197th as it is now called. Refueled and made a third lift into the LZ. By this time we were starting to draw quite a bit of fire coming into & leaving the LZ. Ate lunch at Tay Ninh and finally returned to Bien Hoa about 1500 and released.

3/28 (#923 Capt. Stone&me) {3.5 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Didn't do much this AM. Worked on the motor scooter for a while. Departed Bien Hoa @ 1330 for Loc Ninh. Company picked up troops and we escorted them into 2 LZ's to the southwest of Loc Ninh Very quiet. Refueled at Hon Quan & returned about 1600 and extracted the troops. They captured 1 crossbow and the local VC province chief.

NOTE: from the 3/18 results of strike on area that VC pointed out = 8 dead.

3/29 to 3/31 Time off ! Went to Saigon and went shopping.

4/1 (#922 Ohlenburger&me, O'Byrne&Coyan) {8.7 hrs. + 18 sorties} WOW !

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0615 for Tan An – very cloudy – in fact clouds right on the deck – 1 mile visibility. Made two lifts to the same area where we shot the man crossing the river on 3/13. Returned to Tan Son Nhut, refueled and hauled 2 more lifts from Ben Luc to the area. SilverHouse-32 was in heavy contact and had the VC in a village and dug in. Finally got an A1-E strike on it and leveled it. When we were called off the operation, Firebird-91,97 & 96 had about 20-25 VC KIA – mostly trying to swim away or in boats. Ground troops had 5 POW + 3 weapons. We refueled at Bien Hoa, grabbed a sandwich and went to Duc Hoa. Were briefed by the Battalion S-3 (Intelligence). At the end of the briefing, Capt. Jarrett made a comment that the Colonel repeated so everyone could hear. “Well, here goes Duc Hoa number five. We might as well get it over with.” He didn't know how true that would be - or did he? We made the first lift west of the river near 2 hard core VC battalions. There were three .50 cal in the area. The started with an artillery barrage and then A1-E's. The 197th suppressed and we suppressed being the first into the LZ. Received a little fire. Made a 2nd lift into the same area and now everyone is getting fire. One ship shot down but Dustoff (med-evac) landed right behind it and got the crew out OK even though he was getting a lot of heavy fire. Refueled at Tan Son Nhut and picked up more troops at Bai Trai. First lift was north of last area and everyone received heavy fire. One of the slick gunners was shot in the head and was KIA. Raider-22 was hit – copilot took a round in the shoulder & back. Raider-24 had face cut with Plexiglas real bad. The 118th lost one ship and had several shot up. On the fourth lift Mr. Caper got hit in shoulder – nothing bad. My ship got hit & my wing ship got hit. Maintenance tried to get to the downed ship but got all kinds of fire – just barely made it out alive. Dustoff went in to pick up 2 wounded Americans. His crew chief got out to help them. The Capt. got shot in the

chest and the Sgt. got it in the head. Mortar rounds and machinegun fire started coming in and Dustoff had to leave without his crew chief. CE (crew chief) linked up with another NCO but got separated during a fire fight as they were trying to get to the yellow smoke that Playboy-17 had thrown. The NCO's company (of ARVN) was giving up. Playboy-17 landed and Mr. Davis swam across a canal to get the sergeant to the ship. All that crew made it out OK in spite of the heavy fire. The CE from Dustoff was later reported thru ARVN channels as KIA. Total for the afternoon – 6 WIA & 4 KIA – all American – no telling how many ARVN. The 197th had about 15 ships hit. The 118th had about 5 ships hit and A/501st had about 10 ships hit. – 3 were our Firebirds. No injuries in the Firebirds except me – I got hit in the head by a tail rotor. Someone had started walking the main rotor around while I was inspecting the bullet hole near the tail. Tail rotor cut me above the right eye.

4/2 {5.5 hrs. + 10 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0700 for Duc Hoa with Firebird-91 and 2 slicks. The slicks picked up supplies and ammo at Duc Hoa. We reconned an LZ where the friendlies were but didn't receive any fire. We escorted the slicks in for resupply twice and then escorted 2 Dustoff ships in to pick up the dead and wounded. They recovered the 3 American bodies. Returned to Tan Son Nhut to refuel and eat some C's. Then we picked up the company on the way back and joined the 118th & 197th for another lift into the area. Returned to Bien Hoa and went on 30 minute alert. About 1600 we were call out. We picked up the troops out of the LZ and moved them further south along the river. Drew a little fire east of the pickup and coming out of the LZ. The smoke from the burning grass was so thick it was almost IFR in the area. The smoke was up to about 2000 ft. and covered an area about 20k by 30k.

4/3 (#927 me&O'Byrne, #925 Capt. Ohlenburger&Coyan) {1.6 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Called out about 1230 for Duc Hoa again- took 5 armed and 7 slicks. Picked up troops where we dropped them off on 4/2 and took them northeast across the river. The LZ was a large rice paddy with hootches spotted throughout it. We received some fire from these. The artillery was firing just off to the south. Put two loads in there along with the 118th and part of the 197th slicks.

4/4 No flying. Slept in AM and loafed in PM.

4/5 (#926 Ohlenburger&Cayon, #927 O'Byrne&me) {2.8 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa at 0855 & picked up the troops at Phu Loi. Went on toward Tay Ninh and straight into the LZ. This was the same area that we went into on Christmas Day to recapture the American prisoners. The artillery softened it up, followed by A1-E's and the 197th. Dropped the troops in and returned to Tay Ninh to wait for extraction. Two slicks brought back 2 loads of POW's – about 5 women with them & 2 weapons. A1-E's hit a couple of more targets and then helped escort us in for the pickup. They strafed the tree

lines with 20mm until we were ready to come out. Then we took over with suppressive fire.

