

## Albert in Vietnam

This writing will be everything I can remember about my experiences in Vietnam. In early 1965, I was in VMO-6, A UH1E Helicopter Squadron that was stationed at Camp Pendleton, CA. Vietnam was building and we had sent a detachment to Vietnam led by LTCOL Bauman. In August 1965, MAG-36 with VMO-6 received orders to go to Vietnam with final destination to be Chu Lai. Actually, Chu Lai was an airstrip and we were to establish the helicopter base called Ky Ha nearby. There was nothing there, and the SEA BEES were to put in Marsten matting and we were to have a helo pad for MAG-36 to work out of. For some reason, I volunteered for the advance party. Mike Conner and Mick Pettigrew also volunteered after I told them we would be leaving the states a week after the main party and would have to go to Honolulu Hawaii for a briefing, and then fly into Vietnam and there was a week before the squadron and MAG-36 would arrive on the USS Princeton.

The following are notes I took in my almost daily diary while I was in Southeast Asia.

### 15 August, 1965, Camp Pendleton, CA

0610 awoke, packed and left 17124 Apt F at 0730 by station wagon to El Toro, MCAS. A few tears were shed by Mom and Pop. It was much harder to say goodbye than I expected. My feelings about going to Vietnam were that it was about time I earned the money I was getting paid and that I was a military man, and what our President said to do I had to do without question. It didn't bother me to be going to a war zone because I knew that there was no way I would not be coming back to my family.

0830: Arrived at El Toro Operations passenger terminal with Mike Conner and Mick Pettigrew. Departed at 1110 in a VMGR 352 C-130 (VGMR-352 is a refueling C-130 squadron). Arrived at Kaneohe Bay Air Station Hawaii at 2030 California time, 1930 Hawaii time. Smooth talking Lou Ziegler, the Group's rep, got a car and we went to dinner in Honolulu.

### 16 August, Monday

Went to Camp H.M. Smith by bus to get a briefing by FMF PAC on what to expect in Vietnam. Maj GEN Fields and his 1<sup>st</sup> FMF Marine Division staff were in on the briefing. The briefing was directed at him and move from Pendleton to Okinawa. We of MAG-36 got very little from it. Good G2 was all. Returned to Kaneohe at 1600 and heard that Major "Koo Koo" Kimble broke his ankle aboard the Princeton and was at Tripler Hospital. We visited him for about an hour. LtCOL McGouch, C.O. of 363 (HMH-363, Heavy lift squadron) tore his Achilles tendon and was also there.

### 17 August 1965

Tuesday. 1510: Departed Kaneohe Air Station for Wake Island. Arrived 2230. Wake time 2030. We were billeted at the MATS area and had some dinner. Shower and to bed.

## 18 August, Wed

Lost a day crossing the date line. 0400 up the A/C and departed at 0615.

## 19 August 1965

1430: Arrived Futema MCAS Okinawa.

## 23 August

Enjoyed 4 days at Okinawa. Had our go in-country physical and got my first finger wave. Went to a hotsi bath and cut my toe. Not bad. We departed Okinawa at 1230 and arrived at Danang South Vietnam at 1730 or 1630 VC time.

At Danang, all the advanced party expect LtCOL Costello, LtCOL Armagast, Mike, Mike and myself stayed and the rest went to Chu Lai. We three stayed with VMO-2 (the sister squadron) to get briefed and to get some in country flying experience with LtCOL Bauman, Don Reilly, Ed Kukendall and the rest. I flew my first mission with Bob Smith. He fired the guns and rockets at a hill where some VC were supposed to be. I flew home. Big deal.

## 24 August

Danang. I flew two missions, Air Observation type, with Ron Jennings.

## 25 August

Flew an escort hop with LtCOL Bauman. Escorted 5 A/C into a no activity zone about 15 miles Southwest of Danang.

## 26 August

Did not fly, but went to town (Danang) with Norm Mehalich. I bought a chair, mats and a mosquito net. Town is very dirty and smelly. I went to the wing club and saw H.P. Jones, Al Charlton, and Ken McCoy. Also visited Chu Lai.

## 27 August

I flew as co-pilot with LtCOL Bauman on an escort mission on the beach at Tam Ky. We saw a couple of VC going into a building or what was thought to be a bunker. We shot a few rockets and guns and burned some buildings. But no bunker. Ed Kuykendall and Mick Pettigrew flew the left Zone and saw 4 VC. They got two for sure with a possible on the other two.

## 28 August

I moved from Danang to Chu Lai, or to the helicopter area called Ky Ha. We have no tents or anything to set up housekeeping with. I found a cot and moved in with the Sgts. (Sergeants). I walked the area over and found there was nothing there to set up a group in 5 days.

## 29 August

Sunday, I went to Mass and communion then went swimming in the South China Sea. The LSD arrived in the afternoon and began to off load. Our area is in the process of being terraced off for tents and the

mats for the helo operations is being laid by the SEA BEES. It's just being started. The area will be two mats, 900X600.

