

Robert Malcolm Elliot

F-105 History

10-Jan-63

7934

At Nellis AFB, the 4520 CCTW appointed officers to the wing's Aircraft Accident Investigation Board. "The Board will be convened at a time and place specified by the President." Those named to the board included:

President

Col R. C. Franklin Jr. - 4520 CCr Tng Gp
Col John F. Groom - 4525 School Squadron
Col Wiltz P. Segura - Hq 4520 Maintenance Gp

Investigators

Capt Herbert F. Arnberger, Jr.	F-100 4525 Sch Sq
Capt Eugene J. Devlin	F-100 4520 Sch Sq
Capt Richard M. Dorsey	T-39 4524 CCTS
Capt David H. Duart	F-105 4524 CCTS
Capt David L. Elliot	F-86 4521 CCTS
Capt James P. Gammon, Jr.	F-100 4525 Sch Sq
Capt Willard S. Gideon	F-105 4523 CCTS
Capt James R. Graham	F-100 4525 Sch Sq
Maj Frederick Harnisch	L-20 4520 AB Sq Indian Springs AFB
Capt Raymond L. Jones	T-33 4521 CCTS
Capt John L. Kolkebeck	F-86 4521 CCTS
Capt Dale W. Leatham	F-100 this hq
Capt Oscar J. Lovrak	F-100 4524 CCTS
Capt John W. Marston	F-86 4521 CCTS
Capt Jude R. McNamara	F-105 4526 CCTS
Capt Robert C. Nelson	F-105 4526 CCTS
Capt George W. Panas	T-33 4521 CCTS
Capt John J. Revak	T-33 4524 CCTS
Capt Gerald J. Robinson	F-105 4526 CCTS
Capt John P. Stokenbury	C-54 4524 CCTS
Capt Richard E. Thorndike	U-3A 4524 CCTS
1Lt Willard H. Snell, Jr.	T-39 4524 CCTS

Of the 15 Maintenance Officers listed, five were responsible for investigating F-105 accidents:

Capt Vernon L. Frye
Capt Carl W. Rawie
Capt Charles H. Sundin
Capt Myron D. Ulrich
CWO Lyle H. Amberg

Also listed were four flight surgeons from the 4520 USAF Hospital..

452 Combat Crew Training Wing (TAC FTR), TAC, Special Order M-4 dated 10 Jan 1963 from John Revak.

23-Jun-67

233

The eleventh F-105 RTU Class 67IR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 9 January 1967 with 21 pilots. However, only 17 pilots graduated with the class, which was named "The Reluctant Hog-Herders".

The class deployed for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 25 May - 16 June 1967 with the 563 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Joe W. Pickett.

Capt Steven W. Long, Jr. won both Outstanding Pilot and Top Gun awards. Maj Kenneth W. Mays won the Academic award. The other 15 pilots in the class were:

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Maj Robert Warren Barnett	Maj William L. King, Jr.
Maj James Arlen Clements	Maj Donald W. Revers
Maj Rudolph Edward Fiedor	Maj James L. Taylor - 34 TFS
Maj Crosley James Fitton, Jr.	Maj Raymond Walter Vissotzky
Maj Billy R. Givens	Maj Jay M. Barker
Maj Robert W. Kennedy	Capt Robert M. Elliot
Capt George D. Smith	Maj Donald Myrick Russell
Maj Robert B. Abernathy	

23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm MO554 & Ken Mays, e-mail 4 Mar 2005.

31-Aug-67

3825

The 34 TFS history for the month of August 1967, reported that, "... numerous targets were struck by pilots of the squadron in the Chicom Buffer Zone and within the Hanoi restricted area. A marked increase was noted in all modes of defense (AAA, SAMs, MiGs) due primarily to the sensitivity of the targets." Squadron pilots flew 411 combat missions during the month, 407 to North Vietnam and 4 to Laos for a total combat time of 1063:20 hours.

"Combat pilot strength stood at 36 line pilots. During the month of August, four squadron pilots completed their tour of 100 missions over North Vietnam. Those completing were: Maj Harry Pawlik, Maj Donald F. Fryauf, Capt Jack A. Phillips [on 2 Aug], and Capt David C. Carter. [Not listed in the squadron history for completing his 100th mission this month was Maj John O. Rollins II.] No losses were suffered during this month and 13 replacements arrived during this period of time. Two officers, Captains Skoglund and Shulmister, that had been on temporary duty with the squadron from Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, returned to their home station."

Maj Pawlik last flew the F-105 in February 1968. He had accumulated 436.1 hours in the aircraft.

The 13 pilots arriving in the 34th in August were: Maj William M. Blakeslee, Maj Kenneth W. Mays, Maj Donald Eugene "Digger" Odell, Maj James L. Taylor, Maj David C. Dickson, Jr., Maj William J. King, Maj Raymond Walter Vissotzky, Capt Robert M. Elliot, Capt Robert B. Middleton, Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver, Capt Douglas A. Beyer, and 1Lt Lee E. Hollingsworth.

The Squadron Commander was Maj George G. Clausen. Maj Roderick Gene Giffin was the Operations Officer and Maj William M. Blakeslee the Executive Officer.

388 TFW history, Apr Dec 67, Vol II, 34 TFS history, 1 - 31 Aug 1967, microfilm NO584, frame 0080 & F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.

21-Sep-67

6563

In a published order, Maj George G. Clausen, 34 TFS commander, designated 29 squadron pilots as Combat Ready in the F-105. The same pilots were listed in a separate order as qualified to be Flight/Element Leaders in F-105s. The pilots were:

Maj Almer L. Barner, Jr.	Capt Douglas A. Beyer
Maj Charles E. Bishop	Capt Robert M. Crane
Maj William M. Blakeslee	Capt Hugh W. Davis
Maj George G. Clausen	Capt Nicholas J. Donelson
Maj James E. Daniel, Jr.	Capt Robert M. Elliot
Maj David C. Dickson, Jr.	Capt George W. Hamlin IV
Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.	Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe
Maj Roderick G. Giffin	Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver
Maj David D. Igelman	Capt Irving E. LeVine
Maj William J. L. King	Capt Robert L. Martin
Maj Kenneth W. Mays	Capt Robert B. Middleton
Maj Donald E. Odell	Capt Sam P. Morgan
Maj Dwight E. Sullivan	Capt Harry G. Paddon III
Maj James L. Taylor	1Lt Lee E. Hollingsworth

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Maj Raymond W. Vissotzky

34 TFS Special Orders 45 and 46 dated 21 September 1967 provided by Larry Hoppe, May 2010.

17-Nov-67

6985

"Bad weather over North Vietnam finally broke recently and pilots of the 388 TFW took advantage of clear skies to launch an attack on the Bac Mai airfield south of Hanoi.

"The Thunderchief pilots dodged MiGs, surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and heavy flak to strike the main base support area, including underground command post and personnel bunkers, a communications site, and flak sites around the airfield. All pilots reported good results.

"Maj Lawrence R. Klinestiver [34 TFS], 38, Albuquerque, N.M., led a flight of F-105s that went after the flak sites with bombs and air-to-ground missiles.