4/5 {0.5 hrs. + 1 sortie} Night recon.

4/6 {0.8 hrs. + 1 sortie}

On 10 minute alert all day. Called out about noon to look for a downed aircraft near Tan Uyen. Couldn't find anything. Capt. Ohlenburger left me with the team for the rest of the afternoon & tonight on the airfield standby.

4/7 & 4/8 No flight

4/9 {5.1 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa @ 0730 and refueled at Phouc Vinh. Finally found out where we were to go on to Song Be. After coffee and a briefing, we went east and looked at an area where a VC company was supposed to be. The observer had us expend on an area where they were supposed to live. Ate lunch and then flew overhead cover for a convoy of 8 rice trucks, 13 gas trucks and 6 armored personnel carriers that were coming to Song Be. Returned to Bien Hoa about 1800. On airfield standby tonight.

4/10 to 4/17 **On R&R to Hong Kong ! 5 Days – Fantastic.**

4/18 {2.8 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Went to Phouc Vinh and made a recon around the airfield and along the river to the south looking for a company on the move. Couldn't find anything.

4/19 {5.2 hrs. + 11 sorties}

Went with the 118th and made 4 lifts to the east of Tan Uyen and then extracted them in the evening.

4/20 {1.4 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Did NOTHING. VVBH to Duc Hoa. Sat all AM. Ate lunch. Went to Tan An. Went home.

4/21 (#920 Ohlenburger&Paxton, #921 me&Coyan) {5.4 hrs. + 9 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0730 for Phouc Vinh. Firebird-96+97+93 all left in formation but it sort of broke up when we started down through the clouds. Firebird-93 went on to Hon Quan where we ran the usual "world wide" recon. We stopped at Loc Ninh and talked to the Special Forces people there. Then back to Ho Quan for lunch. After lunch we went to Song Be & reconned a couple of areas for them. Spotted one hidden truck but the observer wouldn't let us shoot it. We also spotted a couple of bulldozers but didn't get to shoot them. Returned to Bien Hoa 1630. On airfield standby tonight. {0.7 hrs. + 1 sortie}

4/22 No flight.

*[Must have been very busy – no notes in log book except for hours flown & # sorties.]*

4/23 {3.6 hrs. + 5 sorties}  
4/24 {5.8hrs. + 12 sorties}  
4/25 No flight  
4/26 {1.6 hrs. + 1 sorties}  
4/27 {5.0 hrs. + 2 sorties}  
4/28 {5.3 hrs. + 2 sorties}  
4/29 {8.4 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Entire platoon flew overhead cover for 36 Wolfhound-6, 30-5,31,32,33,&Silverhouse 42 & 43. Ground troops got pinned down. Firebird-93 stuck village while troops moved back. Brought in another company. Lift received fire & we destroyed another village. Gave the troops 50 meter support all day long. By the end of the day, we had destroyed about 50 houses. We heard back that these people do not ask for fire teams anymore – they ask for FIREBIRDS !

4/30 {4.2 hrs. + 17 sorties}  
5/1 {3.2 hrs. + 5 sorties}  
5/2 {1.5 hrs. + 3 sorties}  
5/3 {2.7 hrs. + 2 sorties}  
5/4 {0.4 hrs. + 1 sortie}  
5/5 {1.6 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Spent the whole day sitting at Ben Luc. Ground operation couldn't find anything. Received many compliments for the work on 4/29. It is nice to know that we make a difference to those poor guys on the ground.

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*PROMOTION! Now assigned as Firebird-97 fire team leader. My team is:*

*WO (W1) Billy W. Rhodes W3151805*

*WO (W1) William J. Gault W3151946*

*WO (W1) James Dixon W3151772*

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5/6 (#920 me&Rhodes, #927 Gault&Dixon) + #923 Capt. Stone&Gwaltney {4.8 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0930 for Phouc Vinh. Made a recon to the east of Ben My. Firebird-98 (my wing man) drew fire and we expended on the area. Returned to PV and rearmed. Then to Tan Uyen. Reconned a couple of areas in front of the ground troops. No fire received. Ate lunch at Bien Hoa and returned. Reconned several more areas and then back to Phouc Vinh. Reconned a large area to the north of PV while a thunderstorm moved across the field. Finally released and checked several areas on way home and expended on another area where we had spotted a 50 gal. drum laying out in the open.

5/7 (#920 me&Dixon, #925 Rhodes&Gault) {2.2 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Reported to Bien Hoa soccer field at 0655. Finally contacted by Special Forces at 0850. Took off on mission at 1000 after briefing by VNAF pilots. Went up into War Zone D to extract 10 people. H-34's couldn't make it. Returned and ate lunch. Stood by until 1500. Finally made extraction. Couldn't find Maj. Thompson to get our release. Turned in report of this to operations thru Firebird-96.

5/8 (#924 me&Gault, #927 Rhodes& Dixon) {3.0 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Started lift from Phu Loi to area west of Phu Hoa Dong. LZ appeared quiet. On short final, everyone received fire. One H-34 caught fire in mid-air, rolled nose over and crashed. Made 4 more lifts into same LZ. Then 1 lift to area where H-34 crashed. Drew heavy fire there. No injuries. Returned to Bien Hoa, released 1700. Heard later that Lt. Irving, gunner platoon leader from 118th was KIA on a practice lift near Trung Lap.