### **30 August to 4 September, 1965. Chu Lai.**

We off loaded the LSD. The USS Princeton came in the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. The A/C went to Danang with most of the people because there was no space to set up around here. We have a few troops here for working parties. Gunner Willis has the security platoon who sit out on the MAG-36 perimeter. The first night ashore many rounds were expended because of inexperience and jumpiness. No one was hurt or hit. MACS-9 is hosting the advance party so we eat and sleep with them. The rest of MAG-36 are in shelter halves and are eating C-rations. Major Presson, CPT Whatley, LT Hilton, Plunkett and Bracka are all here. Conner, Pettigrew and myself flew up to Danang on the 4<sup>th</sup> and will remain here for about a week. The USS Iverville (TAK) came in on the 30<sup>th</sup> and so far they have off loaded about 3 LCUS

### **5 Sept 1965.**

Happy Birthday Albert. I went to Danang City with Fritz Newcomb and bought a few gifts for my family.

### **6 Sept**

Danang. Didn't do much today- Just milled around. Our planes are not operational because of lack of support from the higher ups. We still don't have telephones or any means of transportation. Today, Jim Livengood of VMO-2 was shot in the arm..

### **7 September**

Operation PIRANHA. South of Chu Lai. The operation started at 0630. 7 of the 8 UH1-E's of VMO-2 were hit. 2 Crew chiefs and Ed Kuykendall were hit. Nothing serious. Ed's windshield was shattered and he was cut in the arms and legs. VMO-6 is not in this operation so we took over 4 missions that VMO-2 was supposed to do. I took the DANANG TAOR (Tactical Area of Responsibility). It was two hops. One in the early morning, and the other in the late evening. Nothing to report.

LtCOL Zitnick, our CO of VMO-6 was told by the wing G-3 to get a helo ready in the morning to take B General Carl on this operation. I was with him in the morning getting the plane ready when GEN Carl showed up and told him that the GEN didn't need him to go along with him. We were not so sure that he was completely qualified in the UH-1E but he put another general in the co-pilot's seat and away they went. Didn't sign for the plane and we didn't know where he was going. But they came back late that afternoon with no holes in the A/C. I guess all you can say to a general is -Yes Sir\_.

### **7 to 15 September**

I am still at Danang but now we have 9 A/C here and 9 A/C down at Ky Ha. MAG-36 at Ky Ha is slowly getting to an operational state. One of the two 900X600 mats are finished and HMM-362 with their H-34's and 9 UH-1E's from VMO-6 are trying to operate from it. LtCOL Zitnick asked me to stay at Danang with the remaining 9 UH-1Es and we will go down to Ky Ha when they have room for us. The monsoon season is beginning and most of the work at Ky Ha is bogged down because of all the heavy rain. I've never seen it rain so hard in all of my life.

## 13 September

I flew a TACA mission. Tactical Air Controller Airborne with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 4<sup>th</sup> Marines and 4 A-4 A/C from the 3<sup>rd</sup> MAW, plus two FANGS. That's what the Army UH-1E's were called. It was a sweep north of Chu Lai but was unsuccessful. They picked up about 10 to 15 suspected VC.

## 14 September

I had a gun hop in the evening from 7pm to 7:30pm It was to support a patrol who were surrounded by VC. We did all we could do but had to leave because it was so dark we couldn't tell the good guys from the bad guys.

## 16 to 25 September

We sent 3 more UH-1E's down to Ky Ha and now I have three. From the 16<sup>th</sup> till the 21<sup>st</sup> we flew just about nothing. The only plane we had go out was General Carl's UH-1E. He had one plane assigned to him and it was his to do with as he saw fit. He never took any of us with him. His co-pilot was usually B-General Henderson.

## 21 September

Finally got down to Ky Ha and with my whole squadron. Had a hop down to Tam Ky where I got weathered in so we had to set down until the rain let up. I rained steady for two days. All my gear got soaking wet.

## 23 September

I flew down to Quang Ngai to stand by as MEDEVAC. Flew one passenger escort hop all day.

## 24 September

Had a real fine hop. Mick Pettigrew and I went out on an escort mission with Larry Wright as chase. The H-34's received fire during their pick up. We expended 48 rockets in 5 huts, and many 7.62 bullets. On the first run I put a rocket through the side of one of the huts. We laid down a good line of fire but with only two UH-1Es we could not keep fire on them continuously. When we would get off target the VC would climb out of their holes and fire on the H-34's.

I am now in a Pram tent with LtCOL Zitnick and our XO, Major Bob Presson. The group, MAG-36, is still trying to get this camp settled but not too much progress is being made. But the CO's of each squadron are getting a hardback GP shortly.

## 25-25-27 September, 1965

I flew an AO hop on the 25<sup>th</sup>. We spotted some bunkers and we received some fire from that general area. We didn't fire back. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, I had a big 300 man lift into an area at 0630 Sunday morning. We had 6 A/C up escorting the H-34s. The troops met no resistance but a half hour before we came home, around 0800, we were asked to shoot up a tree line where there were some VC. Mick Pettigrew was in the second A/C and we unloaded 68 2.75 rockets and about 1000 rounds of 7.62 ammo. As we pulled off target we received fire from the ground. They are poor shots. So far VMO-6 received no hits at all. LtCOL Zitnick, Major Presson and I went out on a VIP hop. COL Z had MajGEN McRyzen, BRGGEN Henderson