"We had MiGs hampering us all the way in, but a flight of F-4s was working with us and when the MiGs started to close in, we lit the afterburners, took the ole 'Chief down and separated from the attackers. We weren't bothered at all on the way in.'

"Well planned, well managed and almost perfectly executed,' said Maj James R. Bassett [44 TFS], 32, Dennison, Tex. He led his flight against the command post bunker and termed his roll-in and run-in on the target as, 'picture perfect; just like on the practice ranges back in the States. I also saw numerous bombs from the flights ahead striking the target.'

Pilots reported a number of SAMs launched at the strike force and Bassett also reported seeing two MiG-21s waiting to 'bounce' his flight as he approached the target.

"However, our timing was perfect and when we broke off and dove toward the target, they overshot, and we were in and out before they could get reorganized.'

"Maj James E. Daniel, Jr. [34 TFS Ops Officer], 37, Fort Worth, Tex., who led his flight against the communication site on the southeast end of the runway was the last flight in and reported extremely heavy flak of all calibers. He reported bombs going right through the roofs of a personnel area on hits from another flight.

"The last man in Daniel's flight, Capt Douglas A. Beyer [34 TFS], 33, Seguin, Tex., saw the comm site completely engulfed in smoke and debris as he pulled out and also observed some bombs causing a cut in the airfield runway.

"The 388th TFW's SAM suppression flight was led by Capt Robert E. Dorrough, Jr. [44 TFS], 29, Dallas, and they reported damaging two fire control sites and one SAM site.

"Other pilots taking part in the mission against Bac Mai included: Capt Robert M. Elliot, 38, Newberry Springs, Calif., Major Spence H. Armstrong, 33, Columbia, Tenn., Capt Robert M. Crane, 29, Duarte, Calif., Maj Donald W. Hodge, 38, Panama City, Fla., Capt Raymond W. Vissotzky, 38, Stoughton, Mass. [all from the 34 TFS], Maj Stanley H. Horn, 41, Madison, Wisc., Maj James D. Murray, Jr., 34, Bayonne, N.J., Capt Hal P. Henning, 27, Contoocook, N.H. [all three from the 469 TFS] and Lt Col Robert A. "Red" Evans [44 TFS commander], 45, Rangeley, Maine."

Also today, Capt Craig M. White flew his 6th combat mission with the 44 TFS, 388 TFW. He flew F-105D 62-4221 as "Vegas 04" to Bac Mai. He logged 2 hrs 35 minutes flying time and was awarded his first Distinguished Flying Cross for Extraordinary Achievement. Many years later, he wrote about preparing for this mission for the F-105 Thunderchief Facebook group. "November 17, 1967 .. It's still dark outside but you've been up for over 2 hours. You're the new guy, the rookie, you have five fairly easy RP1 and RP5 missions under your belt, but have yet to see 'Downtown'. You've sat through the early morning mission briefing and the flight briefing, the target today is Bac Mai Airfield, on the outskirts of Hanoi, the weather is good, and it's a GO. You and all the strike force have just eaten breakfast a KABOOM, Roscoe rode back to Fort Apache with my flight, and now we're suiting up in the locker room. My locker is #16, and I proceed to stow my personal effects in the locker and like everyone else, check out my emergency and survival equipment. There is some mild kidding and bullshitting going on, I think mostly to relieve the

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stress. How do I feel? Nervous, excited, heart pounding inside, but not sweating and a calm appearance on the outside. I have heard hundreds of tales for the past months about the defenses around Hanoi I will soon see in person. My biggest fear is that I might show cowardice in battle and let my fellow pilots down, and bring shame to my family and me. Soon, we are all suited up with G suits, survival vests, parachutes, personal weapons, individual good luck charms, helmets, masks, mission data, and as we walk out of Ft. Apache, all we meet wish us luck and Godspeed, and we enter the still dark morning and climb aboard the bread truck for transport to our assigned Thud ... was so long ago, yet like yesterday."

Hq 7th Air Force News release 11-67-515, pp 1 - 3 & Craig White log book, pg 1 and copy of Facebook page, e-mail 21 Nov 17.

17-Nov-67

4839

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS was one of the four flights from Korat's ALPHA force that attacked Bac Mai Airfield (JCS 7). The flight took off from Korat at 0620 with a TOT of 0855 to 0858, four minutes ahead of Takhli's BRAVO force. Their mission lasted 2 hours 50 minutes.

The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Larry R. Klinestiver
- #2 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot, KIA 14 Feb 68
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4248
- #4 - Capt Robert M. Crane

This was Maj Armstrong's 21st combat mission to North Vietnam. "We finally got into the Bac Mai Airfield just south of Hanoi and, I think, in the city limits. The weather was absolutely perfect once we crossed eastward from the mountains into the delta. We were tapped by MiG-21s as we turned north into the target, 30 miles south of Hanoi, but they were not able to get a shot at us. Lead and myself launched Shrike missiles toward Hanoi about 12 miles out. I don't know what they hit. We rolled in with the CBU's and were rather fast on airspeed so I released a little early. I was aiming for the flak sites on the southeast end. There was heavy 85-mm flak as we rolled in from the northeast & pulled off. No one got hit despite the heavy fire and the 3 SAMs that were launched. Takhli's Force Commander was shot down just behind us in the delta [Maj Charles Edward Cappelli, 354 TFS, KIA]. No rescue possible there. We got good hits on the airfield targets.

"That night we faced an inquisition because some ordnance had hit the Russian, English and I.C.C. embassies. None of ours, however."

In his memoir, Lt Gen Armstrong elaborated on this mission. "The next day the weather was much improved in Pack VIA. Our target that morning was the Bac Mai airfield which we had originally planned to strike the day before. Several days earlier a bunch of us in the 34th concluded that the SA-2 radars seemed to shut down whenever a Shrike missile was fired. The Shrike left a very tell-tale gray trail which couldn't be confused with a Sidewinder, for instance. So we opined that it might be a good idea to just fire some Shrikes just before entering the SA-2 ring and see if that held down the radars. So we persuaded the command post to order a Shrike missile to be loaded on the outboard station of the lead and #3 aircraft in the first two flights. Why they agreed to such a wild scheme, I'll never know but they did. Our plan was for the mission commander to transmit a code word about 20 miles from the target and the four of us would hose off our missiles.

"We headed up the land route and turned East to cross the Red River and fly the last 80 miles on the East side of the river so we could make a left hand roll-in on the airfield. I was #3 in the second flight which meant I was carrying CBU's. We briefed to drop them on any 85-mm site that fired on us. If we didn't see any firing, then lead and his wingman would dump theirs on the 85-mm site on the Southwest end of the field and I would do likewise on the site on the Northeast end which we knew were there from photos of the target. Everything was proceeding according to plan until we were about to cross the Red River. We got a call that two 'blue bandits' (MiG-21's) were closing on us from the North. We executed our standard defensive maneuver: lower the nose, go into afterburner, and race them to the SA-2 ring. I noticed a flicker on my airspeed tape which indicated that I had gone supersonic but I didn't think anything more about that as it I was still concerned about the MiGs. They must have overshot us because they caused us no more grief.