5/9 (me&Rhodes, Gault&Dixon) {6.2 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Flew overhead cover for ground operation west of Phu Hoa Dong. Cobra Catcher-41,40 & 43 were in the center of the plantation where we put them on 5/8. About 1400 they got hit hard and were pinned down from all directions. Entire Firebird platoon worked on the area. About 1700, the ARVN broke and ran. No one knew what was happening or where the Americans were. Viper (L-19 observation fixed wing) was also shot down in same area. The 145th made an emergency lift of 2 companies into an LZ just west of them during dark. We made an escort for 2 med-evacs and a resupply to Cobra Catcher-11 on the south edge.

5/10 {2.8 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Went to Tay Ninh & escorted Rattler-60 (Mr. Davis) in & out of 3 hamlets near the Cambodian border. Real nice going up – got to play hide & seek among the clouds at 4000 ft. Released at noon and returned to base.

Found out that all the Americans and Viper crew got together & all present & accounted for. About 1000, they started evacuating all the Americans. Lt. Dorsey took out 3 the day before that were wounded.

5/11 (me&Small, Rhodes&Dixon) {9.2 hrs. + 12 sorties} Long day !

Left Bien Hoa @ 0630 with rest of company. The 97 Fireteam was attached to the 118th for the day. Both companies went to Chanh Thanh & picked up troops then to Hon Quan for fuel. We were going on a lift east of there. Then everything was changed because Song Be had been overrun during the night. So now all the troops are going into Song Be. Combat losses: US 16 WIA & 6 KIA. We shuttled troops up and wounded back all day. Flew until late that night.

5/12 (me&Dixon, Gault&Rhodes) {0.8 hrs. + 1 sortie}

On 10 minute standby all day. Scrambled out in the afternoon by Lt. Young (Aloft-16) He had 50 VC & 15 ox carts. People at Phu Loi wanted us to stop for an observer so by the time we got to the area everything had pretty much disappeared.

5/13 (me&Freeberg, Gault&Dixon) {1.9 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Up at 0330 and took off at 0500. Started for Thu Duc and after we circled it once, they sent us on to Ben Cat. We were to cover 3 slicks as they dropped off two Special Forces teams. Slicks sort of messed up the whole works and didn't get there until after daylight. The teams wanted to go in during darkness. Everyone got in OK and we returned to Bien Hoa to standby the rest of the day.

5/14 (me&Dixon, Gault&Freeberg) {5.7 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Pulled pitch at 0800 & company picked up troops at Phu Loi. Put them in LZ to southeast of Ben Cat. Ground troops already there moved 1 way, APC's another, while airlifted troops cleaned out one village and then were released. Firebird platoon started rotating on overhead cover until about 1745. Finally got ground troops (Cobra Catcher-22) married up with the APC's (Circus Tiger-74). Never could see Cobra Catcher-23. Finally released 1745.

5/15 (me&Gwaltney, Dixon&Gault) {4.5 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Started out on a 10 minute standby. Scrambled about 1000. Convoy to north of Xuan Loc had been ambushed. When we got there, 9 out of the 12 trucks were burning. Couldn't see any survivors at first. Reconned around area and spotted 2 WIA in the ditch. Razorback-1 was escorting troops to the area so I went in and picked them up and took them to Xuan Loc. Returned & covered Dustoff for more med-evacs. Total losses: ARVN: 35 KIA, 20 WIA 20 MIA and two US KIA.

5/16 (#925 me&Gault, Dixon&Rhodes) {4.0 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Departed with Firebird-96 for Song Be to cover ground operation. Firebird-98 had servo failure and started back but had to land at Song Be. Airfield maintenance fixed the aircraft at the field. The compound was really torn up. The rear of the mess hall had the roof blown off. Most of the quarters were wrecked and almost everything had bullet hole in it

– doors, windows, refrigerator, etc. They had killed 9 VC in the compound. Later in the afternoon we reconned a couple of areas & expended on suspected enemy locations.

Accident at Bien Hoa started a B-57 to exploding. 31 KIA, 40 WIA, 10 B-57's, 3 A1-E's and 1 Navy plane destroyed. The whole flight line just disappeared in one big ball of fire. Engines landed in compound & shrapnel was blown all over – clear to the Firebird shack.

5/16 NIGHT {0.5 hrs. + 1 sortie} Night alert.

5/17 {1.6 hrs. + 1 sortie} Range check out for WO Dixon

{1.5 hrs. + 1 sortie} Transition into UH-1D model. *[It was a slick & WOW does it go!]*

5/18 (#925 me&Rhodes, #926Gault&Dixon) {2.7 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa 0630. Refueled at Phouc Vinh. Went on to Song Be and picked up troops at airstrip. Made 2 lifts to southeast of Song Be. No action. Returned to Phouc Vinh, refueled and came home. Spent 2 hours on 10 minute alert for Phu Loi but no action. Released 1600.

5/19/16(#925 me&Gault, #921Rhodes&Dixon) {2.4 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Company started at 0950 lifting 1 battalion of the 173rd into an LZ east of Bien Hoa. It took 7 lifts to get them all in – mortars and all. No contact at all during the lifts. Release at 1300.

Platoon was scrambled late in the afternoon to check on 2 platoons of VC to the northeast of Bien Hoa. Drew some fire and the Playboys and Firebirds expended on several areas. Airborne put out several mortar rounds all night. We are on night alert – up at 0410 for a lift up into War Zone D. Rhodes & Dixon (98) went from the team.

