

commanding officer. He and Larry Robinson were the only Playboys killed in action, although two others were wounded on missions. Maj Dorsie Page was forced to land his TA-4F with bullet wounds in both legs and an NFO in the rear seat. Capt Donald Swaby had a 19.2mm round hit his windscreen and the resulting shrapnel severed his oxygen hose, shattered his visor, and sent plexiglass into his eyes. Several fragments penetrated his mask and shattered his microphone, but he was able to clear his eyes, spit out the fragments, and safely return to Da Nang.

In April, Dick Hebert was relieved as commanding officer of H&MS-11 by LtCol Speed Shea. During his tenure as commanding officer, Dick Hebert had seen the unit grow into a highly effective operational unit. His enthusiasm and intrinsic leadership qualities engendered great personal loyalty from his men. He would always be known to them as "Playboy One."

Speed Shea saw Playboy operations shift increasingly to South Vietnam because of the phasing out of assets and the need for more air support for the remaining ground commanders in the South. The Playboy effort transitioned to a more

solitary Green door gunners. The frequency of out-country missions waned rapidly as September approached because Playboys used their skills in the increasingly hostile skies of South Vietnam as the withdrawal of our forces increased. The end came on 14 September 1970, when the Playboy mission was canceled. The crews experienced the bittersweet emotions of pride in going home after a job well done while retaining the ache of a job they were not allowed to finish.

"Who were those guys?"

They were fighter pilots, scooter drivers, GIBs, RIOs, RSOs, and even Hummer drivers.† They were Marines doing their jobs as best they could. Little has been said or written of them, but many of these dedicated aircrewmen who passed through the Playboy rolls went on to become squadron commanders and more. Others returned to pursue civilian careers immediately after their tours in Vietnam. Regardless of what they went on to do, all counted their experiences on the trail in Laos as second to none. USMC

† Scooters are A-4s; GIBs, guys in back; RIOs, radar intercept officers; RSOs, reconnaissance surveillance officers who flew in RF-4Bs; Hummers, C-117s.

Quote to Ponder:

Flying High

"When I grow up I want to be a pilot because it's a fun job and easy to do. That's why there are so many pilots flying around. Pilots don't need much school. They just have to read numbers so they can read their instruments. I guess they should be able to read road maps too so they can find their way if they get lost. Pilots should be brave so they won't get scared if it's foggy and they can't see or if a wing or a motor falls off they should stay calm so they will know what to do. Pilots have to have good eyes to see through clouds and they can't be afraid of thunder and lightning because they are so much closer to them than we are. The salary pilots make is another thing I like. They make more money than they know what to do with. This is because most people think that flying is dangerous, except pilots don't because they know how easy it is. I hope I don't get air sick because I get car sick and if I get air sick I couldn't be a pilot and then I would have to go to work."

—Anonymous Fifth Grade student
Beaufort, S.C.