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"When we were about 20 miles from the target (using the Doppler navigation system for reference) the code was transmitted to fire the Shrikes. I hosed mine off and it accelerated away in level flight leaving the tell-tale smoke trail. We saw no SA-2s being launched although we knew there were plenty of them in this area. When the time came to roll-in, nobody was firing so [I] aimed at my pre-designated 85-mm site. Since nobody was firing, I made a picture-perfect dive and released my CBU's right on the numbers. The other guys put their bombs on the barracks on the field which was the real target. The airfield itself was too short for any combat usage.

"Unscathed, we returned to Korat feeling pretty good about the mission and our nifty idea of firing the Shrikes. After dinner, we were all called down to the command post. There was an urgent inquiry from the White House who wanted to know about the report that there were casualties that morning at the International Control Commission, the English Embassy, and the Soviet Embassy. Fortunately, the #4 aircraft was equipped with a 70-mm camera which took pictures upon bomb release. The 180-degree pictures showed the CBU's coming off the rack and starting to spin rather than fall away smoothly pulling the wire that allowed the propeller on the nose of the CBU container to unscrew and open up the container like a pea pod. Normally this was calculated to happen at a couple thousand feet above the target which allowed aerodynamic forces on the curved fins of the bomblets to spread them into a lethal circle of about 200-foot diameter.

"But since they were spinning, the propeller didn't turn and the container did not split in two. The film showed that the containers impacted over a mile laterally and emitted a puff of white smoke which was the indication that the bomblets were not armed by the aerodynamic forces. They impacted along Embassy Row parallel to our run-in heading. This could have been the cause of the casualties that the White House was asking about. Or it could have been that there were radar sites on those buildings which our Shrikes homed in on. Anyhow, that's all that we could tell them and we didn't feel like we owed anybody an apology. But we were told that the Shrike gambit was not to be used again. Too bad -- it seemed to work! It was normal to try different tactics. Sometimes changing from the morning mission to the afternoon mission. The mission commanders had a lot of flexibility as it should have been."

Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 8 - 9 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 15 - 16.

06-Dec-67

7148

The 34 TFS, 388 TFW published additional duties assigned to squadron officers. Squadron commander, Lt Col Robert W. Smith, signed Special Order 67 dated 6 December 1967.

Name	Additional Duty
Maj James E. Daniel, Jr.	Operations Officer
Maj Almer L. Barner	Executive Officer
Maj Clyde L. Falls	Navigation and Plans Officer
Maj William M. Blakeslee	Awards and Decorations Officer
Maj Donald W. Hodge	Flight Manuals Control Officer
	PIF Control Officer
Maj Donald B. Zimmerman	Mobility Officer
	Training Officer
Capt Douglas A. Beyer	Asst Awards and Decorations Officer
Capt Hugh W. Davis	Safety Officer
Capt Robert M. Elliot	Personal Equipment Officer
Capt Vernon D. Ellis	Squadron Fund and Recreational Officer
Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver	Wing Life Support Officer
Capt Irving E. LeVine	Athletic Officer
	Fire Marshal
	Security Officer
	Voting Officer
	Vehicle Control Officer
	Asst Wing Life Support Officer

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Maj James L. Taylor	Administrative Officer
Maj David D. Igelman	Bomb Damage Assessment Officer
Capt Sam P. Morgan	Standardization Officer
	Weapons and Gunnery Officer
Capt Jacob Shuler	Unit Historian
	Information Officer
	Asst Squadron Fund and Rec Officer
1Lt John T. Latz	Training Officer
	Retention Officer
	FOD Officer
	Disaster Control Officer
1Lt Philip J. Parisi	Explosive Safety Officer
	Ground Safety Officer
	Mission Safety 70 Officer
	Zero Defect Project Officer
	Unit Fund Council Custodian

34 TFS SO 67 dated 6 Dec 67 provided by Jake Shuler, e-mail 23 Apr 12.

09-Dec-67

6945

"F-105 Thunderchief pilots from the 388 TFW dropped 750-pound bombs on a truck park, 37 miles northwest of Dong Hoi, Dec 9." (Sawadee Flyer, Vol I, No. 11, Friday, Dec 15, 1967, pg 1.)

Under Rolling Thunder RT56A-220, four pilots from the 469 TFS struck a road segment in North Vietnam at location 17-25N and 105-43-30E. They were:

Lt Col William N. Reed flying F-105D 58-1172. His gun camera film showed a missile being fired.
Capt John H. Schaub flying F-105D 60-0458
Lt James L. Karg, Navy exchange officer, flying F-105D 62-4269
Maj Robert F. Grubb flying F-105D 60-0428

Also three pilots from the 34 TFS struck a target NW of Dien Bien Phu at 21-31-16N and 102-54-47E. They were:

Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner flying F-105D 60-0488
Capt Robert M. Crane flying F-105D 62-4387
Capt Robert M. Elliot flying F-105D 60-0445

National Archives combat camera archive control Number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649C.

12-Dec-67

4601

Fourteen flights of F-105s from Takhli and Korat and F-4s from Ubon targeted Kep Railroad Yards at 21-25N and 106-18E and Kep Air Field (JCS 9.1) at 21-23N and 106-16E in Route Pack 6B.

The strike force had a total of 56 aircraft that included F-105 Iron Hands from Takhli, one F-105 flak suppression flight from Takhli, three F-105 strike flights from Korat, and two F-4C MiG CAP flights from Ubon. One MiG CAP flight was supporting the Iron Hand flight, and the other supported the flak suppression and strike flights.

The aircraft departed their bases, refueled over the Gulf of Tonkin, joined up, turned left at the Ile Madeleine, and headed inland north of MiG Ridge. While the strike force was over water, DEEP SEA warned of MiGs airborne from Phuc Yen and later from Kep and Haiphong.

Solid undercast at 8,000 feet caused the Takhli F-105 strike flights to weather abort at 0845L just short of the northeast railroad, followed shortly afterwards by Korat's strike flights. The F-4C MiG CAP aircraft continued ahead to search for MiGs.

One of the MiG CAP flights and two of Korat's egressing F-105 strike flights and its flak suppression flight (Hatchet

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Flight) encountered MiG-21s. MiG CAP number three fired three AIM-7 missiles at a MiG but all three missiles failed. The F-4C pilot and his wingman pursued the MiG-21 until they received a warning call and broke off 10 to 15 miles from the Chinese border.

A "dirty gray/black" MiG-21 fired an ATOL missile at number four F-105 in Korat's flak suppression flight. "The ATOL exploded just aft of [the plane's] right wing, blowing off half the external fuel tank, igniting the fuel, punching two holes in the right horizontal stabilizer, and tearing the right half of the fuselage from the flap on back." (Red Baron Report)

This pilot was Capt Douglas A. Beyer, "Hatchet 04" from the 34 TFS flying F-105D 60-0512. He was "... a 100-mission pilot who was attached to the 388 TFW. [He] said that during a mission near the Kep Airfield an air-to-air missile, fired at his aircraft by a MiG-21, exploded directly behind him. 'Fragments struck the right drop tank causing it to explode,' the pilot recalled. Although shrapnel also damaged the fuselage and the alternate and utility hydraulic systems were lost, Byer was able to safely return to a friendly base. ... " The pilot landed at Da Nang AB, South Vietnam. A photo of the plane with the "JJ" tail code, showed holes along the right side of the aft fuselage above and below the stabilator. He received the DFC (3rd OLC) for this mission. (USAF microfilm AVH-7 & Thunderchief Worldwide Report Vol III No 11 July 1968.)

