

Please type or use pen to provide the requested information. This data will be used for the Ranch Hand History Project and then placed in the Archives at Texas A&M. It is your information. If you wish to restrict any part of this material, please indicate so.

I hereby authorize the scholarly use of the following information, except as indicated.

Gruenler Eric GERHARDT Eric Gruenler Feb 4, 1982
 Name (last) first middle signature date

Specific Information

Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided. Be specific.

1. Ranch Hand service: From OCT 68 to OCT 69. Where? BIEN HOA
2. RH/C-123 training: Where/when? HURLBURT FIELD / AUG-SEP 68
3. Rank while in RH? CAPT Present/retired rank? LTC
4. Duty(s) while in Ranch? TOY TO 70AF HQ dates? OCT 68 - JUL 69
5. Other Vietnam service? Where/when? TOY AS MAC CREWMEMBER IN C-123 & C-141 dates? JUL 69 - OCT 69
6. If aircrew member:
 - a. Number of missions: RH 140 Other (specify) _____
 - b. Combat flying hours: RH 225 Other (specify) _____

Narrative Information

On a separate sheet(s) of paper, please answer the following questions with as much detail as possible. Write too much, rather than too little. Use names and dates, if possible. If you want a name "blacked out" before this goes in the archives, just circle the name. On the sheets, indicate the number of the question you are answering, and put your last name and the form number in the upper right-hand corner of each sheet.

7. Special missions/operations participated in? (name, when, where, what, who else)
8. Decorations? (If Purple Heart, DFC, or above, give date and details of the act. If you have a copy of the narrative justifying the medal, please attach a copy.)
9. Were you present during an attack against the base, Ranch site, or quarters? Explain.
10. Were you present when a Ranch aircraft was shot down or crashed? Give all details.
11. Were you present when a Ranch crew member was killed or wounded? Give as much data as possible, even if you didn't directly observe it or are not sure of date or names.
12. Did you ever see or repair unusual battle damage (more than routine skin holes)?
13. Did you ever help plan RH missions? If so, what was the procedure?
14. How did you get into the Ranch? What did you know about the mission beforehand?
15. What were you told about the chemicals used? In Vietnam? Before Vietnam?
16. Other than something already discussed (or going home), what is your happiest memory of the Ranch (or Vietnam)? What is your unhappiest (saddest)?
17. What unusual, odd-ball, weird, funny, etc., thing happened to you in VN or training?
18. Same as question 17, but you saw it happen to another person(s).
19. What were your quarters like? Your routine day? Your parties? Anything else?
20. We know that the Ranch was unique. What should I tell the reader that will help him understand why this was a special outfit of special people? What or who should I not talk about?

Other data: Do you have any good pictures (especially of RH members), any journals, notes, diaries, letters, briefing notes, maps, etc., that I could copy? If so, DO NOT SEND THEM with this form. Repeat...DO NOT SEND THEM!!!! Describe the items on a separate piece of paper, with your name and form number on it. I will write and give you instructions on when to send them, or how to get them copied, at a later date. All materials will be protected and returned to you!!! Thank you for your help and time.

Please return this form and the narrative sheets in the enclosed envelope to Texas A&M.

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8. AIR MEDAL WITH 5OLC
AF COMMENDATION MEDAL
RVN ARMED FORCES HONOR MEDAL, FIRST CLASS
RVN GALLANTRY CROSS WITH BRONZE STAR
9. I WAS AT DA NANG WHEN THE BASE WAS ATTACKED DURING TET OF 1969.
11. I WAS THE CO-PILOT IN THE LEAD SHIP OF A SIX-SHIP FORMATION IN WHICH CAPT LARRY PHILLIPS WAS WOUNDED ON APRIL 9, 1969. THE OTHER CREWMEMBERS WERE LTC LARRY WAITT, NAVIGATOR, AND SGT WALTZ, FLIGHT ENGINEER. SUSPECTING THAT DETAILS OF THE MISSION WOULD GROW HAZY WITH TIME, I WROTE THE FOLLOWING ACCOUNT EITHER THE SAME DAY OR THE FOLLOWING DAY:

TOOK OFF AT 06:50 AND WERE NOTIFIED BY HAWK THAT THE WEATHER ON THE PRIMARY WAS 1500' BROKEN TO OVERCAST AND VISIBILITY 1-3 MILES IN FOG. REACHED RENDEZVOUS AT 07:20 AND OBSERVED NO CLOUDS BELOW 5,000' AND VISIBILITY APPROXIMATELY 5 MILES. BOMBER FAC MADE CONTACT AT 07:30. FAC REPORTED POOR WEATHER SO WE FLEW TOWARD TARGET TO CHECK WEATHER, LOOKED ACCEPTABLE. RAMROD FIGHTERS MADE CONTACT AT 07:55, COULD NOT FIND US BY 08:10 SO WE ELECTED TO BEGIN RUN ANYWAY ASSUMING THAT THEY COULD PICK US UP INBOUND.