and BGEN Karch. Major Presson had some Bird COLs and I had 2 LtCOLs and the aides. Being the junior major, I guess that's all I deserved. After this mission was over we were called out again on an escort mission. An escort mission is where we in our UH-1Es with full rockets and 7.62 ammo are to escort troop helicopters into an area that we expect fire. While in the area, we were called in to strafe and rocket and area where the ground troops were receiving fire. When we finished, the F-4B's and A-4s came in to drop bombs on the area. The Forward Air Controller was outstanding on this mission. When this mission was over we were diverted to an area where a platoon, to a company of VC were. Our job was to shoot up the area. We had a flight of 4 UH-1Es and expended almost 100 rockets and at least 8000 rounds of 7.62 ammo. From the air we didn't see anyone but we blew the hell out of the jungle. We were told later on that we got about 15 VC for that little hop. Back at the ranch that evening got our first ice for our drinks. Joe Johnson and I went over to the MACS-7 Mess Hall and comp-shawed some ice. It made for great martinis that evening.

### **30 Sept.**

I had the early, early 0625 TAOR hop today. The TAOR hop is a mission where we check out our whole area of responsibility. After that I had an escort mission with 10 "clip clop" A/C (H-34s). Their mission was to pick up some troops and bring them home. I had Bob Purcell with me, Mike Shields and Haims were our wingmen. Jim Perryman and Mike Conner were followed by Mick Pettigrew and Jim Maeger. When receiving fire, Jim and Mick went in and shot up the area as the troops were being lifted out. When they came off target we made a few passes. When we got back to Ky Ha after this mission, Joe Johnson and I went swimming in the South China Sea. The water was warm and salty but refreshing.

About this same time I moved into a strongback tent. A strongback tent is one that has a wooden floor and about four feet up each side that is wood. The tent is put over this. We have six guys living here. LtCOL Zitnick, Major Presson the XO, Major Purcell, Joe Johnson and myself. Joe Tyler is the Bell Rep, will move in when he comes down from Danang.

### **1 October, 1965**

Had a morning hop to support ground troops who were receiving fire. Mike Shields was wingman and we made enough runs to expend 36 2.75 rockets per A/C and about 3000 rounds of 7.62 per A/C. Apparently we did some good as the casualty reported quite a few killed VC with arms and cartridge belts. In the afternoon I took a hop up to Danang with Joe Johnson as my co-pilot and picked up 10 washing machines, 19 cases of Coke and some much needed parts for our A/C from the Army.

### **2 October, 1965**

I worked all morning on our parking area. In the afternoon I escorted 17 H-34's with LtCOL Z as TACA. Larry Wright was the CO's wingman and Buchanan was mine. We saw no one but fired guns and rockets prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> H-34's landing. Our Camp, called Ky Ha, is still half finished with the SEA BEES working night and day to finish the second mat.

### **3 October 1965**

Had an early 0500 brief for a 300 man lift. CO Z was TACA with Stan Kruegar his wingman. I had Bob Purcell as co-pilot and Larry Wright as my wingman. We circled for an hour waiting for artillery to prep

the zone. All 15 H-34s had to take their troops back, gas up and returned to the LZ. L-Hour was delayed for quite a long time. We saw no enemy and no one received fire. In the afternoon I flew to Danang to pick up Joe Tyler, our Bell Rep. While we were there we picked up 10 more washing machines and 10 cases of Falstaff Beer. The troops really needed both. Today was Sunday and I went to Mass at B-Med at 1845.

### **4-5 October 1965**

On Monday the 4<sup>th</sup> I went on an early Air Observation mission. I saw nothing except much rice harvest activity. Then I went to Danang and picked up 20 cases of beer and 20 cases of Pepsi. On the 5<sup>th</sup> I had another AO mission and then an escort mission with no unusual activity.

### **6 October**

Had an escort in the last PM where we dropped 21 men off in an unsecured area. We had no resistance. We then were diverted by NAILFILE 6 (COL Johnson who was flying with LtCOL Zitnick) we went to an area where an H-34 was downed with 25 holes in it. We flew cover while they fixed it and we all returned to Ky Ha.

### **7 October 1965**

I had an early AO mission with no activity. I got one of the washing machines to our tent and hooked it up and did a load of wash. Joe Johnson, Joe Tyler and I went swimming then we showered in our home made shower and then rearranged our tent. Then we had a rush launch at 1930 to drop off about a company in an area where the VC were.

### **8 October 1965**

Had an early 0630 brief with a 0730 takeoff to escort 12 H-34s into the LZ. LtCOL Z was TACA and I had the escort birds. We fired on the first pass and no more. No activity. Then I flew another escort mission for two hours. It was a resupply of two ARVN outposts. It was real interesting country and quite far inland. We had no problems. Today the old mess closed and we are on C rations until the new one opens up. Probably tomorrow night. Also the SEABEES started to lay the second Marsten mat today.

### **9 October 1965**

This may be the rainiest month of the year in S. Vietnam, but the first part of it sure is nice. No rain yet. Today I flew to Marble Mountain airfield-Danang East- and assisted VMO-2 with their VIP commitments. We took up four A/C. Two were gun ships and two VIPs. I flew the second plane with LtCOL Bauman who was flying GEN Krulak. I later flew the second plane with Jim Gillis flying Senator Brewster from Maryland. By mistake he got into my plane and I got to fly him for about 10 minutes.