"Hatchet 02", Capt Irving E. LeVine, 34 TFS, fired 121 rounds at the same MiG-21 at point-blank range, 90-degree angle off without hitting the MiG. LeVine was 33 years old with 2,500 flying hours, 225 in the F-105, flying his 76th combat mission, 70 over North Vietnam.

During a Red Baron interview on 25 November 1970, he described his actions. "At first, that MiG looked like an F-4 with a bad paint job. It came up so lazy; most of the MiGs I'd seen had come up very fast, but this one didn't seem to be in any hurry at all until he suddenly snapped up and fired, like the snap-up they do with the F-89. I expected him to go to 35,000 feet and I started to roll right into him, nose down and I didn't think I'd be able to bring my nose up in time. Anyway, I ceased my roll, started up, and he simply made a lazy left bank just like he was on a GCA. At first I thought we were going to collide; I shoved the nose over as far as I could and hosed off the 20-mm rounds. It seemed like a tremendously long fighter. It was silver but not bright silver; there was a gray band of paint behind the cockpit and halfway on the wings and it looked like somebody made a quick attempt to camouflage it. He pulled around (to the right) to parallel my course and I thought if I barrel-rolled to the left I could pull in behind him but my main concern was to help number 4 (who was hit and burning)."

Capt LeVine accompanied Capt Beyer toward Danang where Beyer landed safely after his fire blew out. Capt LeVine flew on to Korat.

Doug Beyer's comments on his experience are posted on Robert W. Smith's autobiography web site. "Early on the morning of 12 Dec 67, we went through the normal mission briefings. Sam Armstrong, Irv LeVine and I were three members of the flight. My memory fades on the fourth. Target was Kep Airfield, northeast of Hanoi. We went the water route, hit the tankers, and entered the area south of Haiphong. The weather was solid, and we were in and out of the clouds the whole time. The Weasel flight kept us advised as to what they found - no breaks, anywhere.

"Finally, they called for a weather abort, and the strike force began a port turn to go feet wet again. About half way through the turn, someone yelled 'Lead, break left!'. About eight or nine leads responded, what lead? About that time, I felt a heavy jolt at the rear of the aircraft, and the bird started a roll to the right. My first thought, this is the truth, was 'I don't like rice!' I corrected the attitude with normal aileron, no problem. I lit the burner, punched off the MER, and tried to get rid of both drop tanks. The left one jettisoned, but the right one remained with me.

"Sam joined up with me and gave me a quick rundown on what he could see. I was receiving constant vectors and distances to the coast from those guys we always heard, but never saw.

"As soon as I was feet wet, we turned south to Da Nang. As I began my penetration, I entered the clouds and was under GCA control. They advised me of deteriorating weather, with a rainstorm in progress. There was no problem controlling the aircraft, but not having a chance to run a control check, I had to press forward. I had no hydraulic

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brakes, but the [backup] air system was in good shape. I broke out at about 500' with good visibility, hit the runway, popped the drag chute, and began braking to a stop. No problems.

"I opened the canopy, and slid down onto the wing. At that time, the aircraft began to move, and I thought I was in deep trouble. I was wrong. Ground crewmen already had a Euclid hooked up, and was towing me off the runway. First class service, to say the least!!

"Several hours after I landed, a friend of mine in the maintenance squadron called to say he had something he wanted to show me. He's also the guy that got the pictures of the aircraft for me.

"He met me at Base Ops, and handed me a rolleron that they had gotten out of the rear of my engine area. It had no serial numbers on it, so I assumed it had to be from an Atoll missile. One of the oldest master sergeants I've ever seen explained that the US had quit numbering the rollerons as well, and he was certain the rolleron was from a Sidewinder. Interesting.

"I hitched a ride back to Korat on a T-39 and, upon arrival, joined the squadron party, already in progress. At that point, Irv LeVine began to tell me exactly what had happened. He said that he had seen a MIG 21 pop up out of the clouds, hose off an air-to-air missile, and dive back down into the clouds. He further stated that he had gotten off some rounds of 20 mike mike, and felt sure he had hit the guy in the vertical stabilizer.

"Several days later, I got the pictures of the aircraft. One most noteworthy picture shows a hole in MY vertical stabilizer. The old master sergeant says Sidewinder rolleron. You can understand my doubts about what really occurred that day in December 1967, 35 ½ years ago!" (http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch_5/iv.html)

Irv LeVine told how he remembered this mission. "We were inbound when an airborne abort was called. We had a solid undercast from the coast inland and it was several thousand feet below us. The sky was basically clear and visibility was 15 to 20 miles or more. Our flight did a right turn and headed for the coast. I saw no flak or SAMs. I was in a gentle right turn, almost level, and busy cleaning up the cockpit. Out of the corner of my right eye I saw an aircraft lazily climb out of the undercast a mile or so to my 3 o'clock position and it seemed to be moving rather slow. It was a mottled dark gray and I thought, 'It must be one of ours'. I was startled when it snapped up and fired a missile. The missile hit one of our flight and 70 feet of flame shot rearward from that plane. Radio chatter made me realize it was Doug Beyer's bird that was hit. I didn't know how badly but thought he might not make it to the coast. That fire was really burning and streaming rearward. At the same time I thought the MiG, like so many of the MiGs before him, was now going to grab for altitude and possibly head for China. I hoped to get on his tail and get a shot before he could escape to a much higher altitude. I dumped my bombs and hustled getting my switches to 'Guns Air', lower my seat, get into burner while keeping an eye on the MiG all at the same time. To my surprise, he didn't keep climbing but swung into a 90-degree left turn that would take him across my path but well below me. I came out of burner and shoved the nose of my bird down hard. As he started his turn, my bird's nose was well above the horizon at a 45 to 50-degree angle. The Thud reacted perfectly and I thought we were going to collide. He passed directly across my line of flight and just below me. I pulled the trigger as he shot by but I don't think he even knew I was there. He certainly didn't try to take any evasive action or try to engage me. He reversed to his right leveling off a couple thousand feet above me and appeared to be watching Doug's burning aircraft. I felt confident doing the barrel roll attack and for a moment I considered trying one to get at his 6 o'clock position. I was low at about his 5 o'clock position and we were on approximately the same heading. Guilt took over at the same time and told me my job was to guard Doug's ass as he headed for feet wet. I turned hard to my right and using burner caught up with them. I stayed in a weave pattern behind Doug until we were well out over the water and headed south. He went south to Danang and I RTB'd" (Irv LeVine, letter received 16 April 2010.)