5/20 (Rhodes&Dixon-1 ship for the lift)

Company went on CA and stood by rest of day at airfield. (me & Gault were off for the day)

5/21 (#925 me&Dixon, #924Gault&Rhodes) {3.0 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Company departed Bien Hoa @ 0935. Picked up troops at Phu Loi. I went ahead for the recon and to mark the LZ. Artillery worked the area over and no fire received. I stayed for overhead cover. Shot up 5 people leaving the area. Caught 1 more and ran him into the bushes which we hit hard. Caught 1 ox-cart and man leaving and got them for sure. Troops had a little contact. After they pulled out, we drew automatic weapons fire from the area and so expended on it. So did Firebird-96 with the HOG. No injuries until ARVN troops turned over a truck – 23 injured (9 serious) and 3 killed.

5/22 (me&Rhodes, Gault&Dixon) {10.2 hrs. + 17 sorties} Another VERY LONG day!

Departed Bien Hoa at 0710 with fire team. Went to Song Be to cover convoy of 48th Regiment from Song Be to Dong Xuai<sup>40</sup>. Shortly after they started, they ran into a squad of VC but rapidly broke them up when our Fireteam suppressed & killed 2 VC. Later a sniper got 1 ARVN. The next contact was a mine set off by the VC. We expended on the area where they were getting ground fire. Rearmed & returned to convoy after med-evac-ing 4 badly wounded. Meritbadge-20 & 22 were returning to Song Be. We covered them almost all the way. Just as we got back from refueling, they got ambushed. We started shooting up & down both sides of the road. Mortar shells were all over - VC shells going in and ARVN shells going out, all sorts of small arms fire. We called Paris & scrambled some fighters and Song Be brought in some artillery. When we returned, Copperhead was there trying to get the flares over the convoy. We went in thru the artillery and adjusted the flares and then when the A1-E's got there, we marked the targets by going in low and firing tracers. There was just about as much stuff coming up (at us) as there was going down. The fighters took over and really worked the area over. And old Smokey Red kept the flares going all night. We finally got the convoy pried loose and moving. Firebird-96 & 91 came in and escorted it on back to Song Be.

Losses:ARVN – a couple truckloads of ARVN weapons, etc.

US – 2 KIA (Capt. C\_\_ & Sgt. K\_\_)

1 MIA (SP/4 W\_\_)

They figured they got hit by about a battalion of VC – that should have wiped them out but I think we got to the VC a little with the Fireteam. I took 1 hit in the rotor blade coming out of Song Be.

5/23 –Rested all day.

5/24 (#920 me&Gault, #921 Rhodes&Dixon) {5.3 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Fireteam (heavy) departed Bien Hoa at 0930 for Phouc Vinh. Sent down to Ap Bo La to check on a road block – nothing – destroyed one truck. Spent rest of day trying to find targets for B-57's. Not too much luck. Bombed some houses out in War Zone D but couldn't draw any fire. Bombed some up north but not really much there. Destroyed several ourselves. Makes you feel kind of important running around at low level trying to get shot at with all those big bombers overhead watching you. I wonder what they think of armed helicopters??

5/25 (#927 me&Dixon, #922 Gault&Rhodes) {5.7 hrs. + 9 sorties}

Fireteam left at 0745 for Phu Loi. Went on standby for a ground operation and a convoy. Made a couple of trips over the convoy and escorted Dragon-86 in with some road wheels for an APC that hit a mine. Most of the time it was raining. About 1500, all the Rattler aircraft were sent to Tay Ninh for an emergency lift. A Special Forces team had been hit –

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<sup>40</sup> 11.536150, 106.859547

1 KIA, 1 WIA & 1 MIA. The weather was so bad we almost couldn't make it to Tay Ninh. Several of the aircraft didn't. Put in about 150 troops and finally came home – dark – oh it was DARK !

5/26 (#924 me&Rhodes, #922Dixon&Gault) {4.9 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Fireteam departed Bien Hoa at 0635 with company for Vung Tau. Made 7 lifts of Airborne into LZ up on the coast by the mountains. Very quiet. Reported to Xuan Loc after lift was released. Spent 1 fuel load covering 8 vehicles from Rock City to Xuan Loc. Convoy split & Playboy-11 took the rest on to Bien Hoa. We returned to Xuan Loc and stood by all night.

5/27 (me&Gault, Rhodes&Dixon) {0.5 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Stood by all day at Xuan Loc until relieved by Lt. Dorsey.

5/28 (#927 me&Gault, #926 Dixon&Rhodes) {5.8 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Fireteam departed Bien Hoa at 0705 for Duc Hoa. Sat around until 1000. Went out and shot at some large sampans on the river to the south. Didn't really damage any very much. Called back to III Corps to cover convoy from Bien Hoa to Go Dau Ha. Nothing happened. Returned home.

At about 1030, two ships from the 118th had a mid-air collision & crashed 7 burned. Killed 9 and 2 more in hospital. One ship had 3 passengers from III Corps. Bodies were cut in half & strewn all over & burned beyond recognition.

5/29 {0.3 hrs.}

Firebirds had their party this afternoon for the departing gunners. Pulled a sneaky this time. I left before everyone got around to throwing people in the tank.

5/30 No flight today.

5/31 (me&Gault) {2.7 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Made 7 lifts out to the east of Bien Hoa to haul the Airborne in.

**TOTALS SO FAR TO 1 JUNE 65 = 620.8 FLIGHT HRS AND 993 SORTIES.**

6/1 (#924 me&Maj. Henderson, #920 Gault&Rhodes) {2.4 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Finished hauling the Airborne out. Put 5 lifts into a blocking position. Major Henderson flew with me this morning. Spent the afternoon working out at the flight line getting ready for IG inspection.