### **10 October 1965**

The new Ky Ha mess hall opened up today. Real nice and with A Rations. GEN Krulak was in the area and LtCOL Zitnick flew him around this area. I later flew an AO mission and found some caves which we got permission to shoot some rockets in. We did quite well with a few direct hits. Lanny Ingvolstad was 2<sup>nd</sup> A/C with Arlie Demein. Late today Joe Johnson got all of us in our tent digging a big trench bunker along one side of our tent.

## 11 October 1965

A big operation south of Quang Nai was to take place this morning but we had to return to Ky Ha because of weather. We got a little actual instruments in our return through the rain storms. The H-34s from HMM-264 returned along the beach and one of their A/C was hit three times and killed Sgt Wolmac. He was a passenger going down to act as the load master. It rained most of the day. Joe and Bob Purcell and I spent much time working on our trench and keeping our tent from washing down the hill.

## 12 October 1965

I went on a strike down south of Quang Ngai this morning. We fired 30 rockets on the first run. We stayed down there after the strike and flew escort for 12 H-34s during resupply mission to ARVN outposts. Today I flew 8.6 hours. During the first run on the strike the lead H-34 said he saw a rocket hit a VC running out of a building.

## 13 October 1965

It rained all day today so there was very little flying. Mostly the TAOR and AO hops. Did some washing in our new washing machines.

## 15 October 1965

I went to Quang Ngai again today and flew escort, resupply missions to Tra Bong and Nui Tran. Had 4 hours of flight time there. It rained most of the day with about 2 hours of sunshine. Just enough time to dry your clothes. A hop went out around 5pm to go into Laos for reasons unknown. 2 UH-1Es and 2 H-34s. They got out about 20 miles and had to return because of bad weather. They were shot at during the return trip.

## 16 October 1965

I flew the 0630 TAOR hop with an air observer named Sommers. I went low a couple of times and was fired on at once. At 1100 I took Brig GEN Karch to Quang Nai and waited for him until 1500. Ate chow there and got to go to the PX and get a few needed items. I took him to C Company 7<sup>th</sup> Marines so he could give one of his pep up the boys in Vietnam talks. He does a good job of keeping his troops informed.

## 17-18 October 1965

Had one hop on Sat, A TAOR hop with no activity. On Sunday went to 1700 mass with LtCOL Zitnick. We decided to fix up the Chapel tent, which we did on Monday.

## 19 October 1965

Today I saw the white elephant. In writing this in 1997, I'm sure if I really saw a white elephant, or did I write that because it was the first time I saw someone I killed. I was on a 1040 takeoff to escort 20 H-34's to put 3<sup>rd</sup> BLT 3<sup>rd</sup> Marines into an unsecured area. All 4 of our Hueys fired on the first pass then stood by for a couple of hours. Two Hueys were sent home and LtCOL Z and my A/C remained there in support. As we were circling we saw a VC black pajama running to a hedge row. We fired on him then made a couple of firing passes in his area. The last run I gave it to Lt Krohn, my co-pilot who put two

rockets into the hedge row. He made a direct hit and we were able to see the dead in the hole the rocket made. We got two confirmed kills in that area. About 30 minutes later we saw 6 VC lying in the rice paddies. I landed and picked up a platoon leader who directed his troops to the area who captured 3 and killed 2. We saw one get away but I got him. About 30 minutes later we spotted about 10 in trenches. We fired 33 rockets and much 7.62. We know we got at least two VC for sure. One took off in an opposite direction and I was able to stop him.

### **20,21,23,24 October 1965**

It stopped raining for awhile. On the 21<sup>st</sup> we were told by the group to have 10 Hueys ready to go to Qui Nhon at 1600. The time we were told was 1445. When we got to Qui Nhon on the 22<sup>nd</sup> there were 30 H-34s and about 30 Army UH-1D troop ships and gun birds. We were to lift 10 battalions of ARVN troops in an area where there were about 1000 VC. We picked up the ARVN troops but could not continue because of the heavy rains. The operation was called off. It rained so hard we couldn't get out of Qui Nhon until late on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. HMM-363 is there supporting 2 Corps and seems to be enjoying it down there.

### **25 October 1965**

During a large operation near the Song Tra Bong River I had 4 hops in support of 3/7. I flew the CO, COL Petras, on a flight to check out the whole operation. Had two gun hops with no real action and the other was a TACA hop where I controlled 8 A-4s on two different targets. These hops are always fun.

### **27 October 1965**

Today I slept until 0900 because I wasn't scheduled to fly today, but I did get two flights late in the afternoon in the same area I was in yesterday. The H-34s were retracting about 1600 troops. Mick Pettigrew and Mike Conner had a target under fire when I arrived. They were low on fuel so they went home and we continued the strafing runs. I didn't see anyone on the ground but there were actual sightings in that area. I then had two F-4Bs come down and I controlled them on that target and also on a fort on a nearby hill. When the last H-34 was leaving he received fire from his right side and was hit. He was okay and made it home. We made rocket runs on the position. Steve Butler saw muzzle blasts as we made our runs so we know we had a good target.