The four pilots in "Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS were targeted against Kep Airfield. The Korat flight took off at 0555 and flew for 3 hours 50 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Donald W. Revers
- #2 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot (KIA 14 Feb 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0449

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#4 - Capt Sam P. Morgan

It was Maj Armstrong's 34th combat mission. "This was the first Pack VI mission for me in 3 weeks. The weather was too bad around Hanoi so we were sent to Kep Airfield, the water route. I was Deputy Force Commander for this force but I lost my DC generator on the tanker and finally got it reset. After that I had to turn off all my navigation equipment to keep it on the line. Don Revers lost his AC generator just before landfall so Sam Morgan wound up leading the force. We were 5 minutes behind Takhli going in. The weather was completely undercast all up the Gulf and inland. Takhli made a weather abort about 15 miles from Kep and we did also a minute later. Consequently, we were all turning through the same airspace. About halfway through the turn back to the coast, we were jumped by MiG-21s. They fired missiles. One hit Hatchet #4, Doug Beyer, but he landed at Danang OK. Some flame shot out of Don Revers' airplane and we thought he was hit but apparently not. What a fiasco. We shouldn't have been sent up there in that weather." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 14)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong elaborated on this mission. "The weather over Pack VIA was generally bad so most of the missions were flown in flights into Laos or Pack I. The next Pack VIA mission was on the Kep Airfield Northeast of Hanoi. It was primarily a MiG-17 base. The weather was bad so we wound up doing a weather abort where we could bank only 20 degrees without compromising the effectiveness of our jamming pods. After having seen SA-2's coming up through the clouds and hitting aircraft like they did on 18 November, taking this long to turn and exit the area seemed like an eternity! No SA-2's were fired but two MiG-21's intercepted us and fired a heat seeker which impacted Doug Beyer's aircraft causing him to land at Danang with the missile sticking in the side of his aircraft." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 20.

Red Baron II Report, Event 69, pp 134 - 145 & 7 Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS), 67-51 dated 16 Dec 67, for week of 8 - 14 Dec 1967, pg 10.

31-Dec-67

4858

The 34 TFS at Korat launched the four-ship "Gator" flight against a target in Laos. The flight took off at 1430 and returned after flying for 2 hours 20 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 58-1157
- #2 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot, KIA 14 Feb 68
- #3 - Capt Sam P. Morgan
- #4 - Maj William M. Blakeslee

It was Maj Armstrong's 44th combat mission. "This was a Commando Club mission on a target 20 miles east of San Neua. The weather was undercast. We carefully selected our I.P. to be in the 'Fish's Mouth' so that we would automatically get a 'counter'. The weather was completely undercast so we couldn't see where the bombs hit. No post-strike refueling since we still had gobs of fuel. We did some air work on the way home. Very uneventful."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flew in another 34 TFS flight that bombed trucks and troops near the "Fish's Mouth" in RP-3. It was his 57th mission into North Vietnam.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Simmer 3" against a road segment in the Steel Tiger region of Laos. "100%. Road cut and land slide" It was his 28th combat mission.

Maj David D. Igelman from the 34th flew a mission today for which he received the DFC (1st OLC).

Capt Craig M. White with the 44 TFS, 388 TFW, flew F-105D 60-0505 as "Goose 02" on a mission in Laos. He logged 2+10 flying hours.

Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 18 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 31 Dec 67 & Rufus Dyem Mission History log & Craig White log book, pg 3, e-mail 21 Nov 17.

19-Jan-68

4868

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS attacked a train near a village in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 0525. Its line up was:

Robert Malcolm Elliot

F-105 History

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4361
- #2 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #4 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot (KIA 14 Feb 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 58th combat mission. "The target this a.m. was an army barracks 8 miles southwest of Hanoi. I was Mission Commander. I planned to drop off the tankers in the Gulf and ingress just north of Thanh Hoa going up the west side of the Red River keeping the SAMs off to our right. One Iron Hand was to go up on the east side with a MIGCAP as a diversion. As we got close to the coast, the weather, which was supposed to be clear, turned out to be almost completely overcast as far as the eye could see. We turned towards the target and continued on until about 20 miles south of the target. At that time, I could see that there was no way. I called a weather abort to the left and told everyone to pick a target in an open area southwest of our run-in course. We found a train and a convoy of trucks that we dropped on. My bombs were a bit short of the train and I didn't know if I did more than damage the cars. After expending our bombs, we came on home." Their mission lasted 3 hours 40 minutes.

Capt Craig M. White, 44 TFS, 388 TFW, flew F-105D 60-0488 as "Cactus 04" to a target 7 NM SW of Hanoi. His plane received flap damage. He logged 2+30 flying hours.

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong, described this mission and its significance in much greater detail. "I was the mission commander and the target was an army barracks 8 miles Southwest of Hanoi. It was a certainty that we would encounter SA-2's as we ingressed from the Gulf. I sent the Weasels and the MiG CAP up the west side of the Red River when we dropped off the tankers with the hope that they would draw the SA-2 response first. They were equipped to deal with this threat which would allow us to get to the target without losses. This actually worked. I was also very mindful that the weather was likely to be unsuitable for dive bombing and the standard 20-degree turn weather abort was quite hazardous (it seemed to take forever to make 180-degree turn while a lucky SA-2 might come unseen through the undercast).

"Therefore, I had a very radical idea and this was what I briefed at the mission briefing. When I called: 'Weather abort, left' everyone would roll left to an inverted position, pull the throttle to idle and pull back enough on the control stick to keep the aircraft in a light burble. This would result in a minimum altitude loss maneuver. It was the functional equivalent to a 'to the rear march' in that Tail-end Charlie would briefly be the lead aircraft and the leader Tail-end Charlie. I briefed that we would then break into individual flights and the flight leaders would move into the lead positions as soon as possible.

"There were at least two problems/unknowns associated with my plan. The first was that I had never done a Split 'S' in the F-105 in any fuel/weight configuration and our configuration at this maneuver was predictably as severe as could be imagined. We were starting from about 17,000 feet so my assumption that even our weakest pilot could perform a Split 'S' from this altitude before hitting the ground. But I hadn't test flown this maneuver so I was mindful that if I had badly miscalculated, my command could result in 16 'smoking holes' in North Vietnam. The second problem which was easier to predict was what this maneuver would look like on the SA-2 radar. As long as we were in our regular formation approaching the target area, our jamming pods would obliterate their scopes. However, the moment we rolled inverted with the pods pointing straight up, the jamming would disappear from their scopes and they would see the naked radar returns from each of our aircraft. An SA-2 would guide very nicely in this situation. I was betting that our maneuver would catch them by surprise. They would suddenly see our 'blips' and wonder why the 'blips' seemed to become stationary and then quickly move backwards with the resumption of jamming on their scopes.

"Meantime on the mission, as my Doppler indicated 20 miles from the target, it was evident that it was completely overcast. I'm sure that my comrades wondered why I went this far when I called the weather abort break as I had briefed. It worked just fine. Everybody was able to recover from their Split 'S' above the undercast. Some might have had some trouble completing the pull-out in the clouds using instruments. No SA-2's were observed. So far, so good. I simultaneously resumed the leadership of my flight while directing the other flights to: 'Hit targets of opportunity'. It wasn't until later that I heard that LBJ bragged that not a s---house in North Vietnam is bombed without my okay and here was Major Armstrong exercising on-the-spot direction which was inconsistent with the president's claim. Oh well!