6/2 (me&Rhodes, Gault&Dixon) {2.0 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Shuffled some of the Airborne around with 7 slicks and 4 armed.

(me&Dixon, Capt. Stone&Gault) {3.0 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Covered convoy from Long Than to Xuan Loc. Finally got them there after dark. Refueled at XL and returned to Bien Hoa. @ 2030.

6/3 (me&Dixon, Gault&Coyan) {5.1 hrs. + 9 sorties}

Attached to the 118<sup>th</sup> for escort on lift near Phu Loi during morning. Then at noon we escorted H-37's as they lifted back the artillery for the Airborne. Then we joined the A/82 as they helped the 118<sup>th</sup> & 120<sup>th</sup> lift the Airborne back to Bien Hoa.

Night alert {1.5 hrs. + 1 sortie}

6/4 (#920 me&Gault, #927 Capt. Stone&Dixon) {3.9 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Fireteam departed Bien Hoa at 030 for Tan An. At 1000, they had an airstrike on an area that was supposed to have concrete bunkers in it. They really tore it up. Troops moved in but didn't find much. Returned to Bien Hoa for lunch & standby – not called out. Slept all afternoon.

6/5 (me&Gwaltney, Dixon&Gault) {1.3 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Fireteam on emergency standby all day. Called out once to Can Giouc<sup>41</sup> for 30 VC in the open. Same old story – nothing there when we got there.

6/5 (me&Gault, Dixon&Rhodes) {4.3 hrs. + 4 sorties}

My Fireteam alternated with 91 & 96 and covered convoy from Phu My to Xuan Loc. No action at all. Released at 1300.

6/7 {0.6 hrs. + 0 sorties}

Off today. Rode over to Saigon with WO Rhodes to take over some baggage.

6/8 (me&Dixon, Gault&Gwaltney) {4.9 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Company made a lift up to the northwest of Ben Cat for an S&D (Search & Destroy) operation. Returned to Bien Hoa and stood by for the extraction. Took off at 1200 and started extraction. Drew lots of fire on the east side. Two Firebirds took hits on aircraft. Made one trip to free zone to train new gunners.

6/9 (me&Gwaltney, Dixon&Gault) {4.8 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Started with a lift into Gia Ray just east of Xuan Loc Mountain. Gia Ray had been overrun during the night and completely wiped out. The company made 3 lifts & drew some automatic weapons fire to the north of the mountain on the first trip. Fireteam covered convoy from Phu Loi to Ben Cat after lunch and then got rained in at Bien Hoa. Firebird-91 was rained in at Phu Loi and finally covered the convoy back.

6/10 (me&Gault are off, Rhodes – 91 & Dixon – 93)

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<sup>41</sup> 10.589127, 106.683360

Company went up to Dong Xoai<sup>42</sup> north of Phouc Vinh. The compound and town had been overrun by VC. There were 14 Americans KIA and 14 WIA. They were in one building and had the bombers hitting everything else. The first lift in got wiped out in the LZ and the 118<sup>th</sup> lost one armed ship. The USAF had one B-57, one A1-E and three F-102's hit by 50 cal. They estimate there is approx. one regiment of VC in the area.

6/11 (#925 me&Dixon, Gault&Gwaltney on standby) {2.7 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Six slicks left with Firebird-93,94,96,97(that's me) for Phouc Vinh. Altogether there were some elements from almost every unit. We made 2 big lifts up to Dong Xoai. Everything was very quiet. The VC had broken contact and were withdrawing. No fire received in the area since 0630. After two round trips, we returned to Phouc Vinh and stood by until 1600. Then to home. Capt. James ship had the FIRE light come on so we covered him while he went down to check it out. Couldn't find anything so he flew it on home anyway.

6/12 (me&Gwaltney, Dixon&Gault, Capt. Stone&Coyan) {7.8 hrs. + 11 sorties}

My Fireteam + Firebird-96 went out to Xuan Loc to work. We started by reconning a couple of large areas to the south. Drew fire out of one area when Capt. Stone accidentally fired a couple of rockets when he thought we were receiving fire. Well, we faked Victor out on that one because we just happened to have a couple of B-57's on top of the clouds just waiting to dump their load. In the afternoon, we went down to Ba Ria and when we got there, instead of reconning the areas we were sent to do, we ended up covering a ground operation and finally making a CA by using the B-57's from the skunk hunt., the slicks from a shuttle and another Fireteam (Playboy-13) that was supposed to be covering a convoy. As we started back, the rain started and we just made it into Xuan Loc. We had dinner & were starting to wait it out, when a Cowboy ship called in that he was setting down in some airstrip because of the weather. It was about a 500 ft. ragged ceiling, completely dark, heavy lighting, wind 10-20 kts with gusts to 30-35 kts and moderate to severe turbulence. Our heavy fire team took off to try to find him because where he was, wasn't a very secure area. We wallered around for a while but could never sight him. But we finally got him and Paris together and he headed to Bien Hoa. We went back to Xuan Loc and started to circle while Firebird-96 & 98 went to land. Firebird-96 landed and another ship went in. So I landed. Just as soon as I set down, Capt. Stone (Firebird-96) asked me where 98 was. We started a radio search but no answer. So I took off again to try to find him. After about 5 minutes we spotted a set of flashing nav lights about 500 meters from the airfield. The rain and clouds were so bad that I had to fly with the searchlight out to my side for visual reference. I finally got the light on the spot and saw the ship piled up in the trees. I called Capt. Stone and told him they had crashed and that I was going to try to find a place to land. We finally spotted a small hole in the trees about 50 meters from them and managed to get in without hitting the tail rotor. SP/5 Musick & I grabbed a couple of first aid kits and a rifle & started fighting our way to the ship through barbed wire & chest high grass. When we got there the nav lights were still