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AFTER LEVEL OFF FROM MAX RATE DESCENT, AS AIRSPEED PASSED THROUGH 150 KT, RECEIVED FIRST HITS. ENSUING BUFFET AND ERROR IN SUBSEQUENT TURN INDICATE THAT N-1 COMPASS SYSTEM AND LEFT LANDING LIGHT WERE SHOT OUT AT THAT TIME. ABOUT 1½ MINUTES LATER, TURNED TO 328° ON COMPASS, ACTUALLY ABOUT 310°-320°. AS WE ROLLED OUT OF THE TURN I SAW TRACERS FROM THE LEFT PASS DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE AIRCRAFT AND THEN HEARD THEM HIT THE AIRCRAFT. ONE BULLET PASSED THROUGH THE PILOT'S OXYGEN QUANTITY GAUGE AND HIT HIS ARMOUR, FALLING INTO THE FRONT POCKET. THIS BULLET CAUSED A SPRAY OF GLASS AND METAL WHICH CUT THE PILOT'S LEFT ARM AND BRUISED HIS KNEE. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT HE WAS HIT BUT WOULD RETAIN THE CONTROLS AND CONTINUE THE RUN. SPORADIC GROUND FIRE WAS HEARD ON THE REMAINDER OF THE RUN. AFTER CLIMBOUT WE PASSED OVER THE TARGET DUE TO COMPASS ERROR WHICH WAS LATER NOTICED BY OTHER AIRCRAFT WHEN WE CALLED A BASE HEADING. WE THEN RELINQUISHED LEAD BECAUSE OF OUR LACK OF A COMPASS. WE DISCUSSED AN APPROACH SPEED CONTROLLABILITY CHECK BECAUSE OF THE BUFFET BUT DECIDED TO FLY FINAL AT 130 KNOTS. AN INSPECTION REVEALED NO SYSTEM

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DAMAGE OTHER THAN THE N-1 COMPASS HOWEVER THE ENGINEER REPORTED THAT THE LEFT OUTBOARD FLAP WAS FLUTTERING. WE THEN DECIDED TO LAND NO-FLAP. WE LEFT THE FORMATION 20 MILES OUT AT 5500' FOR A STRAIGHT-IN AND INTERCEPTED FINAL AT 5 MILES. ENGINEER REPORTED THAT WE PROBABLY HAD ONE FLAT NOSE TIRE. AFTER LANDING I CUT THE JETS AND OBSERVED THAT #1 ENGINE COULD NOT BE BROUGHT BELOW ABOUT 30" SO I CUT THE MIXTURE. WE TURNED OFF AT THE END AND STOPPED IN THE ARMING AREA. MAINTENANCE TOWED OUR BIRD AND THE FORMATION TAXIED IN BEHIND IT. 24 HRS!!

NOTES ON THE NARRATIVE:

- (1) "HANK" WAS PROBABLY OUR COMMAND POST
- (2) ONE STRANGE THING ABOUT THIS MISSION WAS THAT THE LEAD SHAP WAS THE ONLY ONE THAT RECEIVED ANY HTS. APPARENTLY WE HAD ENCOUNTERED SEVERAL WELL QUALIFIED GUNNERS.
- (3) REVIEWING THE TIME WE ARRIVED IN THE TARGET AREA AND THE TIME WE BEGAN THE SPRAY RUN, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE VARIOUS DELAYS COST US THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE ON THIS RUN.
- (4) LOSS OF A LANDING LIGHT COVER, ALTHOUGH NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM, WAS VERY UNSETTLING TO THE CREW. THE LANDING LIGHTS WERE LOCATED IN THE

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LEADING EDGE OF THE WING BEHIND A PLASTIC COVER. WHEN THE PLASTIC COVER WAS BROKEN OR MISSING, THE DISTURBANCE TO THE AIRFLOW OVER THAT WING CAUSED A BUFFET THAT COULD BE FELT IN THE CONTROL COLUMN AND TO A LESSER DEGREE THROUGHOUT THE AIRCRAFT. ALSO, AILERON RESPONSE WAS MUSHY AND ERRATIC.