Robert Malcolm Elliot

F-105 History

"I headed my flight south in the hope of finding breaks in the overcast where we could find a suitable target to bomb. The clouds started to diminish the further south we went. One of my flight members called out that there was a train in a village over by the river. It took me only an instant to spot the village and train and call: 'Pistol lead is up and in'. With that I pulled up and banked left to position for a bomb run. The train was about ten cars with half of it inside the village environs and the other half sticking out. I established my 45-degree dive aiming at that part sticking out of the village. I didn't see anybody shooting at us so I released my bombs on cue and pulled out of the dive. I kicked the left rudder so I could see my bombs hit as I gained altitude. I was able to see all six of the 750# bombs impact. The first ones were short of the train. The very last one hit the edge of the track--not the train. I was upset with myself that I had missed hitting the train since this was indeed a very rare opportunity. I am not aware of a train ever being attacked this far outside of Hanoi.

"A little calculation would show that at 125 milliseconds between release of the 6 bombs at 500 knots, at 45 degrees dive angle they would impact 75 feet apart. The train was only about 8 feet wide and from a 90-degree attack angle, missing the train was not a disgrace. I didn't stop to make this calculation at this time -- I was determined to take advantage of this opportunity. I leveled off and raised the mils of depression in the sight to 20 and selected 'guns' on the armament panel. As I turned 270 degrees to make a strafing pass down the length of the train, I had a sudden thought. We had flown South far enough to be in Pack IV which was Navy territory. Consequently, this was an area that was unfamiliar to me. The train could be a trap that was used to lure aircraft into gun range. I could see that the last member of my flight had completed his bomb run and we didn't have a direct hit on the train. With my finger on the armed trigger, my better instincts took over and I banked sharply to the east and called: 'Pistol, were going feet wet' (meaning heading out to the Gulf for post strike refueling). Nobody objected and we returned safely to Korat.

"During the debriefing, I mentioned the train. I suggested that I thought that I had damaged the track enough that the train might be stuck there and the Navy should be aware of this intelligence so they could target it tomorrow. It was too late for the afternoon mission. I thought no more about this mission since I had only one more benign mission before I met Beth in Hawaii on R&R. It was only 22 years later when I was ready to retire that I matched this mission data, the tape of this mission, and the recognition that Tet 68 started 12 days later that I realized that the train I could have destroyed with my Gatling gun was probably carrying war goods for that Tet Offensive. We had no warning that Tet was coming. Otherwise, I would have risked the danger of the village defenses to strafe the train and destroy the goods that Tet would need. In retrospect, this was the mission, out of 100, that could have been the most important! This was a reflection of the failure of our intelligence system."

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 23 - 24 & Craig White log book, pg 4, e-mail 21 Nov 17 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 33 - 35.

14-Feb-68

2705

"... Seventh Air Force used the rare day of clear weather to attack Hanoi's canal bridge, one of the targets President Johnson had again released only a week earlier. Since the bridge raids of December, the Canal Bridge (JCS 13) had returned to operation, while the Doumer Bridge over the Red River (JCS 12) was still down."

"Late in the afternoon, strike forces from Takhli and Korat converged on the bridge from opposite directions. Sixteen bomb-laden F-105s from the 355 TFW at Takhli came down Thud Ridge from the west, with eight F-105 escorts to threaten the SAM sites and eight F-4s to guard against the MiGs. A similar force escorted a like number of F-105s from the 388 TFW at Korat as they penetrated North Vietnam from the Gulf of Tonkin. Although the two wings dropped forty-eight 2,000-pound and 3,000-pound bombs, only one hit the bridge, and three days later trains were using it. An escort F-105 from Korat was lost to a SAM and the pilot, ["Pancho 02"] Capt. Robert M. Elliot [from the 34 TFS], was never seen by Americans again." (To Hanoi and Back")

"The two wings expended 22 3,000-pound bombs and 26 2,000-pound bombs in the target area. KA-71 strike photography showed one direct hit on the south end of the bridge and several craters on the southern approach. It was estimated severe damage was inflicted on the bridge." (388 TFW history)

Maj Cecil G. Prentis from the 333 TFS at Takhli received the Distinguished Flying Cross (Second Oak Leaf Cluster)

Robert Malcolm Elliot

F-105 History

for heroism on this mission. "... Major Prentis led the last of four flights against a heavily defended bridge. After flying through intense barrages of flak and surface-to-air missiles to deliver his ordnance directly on target, he successfully broke up an impending attack by MiG interceptors which allowed the force to egress without loss." (Cecil G. Prentis, DFC (2nd OLC) citation)

Capt Craig M. White, 44 TFS, 388 TFW, flew F-105D 62-4270 as "Locust 02" against the Canal des Rapides Bridge. It was his 49th combat mission. He logged 3+20 flying time.

Maj Roger D. Ingvalson from the 34 TFS from Korat was awarded the Silver Star for a mission he flew on this day. He was presented the award on 25 July 1968 under SO G-2248. "Major Roger D. Ingvalson distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 14 February 1968. On that date, Major Ingvalson exhibited extraordinary courage as a member of a surface to air missile suppression flight of F-105 Thunderchiefs assigned to protect a large strike force. Despite electronic equipment malfunctions, his aggressiveness and skill enabled him to successfully decoy numerous surface to air missiles as well as intense, accurate antiaircraft fire away from the main force and to his own aircraft. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Major Ingvalson has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Citation posted on-line at <http://www.veterantributes.org/TributeDetail.asp?ID=13>)

Maj Eugene P. Beresik flying with the 34 TFS received a Distinguished Flying Cross for his mission today. "... Major Beresik was a member of a force of F-105s on a mission against a key military target in the vicinity of Hanoi. In spite of heavy barrages of surface to air missiles and antiaircraft fire, Major Beresik courageously pressed his attack to make precise ordnance run on this highly defended target. The professional competence, aerial skill and devotion to duty displayed by Major Beresik reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Citation to Accompany the Distinguished Flying Cross (Posthumous) to Eugene P. Beresik provided by his son Paul Jansen)

Lt Col James B. Ross from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, led the CBU flight attacking the four corners of Gia Lam airport (JCS 3) in Hanoi to provide cover for 388 TFW flights bombing the Canal bridge. His call sign was "Locust Lead". This was the first attack on this airport. "No AAA fire on mission aircraft! One A/C lost to SAM on egress." Col Ross was awarded the Silver Star for this mission. (Jim Ross, undated note circa May 2001 to Ron Thurlow.)

Capt Lamont H. Pharmer also from the 34 TFS was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement for supporting this mission. The award citation read, "Capt Pharmer was a member of the flak suppression flight for a force of F-105s assigned the mission of destroying a vital military target in the heavily defended Hanoi area. Despite heavy missile and antiaircraft artillery fire, Captain Pharmer unhesitatingly selected and attacked a lethal antiaircraft artillery site over the one originally assigned him in order to suppress a more potent threat to the strike force. Capt Pharmer displaying outstanding courage and flying skill, delivered his ordnance directly on target, contributing significantly to the safety of the main force on an important and highly dangerous mission." (Lamont H. Pharmer DFC Award Citation.)