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<sup>42</sup> 11.535309, 106.900746

flashing but there was no one in the ship. I tore off the map light and searched around but nothing – no blood – no bodies. The helmets were still in the ship and there was a large hole burned in the right side of the engine cowling. Musick & I had just started to hunt further out when Gwaltney came over from our ship and said that Firebird-96 had called and that Gault, Dixon & Dougherty were safe in the ARVN compound but one of them had a broken leg. I felt a lot better because all I could imagine was that the VC had already been there. We started stripping off the weapons and in about 5 minutes, the ground party arrived and helped. So I took off and went back to the field. Mr. Gault had a bad cut on his head, Dixon had a broken right leg and Dougherty had a couple of broken ribs. Dustoff finally made it thru the weather about 0030 and took Dixon to Saigon. We stayed the rest of the night at Xuan Loc.

6/13 (Firebird-97=me&Gwaltney, Gault&Egers, Musick&Apo)

(Firebird-96=Capt. Stone&Coyan, Klapkowski&Perez, & Dougherty) {1.8 hrs. + 3 sorties}

By 0700, the weather had cleared so we loaded all of 98's equipment & guns on the two ships and took off. Just as we did, one of the Cowboy ships asked the ground people if he could go check a set of coordinates where one of the Falcon gunships was supposed to have crashed that night. We told him we would check on it. The area was just east of Long Thanh out in a wild rubber plantation. As soon as we got there, I spotted the hole in the trees and the wreckage. I told Firebird -96 that I was going to land and check for survivors. The only landing place was a small hole in the jungle about a half mile from the crash. Each of us took a couple of smoke grenades and a rifle. SP/5 Musick & PFC Apo & myself started into the crash site. The aircraft had burned on impact and nothing was left except part of the engine. And the vertical stabilizer with the A/C number on it. One body was about 5 ft. from the wreckage and badly burned. Two of them were tangled in the wreckage and all that was left of the fourth one was part of a leg bone. Everything else had burned up. Just as we started back, Capt. Stone came into the landing area that I had had Apo clear and said there was supposed to be a VC ambush set up around the wreck according to III Corps Opns Center. Dustoff came in and we helped him load the bodies into the rubber body bags. After everyone was out safely, Gault & Gwaltney brought in my ship & picked up Musick & me. I was so tired that I could hardly get on the ship. Capt. Stone gave us the rest of the day to sleep – I did – from 1000 to 1800.

6/14 {3.5 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Company departed Bien Hoa for Phouc Vinh for another lift into Dong Xoai. Song Be, Dong Xoai & Tan Uyen had all gotten hit on the bad night of the 12<sup>th</sup> and Dong Xoai was beginning to look like another Binh Gia. They lost 3 ships there and one air force jet – the pilot ejected right into the middle of the VC & they shot him. The company drew some fire going in & some fire going out as they hauled in troops and hauled out wounded. The Air Force had completely destroyed the plantation and the town.

6/15 (me&Robinson, Rhodes&Gwaltney) { 1.2 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Fireteam started the day on a 10 minute standby but at noon the company went back to Phouc Vinh for a possible lift. Nothing happened & we returned to Bien Hoa about 1800. My Fireteam drew airfield standby that night.

6/16 No flight. Capt. Stone told me today that I was being put in for the Silver Star<sup>43</sup> for the action on the 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> of June. [*To my memory, I never heard anything more about it, so it must have been denied. I didn't even remember he had put me in for such an award.*]

6/17 (me&Gwaltney, Rhodes&Prendeville) {4.2 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa at 1010 for Song Be for Psy War<sup>44</sup> escort. Ate lunch and waited around for briefing. Finally took off 1240. Escorted the Psy War ship around to several places and ended up expending around this one particular village where the VC were.

They were telling them “*We know you are there and we know all about your weapons. We would like to apologize for not having attacked you yet but we have been too busy killing off your friends down at Dong Xoai. Don't worry though – we'll be up to get you next – you can count on that.*”

6/18 (me&Coyan, Prendeville&Wolf) {4.6 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Made two trips to Phouc Vinh.

6/19 No flight.

6/20 (me&Maj. Henderson, Rhodes&Robinson) {5.0 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Made lift out of Hon Quan and extracted them.

6/21 (me&Coyan, Rhodes&Wolf) {6.0 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Spent the day on Psy War escort. [*Boring*]

6/22 & 6/23 No flight.

6/24 (me&Prendeville, Rhodes&Brown) {3.1 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Made CA near Tan Uyen.

6/25 (me&Prendeville) {2.4 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Made another CA near Tan Uyen.

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<sup>43</sup> The Silver Star, officially the Silver Star Medal, is the third-highest military decoration for valor awarded to members of the United States Armed Forces. Any uniformed service member may receive the medal, which is awarded for gallantry in action against an enemy of the United States.

<sup>44</sup> Psy War was a UH-1B with a monster loud speaker system mounted on it. They would fly around and put out the propaganda to the locals or Viet Cong.

6/26 (me&Gault) {3.3 hrs. + 4 sorties}

*[no notes in log book]*

6/27 (#925 me&Brown, #997 Prendeville&Brown) {2.3 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Departed Bien Hoa at 0730 with Lt. Nutt on Psy War. Worked 3 areas to west of Duc Hoa and returned to Bien Hoa. Went on airfield standby.