### **28 October 1965**

At 0130 I was awakened by a telephone call to LtCOL Zitnick. Marble Mountain airfield or called Danang East was under attack by the Viet Cong. I was nominated to take 3 A/C up to Danang and to stand by for whatever support we were able to give them. We ended up getting there about 0400 and stayed on call at the air freight area until 0700 when we were able to go over to Danang East. We arrived and saw the damage done by the Viet Cong attack. They came in from the Northwest into the VMO-2 flight line. They used satchel charges and grenades. As they ran down the row of aircraft they threw these charges into the aircraft. They demolished 13 UH-1Es down to a burnt crisp and 4 others that were repairable. They also got 18 H-34s that were damaged or destroyed. LTs Dechant, Jennings, and Masters were asleep in the ready tent. Masters shot a VC outside the tent, then another VC sprayed the ready tent and got Dechant in the stomach and Jennings in the foot. Don Reilly and Ben Meharg were also at the line at the



time but were not hit. The Viet Cong threw many grenades into most of the tents and wounded 13 men of VMO02. A Corpsman who happened to be Tab Hunter's brother, was in the MEDEVAC helicopter when it was blown up. He was killed. Many H-334s were damaged by grenades being thrown into the engine near the exhaust stack. I remained at Marble Mountain airfield until Saturday, the 30<sup>th</sup> of October. While we were there, Arlie Demiane and Lanny Ingvolstad and myself with three A/C flew missions that VMO-2 would have flown. During one at a 0545 launch we went out in support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 1<sup>st</sup> Marines who were being attacked at Hill 22. Don Reilly and I relieved Bob Smith and Dick Carr on station. The 1/1 lost 10 killed in action and 54 wounded in action. It was estimated that there were about 100 VC KIA.

### **30 October 1965**

On a mission we spotted the VC crossing a river. We made rocket and gun runs on them and then brought in the F-4Bs to attack the area. After it was over there was an estimate of 10 KIA and 5 boats sunk. That night I returned to Ky Ha. 4 more A/C came up from VMO-6. We left 3 at VMO-2 and returned with 4 of the 7 we had up there. We then transferred 4 more to give VMO-2 a total of 14 UH-1Es and VMO-6; 11.

### **31 October 1965**

Went to church and didn't fly today. Mike Shields was hit by shrapnel from an A-4 bomb. He was down marking the target for the A-4 when the A-4 dropped before being cleared. The A/C doors and tail section were hit with shrapnel.

### **1 Nov-6 November, 1965.**

After we gave VMO-2 the 4 A/C, we were left with 5 A/C in an up status. Since the first of the month we have been averaging about 15 hours a day. Prior to this we were getting 45-50 hours. During this past week, the woman correspondent, "Dickey Scheppel", was killed south of Chu Lai. The doctor that examined her on her arrival and B-Med said he took his knife to cut off his cloth and said "By God, this is a woman". She was dressed exactly as any other Marine in the area. She stepped on a mine and was hit from under the chin and went through the top of her head. We got some good words from the king, The Mayor, or COL Johnson, that VMO-6 enlisted quarters were to be the next to be put up and ours will be the first living quarters to have the metal roof. Life is very slow. We read a lot as there is not much work to be done, and very little flying as there are very few aircraft to fly. We sent four crews to Danang to pick up 4 new A/C from the states. They are putting them together and will be down soon.

### **6 Nov- 14 November, 1965**

All A/C came down from Danang and we ended up getting 8 A/C. This gives us 19 in VMO-6. VMO-2 received 2 of the new 540 rotor A/C. These are the first to be in the Marine Corps. It rained for two straight days this past week and very little flying was done. A big joint ARVN and Marine operation went off in the Tam Ky (Quang Tin) area. The operation was called BLUE MARLIN. There was very little action. Herb Harkey came back from Yokosuka hospital on the 12<sup>th</sup>. He is all healed from his self inflicted .45 bullet hole in his leg. He is in good shape and fine spirits.

## 14 November 1965

A strike went out today just north of Tam Ky. Herb Harkey led the flight of 6 UH-1Es and I flew TACA. As I was directing A-4 on three different targets I heard Larry Wright on the guard channel calling "Crash Crash Crash". He was chasing Stan Kruegar and Glenn Mann who were chasing some VC when Stan hit the deck in a rice paddy. They hit flat, but turned over 1 ½ times ending up upside down. Larry Wright and co-pilot Lanny Ingvolstad emptied their rockets and went down and picked Stan, Glenn, Sgt Waite and Sgt Hern and took them all to B-Med. Stan had his nose slit down one side and across the bottom, Glenn had a gash in the back of his head and a possible knee fracture. MSgt Waite had a dislocated shoulder and a Big Charlie Hern was not hurt at all. It was Charlie who pulled all the others out of the A/C prior to the landing of Larry's A/C.

## 15 November 1965

Today I went to Kham Duc to escort 3 H-34 ARVN helicopters to retract 9 Special Forces and ARVN out of an area near the Laos border. Two of the H-34s that picked up the troops had to go IFR in a mountainous area to pick up these people. They did an outstanding job. L Lt Dhin led the H-34s.

## 16 Nov-19 November 1965

It rained all day on the 16<sup>th</sup> so there was no flying. On the 17<sup>th</sup> we had an ARVN strike south of Quang Ngai. Major Presson led the escort and I was second section leader. We had no real action except for BrigGEN Karl being in the area with his single UH-1E getting in the way. For some reason he seems to have it in for LtCOL Zitnik. We have to make a report of the operation because he claims we were about to shoot some civilians who he chased out of a hole where they were hiding.