Years later, Monty Pharmer still remembered details of this mission. "It was my first Pac 6 mission and it amazed me how much fire power, AAA, SAMs, etc. the NV sent up at us. Before the flight, I rode out to the flight line in the van with Bob Elliot. He was trying to ease the tension for some of us new heads. He said it won't be as bad as some had told us. Unfortunately, he got hit by a SAM that day and his body wasn't recovered until sometime in the 1990s. Sq. CO, L/C Bob Smith was leading the mission and I was Number 4 on (I believe) Jim Ross' wing [Lt Col James B. Ross]. Gary Durkee was on Bob Smith's wing as No. 2." (Monty Pharmer, e-mail 22 Sep 2006)

On his 43rd combat mission, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Bass 3" against the Canal bridge. "On target. Heavy 37/57/85 mm/SAMs. Pancho 2." (Rufus Dye Mission History log.)

A newspaper article told of today's bridge strike and other targets struck in February. It was headlined "Bridge, Airfield Hit Despite Poor Weather". Fighting 388th Tactical Fighter Wing pilots struck two major targets during the nine day period, Feb. 10 through 18, although bad weather continued over North Vietnam.

"Striking near the heart of Hanoi Feb. 14, 388th TFW F-105 pilots dropped their 3,000 pound bombs on the Canal des

Robert Malcolm Elliot

F-105 History

Rapides railroad and highway bridge, five miles northeast of the capital city. No bomb damage assessment (BDA) was available due to the weather. [Craig White noted on his clipping "It was Clear!"]

"Feb 18, Yen Bai airfield, 78 miles northwest of Hanoi was hit by Thunderchief crews utilizing radar bombing techniques. Again weather precluded any BDA.

"Using radar bombing techniques, 388th Thunderchief pilots struck Kim Lan army barracks, 55 miles northwest of Hanoi, Feb. 12.

Xom Bai army barracks, 43 miles west-northwest of Hanoi fell victim to 388th TFW pilots Feb. 16. They dropped their 750-pound bombs using radar bombing techniques.

"During another strike a surface-to-air missile (SAM) site, seven miles south of Vinh was silenced.

"Two more SAM sites were silenced, in a line, 14 miles northwest to 28 miles northwest of Hanoi Feb. 17.

"During the entire period, 388th pilot struck lines of communication and military storage areas in the southern panhandle of North Vietnam."

"To Hanoi and Back", pg 128 & Craig White log book, pg 5, and news clipping, e-mails 21 Nov 17 & 388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frame 0501.

14-Feb-68

4876

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS was one of the Korat flights that struck the Canal des Rapides bridge (JCS 13) in downtown Hanoi. The flight took off at 13:55. Its line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #2 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0464
- #4 - Capt Gary G. Durkee

This was Maj Armstrong's 66th combat mission. "The target was the Hanoi Railroad & Hiway Bridge [JCS 13]. The weather was clear for the first time in several weeks. We came up the delta into the target. Col Smith inadvertently dropped his bombs crossing the coast. The visibility was restricted but we picked up the target about 20 miles out. I hit about where I aimed but the winds they gave us were wrong. Nobody hit the bridge consequently, and post-strike photography showed there were 30 cars on the bridge at the time. #2 couldn't get his bombs off and carried them out. The flak was lighter than reputed and we only saw about 6 SAMs, which weren't too close. However, Pancho #2 was hit by a SAM on the way out and went down [Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot, 34 TFS, KIA]. We went on down to Pack I in northern Mu Gia Pass and #2 got his bombs off. The rest of us made 3 strafing passes on a building along the road." Their mission lasted for 3 hours 45 minutes.

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong further described this Valentine Day mission. "The weather cleared in Pack VIA so we launched against the Hanoi Railroad and Highway Bridge (alternately called the Canal des Rapides Bridge) which I hadn't bombed since 28 October. Bob Smith was the mission commander and I was flying #3 in the lead flight which meant that I was the deputy mission commander. We went the water route and dropped off on a Northwesterly heading towards Hanoi in unusually clear weather. As we neared the coast line of the Delta, I noted Bob's two 3,000# bombs drop and impact with violent explosion on the beach. I called out: 'Scuba lead, why don't you turn around and I'll take the force in'. There was absolutely no reason to risk oneself and an aircraft that had no bombs. His response was: 'Negative'. I should have expected as much from hard-headed Bob Smith. He knew that I was perfectly capable of taking the force to the target but he wasn't about to retreat.

"So Bob led us in for a run on the bridge. He made his dive bomb run as if he had bombs to drop. Post strike photography showed that there were about 30 cars on the bridge when we arrived and the locomotive was valiantly trying to back off which apparently he was able to do. I released my bombs and joined up with Bob for our egress. Our #2 man, Bill Thomas and our #4 man, Gary Durkee were nowhere to be seen so the two of us headed to the tankers. When we coasted up to the tankers, we observed that the two of them were already there. I should mention

Robert Malcolm Elliot

F-105 History

that this was the first Pack VIA mission for both of them and that probably accounts for their actions.

"I called out: 'Hey, #2, you've still got a bomb on your right wing'. Gary Durkee called: 'And you've got one on your left wing, too'. Bill apparently didn't realize that his 3,000# bombs had not released when he hit the button. He never had dropped that size bomb before and felt the quiver in the aircraft when they were blown off the pylon station. Even with this extra load, he had out run us and Gary was so mesmerized by the 6 SA-2's that we saw and the 85-mm flak which popped around us just before roll-in that he hadn't noticed the bombs on Bill's aircraft. They were justified in having adrenaline up to their eyeballs because of the enemy defenses since Capt. Bob Elliot from our squadron was hit by a SA-2 on the way out and killed.

"When we landed Bob Smith told us what happened to him on the way in. He was flying on auto-pilot as the mission commanders always did to give some stability to the many aircraft using him for guidance when the auto-pilot 'burped' and he hurriedly grabbed the control stick. In his haste he inadvertently hit the already armed bomb release system. Explanation:>>There were a dozen things that one had to do before entering North Vietnam. Maybe some pilots used a checklist but I memorized the steps since I wanted to keep my head out of the cockpit. I made up a little jingle which contained the first letter of what needed to be done and had rehearsed it enough so that it came naturally even in times of extreme stress! Some of those steps were to dump the cabin pressure so that you would not ingest fumes in case of a hit in the compressor section. You also had to verify that you had selected the correct mil setting for the attack, selected the proper ordnance on the appropriate station, gone to 100% oxygen, etc. All of this time you had to maintain your formation position and look for MiGs and SA-2's. This was not easy and the less competent/current pilots had all they could handle! Bob had already done all of this and now was concentrating on positioning the force for the attack when the auto-pilot 'burped'.<<

"Bob was now faced with two thoughts. The first was what to do with Bill's bombs. 3,000# bombs were a precious commodity so he was loathe to just drop them safe. Secondly, he was still smarting over the inadvertent loss of his bombs. So after we all took on our post strike fuel (Bob told us to take a couple thousand pounds more than every other flight was taking on board) Bob called for a FAC in Pack I. All of the other flights proceeded down the Gulf and headed back to Thailand across South Vietnam -- except the four of us. We flew into Pack I and made contact with a FAC who said that he had spotted a building at the North end of Mui Ghia Pass where some bad guys were hanging out. It was easy to see so Bob told Bill Thomas to bomb it. Bill made his run but the bombs failed to release a second time -- an obvious material malfunction. Bob then told him to do it again but this time to hit the jettison button which caused the bombs to impact still attached to the pylon and thus not armed.