{1.7 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Scrambled at 2300 to cover rescue for a C-123 that crashed 5 miles south of Bien Hoa. It went into the middle of a village and took out about 6 houses. Everything was burning when we got there. Finally got back about 0230.

6/28 (me&Brown) {3.4 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Company departed Bien Hoa at 1100 as 3<sup>rd</sup> element of 7 to lift two battalions of ARVN Airborne into War Zone D and then 2 battalions of the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne. Made 6 trips and got a little fire going in and coming out on almost every lift. Couple of the slicks took hits. There were 160 slicks making the lift.

6/29 (me&Maj. Henderson, Prendeville&Brown) {3.8 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Lifted in Aussies<sup>45</sup> & hauled out ARVN Airborne.

6/30 (me&Gwaltney, Prendeville&Brown) {5.0 hrs. + 6 sorties}

*[No notes in log book as to what we did during day]*

{0.7 hrs. + 1 sortie} On night alert.

**TOTALS SO FAR TO 1 JULY 65 = 713.2 FLIGHT HRS AND 1124 SORTIES.**

Monthly flight hours so far.

1964

Aug = 29.6

Sep = 54.0

Oct = 68.7

Nov + Dec = 90.0 *[had ~month off for WIA]*

1965

Jan = 55.9

Feb = 54.4

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<sup>45</sup> First troops from Australia got baptized in War Zone D.

Mar = 91.3

Apr = 78.4

May = 98.5

June = 94.1

July = 70.1

7/1 No flight.

7/2 (me&Carlson, Prendeville&Brown) {4.7 hrs. + 8 sorties}

Covered ground operation to west of Phu My. Drew fire 3 times and last time gunner on wing ship got hit in leg. Lost quite a bit of blood – all over the ship. Also found that ship had a cracked tail boom. Had to leave it at Saigon.

7/3 (me&Carlson, Prendeville&Brown) {4.3 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Fireteam departed Bien Hoa at 0815 with Rattler-26 on a Psy War to Thu Dau Mot. Circled around over the clouds but were too high to do anything so we came home. Departed again @ 1315 for Hon Quan. No mission because no one showed up. So, after a cup of coffee we headed home. Expended on a target out of Tan Uyen. Then on night alert – no action.

7/4 **4<sup>th</sup> of July !** Very quiet – no flight.

7/5 {1.4 hrs. + 2 sorties} *[no note as to what we did]*

7/6 (me&Brown, Carlson&Prendeville) [2.4 hrs. + 6 sorties]

Our Battalion hauled the US Airborne, the Aussies & the ARVN Airborne up into War Zone D. We made 9 trips and drew fire on almost every trip in and out.

7/7 {0.8 hrs. + 2 sorties} *[no note as to what we did]*

7/8 {0.9 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Fireteam called out at 1800 to go on 10 minute alert for Dau Tieng which had been wiped out earlier in the day. Rained all night & we couldn't have gone anywhere if we had wanted to.

7/9 No flight.

Company started hauling out the Airborne & the Aussies late in the afternoon. Started raining again and finally got so bad that the Cowboys had to spend the night with us.

7/10 No flight.

7/11 {3.5 hrs. + 4 sorties} *[no note as to what we did]*

7/12 {6.3 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Spent the entire day escorting Psy War ship. Things have been real slow lately. A lot of the operations have been called off because of the weather.

7/13 {6.0 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Another day of Psy War. You'd think they would get tired of it after a while – we are ! Capt. Stone & Capt. Ohlenburger went with us as my wing ship today & we went over the same areas we hit yesterday.

**7/14 No one had any missions today. Rumor has it that we are going up north somewhere. Everyone is getting ready at least. CO called a meeting at 1700. We will take 7 slicks & 7 armed ships. Takeoff is at 0630 for Quin Nhon<sup>46</sup> for 10 days.**

7/15 (me&Carlson, Prendeville&Brown) {5.8 hrs. + 5 sorties}

Company (light) departed at 0630. First stop - Phan Thiet – fuel. Then on to Nha Trang for fuel again. We are following the coast all the way. Not much of a pleasure cruise – turbulence is too bad. Last stop at Quin Nhon before we go on to An Khe<sup>47</sup> which is west toward Pleiku<sup>48</sup>. An Khe was completely overrun sometime back & evidentially they are going to fix it up again. The C-123's have been coming in every 10 minutes all afternoon and evening until about 2200. Fireteam reconned area all around airfield but no action.

7/16 (me&Carlson, Prendeville&Brown) {2.0 hrs. + 3 sorties}

Company & rest of Battalion lifted 2 battalions of ARVN up to the northwest of here this morning. As soon as they were in, I started overhead cover. We only stayed for 40 minutes as they really didn't want us & nothing was happening. Today is HOT & still windy. We have had a 20-30 kts wind now for the past week. Everyone is busy digging in as they expect we will get mortared and/or ground attacked before we leave. At 1530 we were called out for slick escort. We took the Battalion Commander up to Mang Yang Pass<sup>49</sup> & then back over the area where the lift went in. When we got back, the Company was getting ready to go back to Quin Nhon. It seems they are going to send half the people in every night. Sure will be a mess even though it will mean a bed and a shower.