## 19 November 1965

We escorted more H-34 A/C into the Hiep Duc area this morning but received no resistance mainly because there air strikes all day by U.N. AF A-1s, Marine F-4Bs and A-4Ds. Herb Harkey was MEDEVAC for that operation and I flew escort all day. Bob Purcell and Ray Touchton were the other escorts. One one of the flights, Bob's A/C was hit from head on with a .30 cal. It went just to the right of Bob's head and went into the rear and hit Cpl Hack, the gunner in the head. He was in serious condition when Bob Whaley flew him to Qui Nhon Hospital where they have a brain surgeon. Stan Kruegar is to be MEDEVAC'ed to Clark tomorrow because of a slight infection in his hand and healing will be longer than expected. 10 days is max at B-Med.

## 20 November 1965.

Had one hop today. It was a look and see TAOR hop with no action.

## 21 November 1965

It rained all day and 40 H-34s and 6 UH-1E Gunbirds were committed to lift Marines to the Hiep Duc area to help out the ARVN. The lift was on and off about 5 times then it was canceled when the troops were aboard the helicopters and half way to the destination. GEN Lam, the 2<sup>nd</sup> ARVN DIV CO requested some Marines assist him in his defense of Hiep Duc. There are supposed to be about 6 batallions of Viet Cong in that area. (I don't know if his request was granted).

## 22 November 1965

An ARVN outpost was overrun about 10 miles south of Quang Ngai and the H-34s were used to bring in troops and supplies from Quang Ngai to the outpost. Also, the H-34s were used to bring Marines down from LZ Robin at Chu Lai. There was an estimate of a VC regiment in the area. Our 6 UH-1Es were in the area all day. Major Presson had one flight of 3 and I had the other flight of 3. I had Bob Whaley and Bob Shields with me. There was an ARVN O-1 A/C with a U.S. Army and Vietnamese aboard who were finding VC troops on the ground and having us come in and fire on them. During the day my flight ended up with 7 confirmed kills, Mike Shields got one with a rocket. The return trip to Ky Ha was quite hairy. Ky Ha was socked in with a big rain storm overhead. The H-34s landed at Chu Lai air strip. COL Z with COL J landed at Robin LZ and then stayed at Chu Lai. I went into Ky Ha in a real bad rain shower with visibility around ¼ mile and 300ft. The group lost 1 H-34 during this return trip. The plane with crew were last seen going into a cloud. The search for them is continuing today.

## 23 November 1965

Today 1<sup>st</sup> LT Glenn Mann, God bless his soul, was killed. As Co-pilot for Bob Presson, they were attacking a VC .50 cal gun position. It was south of Quang Nhai when they were hit twice while making runs on a VC gun position. The first did no damage but the second came up from the lower left and got Glenn in the stomach area. He was dead on arrival at B-Med. Three other A/C were also hit in that same strike. Capt Downey got one through the right window and came out the center part of the windshield. Capt Perryman got a couple of rounds in the tail cone and two holes in the tail rotor drive shaft. Herb Harkey had some shrapnel marks on his A/C. I wasn't in on all this but was standing by as relief and took the tail rotor drive shaft down to the A/C could be flown home. The lost H-34 and crew still have not been located.

## 24 November 1965

Today is the day I go on my R/R to Bangkok. I went to Danang to catch my hop to Bangkok but it didn't go out til the next day. I stayed at the Air Force Club at Danang. Boy do the Air Force have it made in this war.

## 25-30 November 1965

Had 5 great days in Bangkok. I bought rings for everyone and Bronzeware. I met Glen Mann's stepfather, Mr. Martin, who is the U.S. Ambassador to Thailand. He invited Larry Wright and I to an Embassy party but we both declined. Joe Johnson's friend Tommy Cliff, took real good care of us while we were there. He had a travel agency and had one of his drivers in a Mercedes pick Larry Wright, Chester Whipple from 364 and I up daily and tour Bangkok.

## 1, 2, 3 December, 1965

I had an escort on the 1<sup>st</sup> with no action. I had a MEDEVAC on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and flew a VIP hop on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Also the on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, HMM-364 lost an H-34 and crew. Mike Shields saw it go down and said it was apparently hit by a .50 cal and went out of control and crashed and burned. There were no survivors.

## **4-5 December, 1965**

Herb Harkey and COL Johnson were flying together down south of Quang Ngai during a resupply mission. They landed in a compound that was about to be overrun to pick up 2 advisors who were injured. During the takeoff there were many Vietnamese who wanted to get out of there and quite a few of them hung all over the A/C during takeoff. As the A/C lifted off the tail rotor hit a bunker and settled back down. An H-34 came in and picked up everyone and left the A/C there over night with hopes of getting it out later. That night it was hit by VC mortars. GEN Platt, GEN Walt, GEN Karl and COL Johnson all couldn't put the UH-1E back together again until the 6<sup>th</sup> when an H-37 crane came in and lifted it out and brought it back to the VMO-6 area. It required overhaul.

## **6 December, 1965**

Today I flew 4.2 hours on a resupply of Hiep Duc outpost. During the flight, A-4s made a strike on 2 A/A positions.