"This was done. Then Bob asked the FAC if he wanted us to strafe the building since we had 1,000 rounds of 20-mm ammo each. Of course the FAC said yes. So Bob made the first firing pass by flying below the heights of the pass to get the right attack dive angle. We all followed and made 3 passes each until we had fired all of our ammo. I'm sure it looked to a casual observer that we doing a gunnery practice on a range back in the states. In fact, Mui Ghia Pass was known to have the fiercest defenses on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Reconnaissance aircraft transited it at 600 knots and still were shot at by the flak sites situated on the hill sides. As far as any of us could tell, they never fired a shot at us while we made these vulnerable, multiple passes. We concluded that this was such an unusually bold effort that the North Vietnamese just knew it had to be a trick! From my standpoint, I had just hung my precious bottom out twice on one mission for just one counter. This was vintage Bob Smith! He had no fear of anything."

As "Scuba 02", Capt William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. received the Distinguished Flying Cross for Extraordinary Achievement on this mission. "... Capt Thomas was a member of the lead flight of a force of F-105 aircraft assigned the mission of destroying a key military target in the vicinity of Hanoi. Despite heavy barrages of surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft artillery fire, Captain Thomas skillfully and at great risk made a precise bomb run on the target. ..." (Award citation under Hq 7th AF SO G-1844, 24 June 68.)

Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 26 - 27 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 39 - 40.

14-Feb-68

F-105D 600418 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by a SAM while returning from the Hanoi RR and Hwy bridge (JCS 13). Crashed in RP-6B, North Vietnam. 20-45N 105-57E Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot 34 TFS pilot ejected and was

Robert Malcolm Elliot

F-105 History

MIA then KIA. Call sign: "Pancho 02". On an Iron Hand mission, "... Captain Elliot's aircraft was hit by an enemy surface-to-air missile while conducting a bombing mission against a railroad bridge (Canal des Rapides) in the area of Hanoi Municipality. (It was his 75th mission.) There was no beeper and there was the sighting of a possible parachute. However, there was haze in the target area and visibility was poor. ... Captain Elliot was initially reported as missing in action."

Capt Robert M. Elliot flew as Pancho 2, in a flight of four, on a strike mission to the Hanoi RR/Hwy Bridge, North Vietnam. Other members in the flight and witnesses to the loss from other flights were Maj Emmett E. Ott "Pancho 01" from the 44 TFS with EWO Capt Thomas J. McGuire IV, Maj Richard E. Steere and EWO Capt Gerald W. Metzler from the 44 TFS, Maj David D. Igelman, and Maj William W. Blakeslee, both from the 34 TFS. The flight took off from Korat at 13:35 and Capt Elliot was shot down at 15:45.

"While on egress from the target, Captain Elliot's aircraft was hit by a SAM, as described in this extract from the statement of Major Robert E. Ott, Pancho 1: '...Downed member was hit by SAM at 15:43 in the vicinity of 2055/10600. I last saw him in the vicinity of 2045/10557. I did not see him eject. I did not see man/seat separation. I did not see a good chute. I did not hear a beeper. Weather in the area where member is down was scattered, 6 miles, haze. Type of terrain is flat and moderately populated. Pancho 2 called that he was hit. I asked where he was and he stated he was in a left turn. I picked up a Tally Ho on him and observed him in a left turn and intermittently torching 30 to 70 ft behind the aircraft. #2 continued past the egress heading (150 deg) and started a spiral. #2 could have ejected at any time and I would not have been able to see him due to distance and haze in the area.' No other members of the flight saw a chute or heard any beeper signals. SAR operations were not conducted." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 4-028, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3.)

"On 14 February 1968, [the North Vietnamese] 61st Missile Battalion shot down a USAF F-105, which provided Vietnamese and Soviet technicians with a piece of equipment they desperately needed: an intact [QRC-160-8] jamming pod. In the words of a senior Vietnamese officer, 'The secrets of the enemy's jamming of our missile guidance channel, which had caused us so much heartache, now lay revealed right there in front of our eyes.' This success was scored just in time. North Vietnamese missiles would not shoot down another pod-equipped USAF aircraft until 22 March 1971 [when they shot down an F-4D from the 13 TFS], more than two years later, when the modified SA-2 system finally went into service." ("The -Ology War: Technology and Ideology in the Vietnamese Defense of Hanoi", 1967, Merle L. Pribbenow II, in *The Journal of Military History*, Jan 2003, pg 198.)

"[On 7] June 1979, Capt Elliot was declared dead/body not recovered. His identity card was turned over to U.S. officials on April 6, 1988 together with a small quantity of skeletal remains, also reportedly belonging to Captain Elliot. The remains were insufficient for positive identification and correlation to Captain Elliot."

Later, family members were able to have the crash site further excavated and additional remains were recovered to enable positive identification.

"The remains of an Air Force pilot, previously unaccounted for from the Vietnam War, Col. Robert M. Elliot of Springfield, Mass, have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial in the United States."

"Elliot was flying his F-105D Thunderchief on a strike mission Feb. 14, 1968, over Hanoi, North Vietnam, when he was hit by a surface-to-air missile. He radioed to the other pilots in the flight that he had been hit and they witnessed his crash. None of the other pilots saw any ejection attempt nor heard any emergency beeper signals, but one reported seeing a streaming (unopened) parachute at approximately 3,000 feet."

"In April 1988, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam turned over remains to the United States that they attributed to Elliot. Returned with those remains was his military identification card. In 1992, Vietnam provided to U.S. officials several documents related to U.S. losses during the war. One entry was for Elliot. The description indicated that he died from his injuries."

"In 1994, a joint U.S.-Vietnamese team interviewed residents of the province where Elliot's plane crashed. They took the team to the spot where they had buried his remains in 1968 and subsequently turned them over to their government

Robert Malcolm Elliot F-105 History

for repatriation to the United States."

"With the accounting of Elliot, 2,031 servicemen are missing in action from the Vietnam War. Another 552 have been identified and returned to their families since the end of the war. Analysis of the remains and other evidence by the U.S. Army Central Identification Laboratory Hawaii confirmed the identification of Elliot."

Capt Elliot was born 8 November 1929 in Westfield, Massachusetts. He entered the service from Springfield, Massachusetts. He had accumulated 339.8 hours in the F-105. His name appears on the Vietnam War Memorial Wall panel 39E line 31.

Report of the Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, United States Senate. Jan 13, 1993 & AFPN news article datelined WASHINGTON reported in RATNET Digest - 26 Dec 1999 to 2 Jan 2000 (#2000-1)