*[If memory serves me correctly, you can see the dark green spots on the hill side to the north of the highway. These are the graves of the French that were wiped out when they were here. At least that is what we were told.]*

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<sup>46</sup> 13.774250, 109.224344

<sup>47</sup> 13.955369, 108.659235

<sup>48</sup> 13.972816, 108.017987

<sup>49</sup> 14.028599, 108.423300

7/17 {1.8 hrs. + 2 sorties}

Left Quin Nhon @ 0630 & returned to An Khe. Didn't do anything all day except escort a slick over to Mang Yang Pass where we went yesterday. The rest of the day was spent digging in a little deeper. Just after dark, the armored regiment from Pleiku arrived and set up around An Khe. Those tanks sure looked good even if they were only M-41's.

7/18 {1.4 hrs. + 1 sortie}

Fireteam went over to An Khe pass and reconned the road on toward Quin Nhon. We picked up a convoy of 5 civilian trucks hauling rice and escorted them back to An Khe Pass – no excitement. We still haven't had any rain up here at all. Nothing but heat. The sun is so hot it just seems to burn right through your clothes. A company of tanks pulled in again tonight. Rumor has it we will be going home tomorrow. Sure would hate to get hit our last night here.

7/19 (me&Carlson, Prendeville&Brown) {4.7 hrs. + 4 sorties}

Rumor confirmed. We leave at 1000 for Bien Hoa. Second rumor is that Bien Hoa got mortared last night. Understand it was the Airborne and wasn't very heavy. We pulled pitch at 1020 & started home. It is just as long going home as it was coming up here. Finally arrived at Bien Hoa about 1700.

7/20 (me&Brown, Prendeville&Robinson) {2.3 hrs. + 3 sorties}

We weren't supposed to have any missions today [*after that long flight home*] but about 1300 we were called out for an emergency lift into Bu Dop which got hit pretty bad last night. Finally got back at 1900.

Time is getting short [*approaching my 1 year mark*] and it seems like I have so many things to do to get ready to go home.

7/21 (me&Coyan, Prendeville&Brown,Wold&Ohlenburger) {4.7 hrs. + 7 sorties}

Fireteam (heavy) departed Bien Hoa at 0740 for Xuan Loc. Waited until 0930 for weather to improve then we started covering a ground operation by Gia Ray Mountain. AuntSally-21 had us hit one area & when they moved in, they found a carbine with a hole in it, grenades, papers and a bed roll with holes in it. I know we did some damage there. Later in the afternoon we were up north when we caught 8 people leaving on bicycles. Sorry 'bout that – three of them made it back but 5 didn't. One Lambretta scooter also made a quick 180 turn when we fired in front of him – guess he didn't want anything to do with 3 armed ships!

7/22 No flight

7/23 (me&Prendeville, Brown&Gwaltney) {4.4 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Spent the day on Psy War escort with WO Mason. Went to Bai Trai about 0930 after the weather cleared and then after lunch up to Tay Ninh. While we were at the sugar mill, a

report came in to the Senior Advisor on Psy War ship of a VC battalion. He asked us to check it out and even though we couldn't see anything we drew some small arms fire and expended on it.

7/24 (me&Carlson, Prendeville&Brown) {5.7 hrs. + 6 sorties}

Spent the morning escorting the Company between Xuan Loc and Baria on a troop shuttle. Firebird-98 & 92 drew a fewounds on the fourth trip out of the plantation near Binh Gia. In the afternoon we escorted WO Clapp on Psy War up at Song Be. Lots of thunder storms on the way back.

7/25 No flight – just loafed & played pool all day. George Freeberg got his Senor Wing tonight & they filled up a large kettle with beer but every time he drank a little, someone poured inn another can.

7/26 {5.3 hrs. + 6 sorties} *[no note in log book as to what I did]*

End of combat flying. From here I returned to the USA and became an instructor pilot at Fort Rucker Alabama.

**TOTALS 1 Aug 65 = 783.3 COMBAT FLIGHT HRS AND 1209 SORTIES.**

**1 PURPLE HEART<sup>50</sup>**

**AIR MEDAL WITH 31 OAK LEAF CLUSTERS<sup>51</sup>**

**ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL<sup>52</sup>**

*[That is the end of the log book. There was no final entry that I was leaving but that doesn't surprise me. I was busy packing, selling a motor scooter and arranging for all my belonging to be shipped home. Trip home was as follows. One of my Fireteam flew me to Saigon where I (after some paperwork to check in) boarded a Pan Am 707. Take off was somewhat short of VERTICAL because of the risk of small arms fire just off the end of the runway. Flight from Saigon starts with just enough fuel to make it to Clark AFB in the Philippines (to enable quick take off). Then we had a short break, refueled and headed to Hawaii. I had arranged to meet a Colonel's daughter at the airport for a drink and tour of the Island. However, because of a head wind, we were late and so I only had time to make a call and apologize. From Honolulu it was on to San Francisco (actually Travis AFB) and another long bus ride back to the San Francisco civilian airport. I just missed the flight to Kansas but as luck would have it, I caught the helicopter over to Oakland where my plane was making a stop so I didn't miss it at all. Another 707 red eye flight (only 3 people on board – a Navy Commander, me and a civilian) to Denver and then a prop job to Wichita. Of course the entire family was there to meet me.]*

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<sup>50</sup> The Purple Heart is a United States military decoration awarded in the name of the President to those wounded or killed while serving, on or after April 5, 1917, with the U.S. military. The Purple Heart is the oldest military award still given to U.S. military members.

<sup>51</sup> The Air Medal is a military decoration of the United States military. The medal was created in 1942 and is awarded for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight.

<sup>52</sup> The Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) is a military award of the United States military, which was first created in 1961 by Executive Order of President John Kennedy. The medal is awarded for participation in "any military campaign of the United States for which no other service medal is authorized."