## **7-10 December 1965**

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of December, Don Reilly of VMO-2 was killed. This hurt me more than anything that has happened so far. Don was a very good friend and a very fine person. He was an outstanding family man and one of the best aviators the Marine Corps had. He was on a MEDEVAC mission going in to pick up some wounded during a heavy firefight. He was hit in the back of the neck at 50 feet on the approach. The A/C crashed but Don lived for about 20 minutes and his concern was for destroying the A/C so the VC wouldn't get it. His co-pilot John Chester was slightly injured and the crew chief broke an arm and leg. They asked for me to be transferred to VMO-2 but COL Z said Major Navorska will go if the transfer goes thru.

## **10 December 1965**

I flew BRIG GEN Platt, 4<sup>th</sup> MAR RLT CO, on a convoy escort. COL Petras CO, 7<sup>th</sup> Marines was also there. After that hop, Ray Touchton and I went to Ky Ha village. We spent a lot of time at the local school and had a tremendous time talking and kidding with the children.

## **11-13 December 1965**

The big operation midway between Danang and Chu Lai is still going strong. Three Marine Battalions led by BRIG GEN Platt with both MAG-16 and MAG-36 all in on it. B-52 raids and our Marine F-4Bs and A-4 squadron have done outstandingly well in destroying positions in the jungles. Many .50 cal positions were found and destroyed. VMO-2 is doing the TACA missions and they are doing a very fine job. I flew a lift with 50 helicopters, 4 A-4s and 2 F-4Bs in one area with low visibility and rain showers. It was quite hairy. On the 12<sup>th</sup> I had two MEDEVAC trips to Danang at night with 1200 to 1500ft and in and out of clouds. I had one ARVN with a head wound and a Vietnamese boy with lockjaw. I finished at midnight and took off for a day's flying of 8.9 hours on convoy escort missions.

## **13-25 December 1965**

Operation HARVEST MOON continued up north. COL Yunch was flying with Ed Kuykendal when he got hit in the leg with a .50 cal and ended up losing the leg. I'm told he got a Silver Star for that hop. Bob Purcell was TACA on that mission and COL Yunch took over from him and put the troops in the wrong

zone. Bob took it back and changed the landing zone. After this mission Bob had to go to Danang and answer at an investigation run by GEN McCutchen, GEN Karl concerning that operation. Another investigation went on here at Ky Ha. Our A/C fired on a trench position that was to have VC in it. As it turned out our A/C killed two Marines. Father Long said high Midnight Mass at the VMO-6 area. It rained during most of the mass. The next day, Christmas, Cardinal Spellman came to B-Med. I got to see him and take pictures.

On Christmas Eve, I was on standby for any flights. Hill 69 reported receiving mortar rounds and we were told to launch and see if we could spot the positions they were coming from. I took off with my red and green lights on and after flying around the area I heard a ground controller come on the air and say "I say there, you up there with your flashing red and green lights, identify yourself".

I told him I was a Klondike aircraft on a mission. He came back with "Oh, I thought you were Santa Claus—Merry Christmas!"

## **25-31 December, 1965**

Two worthwhile comments these last 6 days. The first is that we cannot shoot back at any enemy within our TAOR even if we see them shoot at us. We must get permission to shoot back from our controlling group. Outside the TAOR we can shoot back if we are fired upon. VMO-6 is still under investigation for shooting too much and also because of the misunderstanding and two Marines were killed.

8 miles South of Quang Ngai and outpost used to exist. On the 29<sup>th</sup> at 1730, we had 4 UH-1Es go down to escort 6 WHITE GOLD, HMM-364 H-34s on a AMO resupply. As the first 2 A/C went in they received automatic weapon fire from their rear. Our UH-1Es took it under attack and I believe we destroyed it but as we pulled out to the right we got more fire from the right side. On our first run on a target we received .50 cal fire from our rear. The outpost was surrounded by VietCong and it looked like a nice trap for the helicopters. The H-34s dropped their two loads and we all got out of there. The Air Force Bird Dog was in the area and called in Marine A-4s on the .50s. The first A-4 napalmed the gun and had a direct hit. The second A-4 was hit as he made a run and came on the air to say he was hit bad in the leg. He immediately headed for home and as we watched we saw him suddenly head for the deck and crash in a big bellow of fire. I believe this was the first A/C from MAG-12 to be lost to ground fire. Today is the last day of 1965 and we are closing it out with a normal Vietnam winter: rain and more rain. Before the 1<sup>st</sup> we did pick up 120 of LTCOL Bodly's troops from 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 7<sup>th</sup> Marines.

## **1 January to 7 January 1966.**

We are back to normal TAOR and VIP hops. I flew GEN Platt a couple times this period. He always asked for me to fly him and I think it's because I give him a flying lesson each time. About the 4<sup>th</sup> I was launched to locate a Navy pilot who crashed into a hill 40 miles South of Chu Lai. With the aid of an Air Force Dumbo we found the wreckage of the aircraft but after searching for about an hour there was no sign of the pilot. The next day Mick Pettigrew went down with a couple of Navy people in his plane and a flight of 4 A-1s. When they got in the area they spotted a body they believed to be the pilot right in the middle of a clearing. As Mick went down to pick up the body he was fired upon from a few different areas. Apparently it was set up as a trap to get the rescue plane. They departed the area.

## 8 January to 20 January 1965.

I had some nice hops down South in the Duc Pho area, the BATO area and Gia Vuc area. I flew GEN Platt to those outposts a couple of times. While I was in Gia Vuc the Special Forces there gave me a .30 cal carbine with a banana clip. I kept it under my seat every flight until the day I left in Feb 66. I don't remember who I gave it to but I received a letter when I got back to the states telling me thanks a lot, the gun was never able to fire because of a broken firing pin. We had a strike down south and COL Z was TACA airborne and did an outstanding job in controlling the fixed wing, Naval gunfire and all the helicopters. I had another strike on the island 5 miles North of here. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> one I've been on since I've been here. The weather here in Ky Ha has improved with a week of clear skies. Father Long got orders back to the navy at Quonset Point, R.I. and now we have Father Daley with us. A new chapel is being built on the hill and it's half stone and half wood. So far it's the only building with cement in it. I went to Danang to help out VMO-2 a couple of times. They are either short of A/C or pilots and we are called on quite a bit to help out. We don't mind.

## 20 January 1966

After an operation north of here at Que Son, BRIG GEN Platt told the ARVN commander he would bring him a Bull Cow. He got permission from COL Z and then called me to find a couple of guys who knew something about cows. I found our cowboy SGT Benway and we went to pick up the bull and the general. We got the bull down, tied him up and put him on his side in the helicopter. We flew for about 30 minutes and after we landed and the General went to get the ARVN commander to show him his present, SGT Benway told me the bull was dead. I guess it died of fright of my flying abilities. I ran up the trail to catch the General before he got to the A/C and I whispered in his ear; "General, the bull is dead". He slapped me on the back and said "Hell, don't worry about it Al, they were going to eat him anyway"

## 21 January 1966.

It's Vietnamese New Years for 3 days starting today so there will a cease fire in effect for the full three days. I just returned from an observation mission where we located about 50 VietCong at a meeting place 10 miles from here and they were waving a big VC flag. As we flew by the first time they all scattered into the tree line and then on our second pass to see more they fired on us with small arms, .30 cal, etc. I called back to our controlling agency and asked to fire back but was denied and told to come home. What a helluva way to run a war.

## 21 January-23 February 1966.

During this period for some reason I didn't write down too much. We had a lot of operations down south and the shooting on both sides picked up quite a bit. On one operation, where we picked up our tents and set up an operating area for three or four days in support of some ARVN group, I was standing by on call. As a lover of the sun I was lying down on a cot getting some sun with my flight suit down around my belly button. I was just outside of the operations tent where they could yell at me and I'd be ready to go. Lying there with my eyes closed, I heard a whistling over my head two or three times. Then I heard a thud where this whistling noise made a bullet hole about a foot over my head into the tent I was lying next to. I know the troops in the field get to hear this sound quite a bit, but for me it was a first. A

VC was shooting into our area and killed a couple of Marines. I naturally fell off my cot and crawled through the sand to the lowest ditch I could find. During this same time, Bob Purcell captured a VietCong flag about ten miles North of Chu Lai. The flag was flying near this highway (dirt road) when he let down and hovered over it while his crew chief grabbed it.

## 23 February 1966

On an escort mission to an area south of Quang Ngai, I had my last flight in Vietnam. I led a flight of two Huey escort gunships escorting two H-34 MEDEVAC helicopters. We were to pick up about 15 wounded ARVN and take them to the nearby hospital in Quang Nhai. When we arrived in the area the place looked like a civil war battlefield with the dead and wounded all over.

All four A/C immediately began picking up the wounded and taking them to the hospital. When we got all the wounded out I sent the two H-34's home and my wingman and I stay at the request of an army FAC (Forward Air Controller). I'm sure we picked up more than 50 ARVN wounded. The FAC said he had spotted about 100 Viet Cong in a hedge row and were the ones who overran this ARVN group. My wingman and I made enough runs on them that we expended all our ammunition and went back and reloaded. When we returned to the area we made a couple of runs and I was hit thru the right leg and the bullet, a .30 cal, lodged in my right hand. I was told later that we got between 50 and 100 Viet Cong on the runs of ours.

Ray Touchton flew me back to B Med where they kept me overnight and worked on me the next day. No one knew where the bullet was after it went through my leg. When I was hit, I grabbed my leg and the crew chief came over from the back of the A/C and and put a tourniquet on my leg to stop the bleeding. When I grabbed my leg when I was shot I thought the blood in my glove was from the leg. I actually drained blood out of my glove.

When I got to B Med I asked the doctor to check out this black mark on my right hand. He took an X-ray of it and came back laughing and said that's where the bullet was. He showed me an X-ray of my hand with the bullet lodged right under my right thumb. He told me to write all my letters home tonight because I wouldn't be able to write for 6 months. He was right, because it was over 6 months before I had full use of my leg and hand. Because of worry of infection, etc, I was shipped to Danang Hospital and then to Clark Air Force Base in the Phillipines, then to Tripler Hospital in Hawaii, then to Travis AFB in California.

Here I had two visitors. Gerry and Bunny Turley. After 3 or 4 days I was sent to Balboa Hospital in San Diego. About two weeks later I was sent to the hospital at Camp Pendleton for final recovery.