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT THE LANDING LIGHT COVERS COULD BE SEEN FROM THE COCKPIT, SO IF YOU SUSPECTED THAT ONE WAS BROKEN YOU WERE KEPT IN SUSPENSE UNTIL YOU LANDED.

(I LOST A LANDING LIGHT COVER ON ANOTHER MISSION BUT THAT TIME THE OTHER PILOT AND I WERE CERTAIN THAT THE CAUSE WAS NOT ENEMY FIRE BUT RATHER A PELLET FROM A CBM THAT A FIGHTER HAD DROPPED AHEAD OF US.)

12. SEE REPLY TO QUESTION #11.

13. I WAS A LEAD PILOT, WORKING IN TARGETING FOR ABOUT 2 OR 3 MONTHS. THE PROCEDURES FOR SCHEDULING TARGETS WERE RATHER COMPLICATED BECAUSE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- (1) WE TRIED TO STRICTLY FOLLOW THE 7TH AF PRIORITY LIST BUT
- (2) IT WAS NECESSARY TO WAIT 7-10 DAYS BETWEEN ADJACENT "BURNS" IN ORDER TO SEE THE PREVIOUS

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ONE.

- (3) TWO "LONG" SORTIES COULD NOT BE FLOWN IN ONE MORNING UNLESS THE TARGETS WERE NEAR ONE OF OUR REFUELING/REHERBICIDE BASES (PHU CAT OR NA TRANG).
- (4) AGENT ORANGE WAS USED ON MOST TARGETS BUT AGENT BLUE WAS USED ON RICE OR OTHER CROPS AND AGENT WHITE WAS USED FOR DEFOLIATION NEAR RUBBER PLANTATIONS. IF AGENTS BLUE AND WHITE WERE MIXED, THE RESULT WAS A STICKY GEL. TO AVOID FOULING THE PLUMBING ON THE AIRCRAFT, A LOAD OF WHITE OR BLUE HAD TO BE FOLLOWED BY 2 OR 3 LOADS OF AGENT ORANGE BEFORE SWITCHING TO THE OTHER.
- (5) LAST BUT NOT LEAST, SEASONAL WEATHER PATTERNS WERE ALWAYS A CONSIDERATION.

ONCE A SPECIFIC TARGET WAS CHOSEN, RUNS WERE PLANNED CONSIDERING SUCH THINGS AS TERRAIN (TRIED TO FLY DOWNHILL), LOCATION OF SUN, BORDERS, LANDMARKS (OR PREVIOUS RUNS), AND OBJECTIVE. THE OBJECTIVE WAS DETERMINED THROUGH DISCUSSION WITH THE GROUND FORCES THAT HAD INITIATED THE REQUEST FOR THE PARTICULAR TARGET.

19. I WAS CHOSEN FOR THE RANCH WHILE I WAS AT C-123 SCHOOL BASED ON THE FACT THAT I HAD ~3000 HOURS OF MULTI-ENGINE RECIP TIME. I KNEW WHAT THE MISSION WAS.

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15. WE WERE BRIEFED ON WHAT THE DEFOLIANTS WERE WHILE WE WERE IN TRAINING AT HURLBURT. I ALSO MADE IT A POINT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEM WHILE I WAS TDY TO 7TH AF AS THE HERBICIDE PROTECT OFFICER.
16. HAPPIEST MEMORY OF THE RANCH WAS THE ESPRIT-DE-CORPS AND THE PRIDE IN THE JOB THAT WE WERE DOING. UNHAPPIEST MEMORY WAS 3 MONTHS TDY TO 7TH AF HQ.
17. I ENJOYED THE ASSIGNMENT, WHICH IS SOMETHING THAT I DIDN'T EXPECT BEFORE I WENT THERE. THE QUARTERS WERE VERY POOR BUT PEOPLE IMPROVED THEM GREATLY THROUGH SELF-HELP. SINCE IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO GET MATERIALS OR AIR CONDITIONERS THROUGH OFFICIAL CHANNELS, I HAVE HUMEROUS MEMORIES CONCERNING "PROCUREMENT" OF THESE ITEMS.
18. AS TET 1969 APPROACHED, WE ALL BEGAN TO PREPARE FOR A REPEAT OF TET 1968. WE HAD REFURBISHED THE SANDBAG WALL AROUND OUR HQ BLDG AND AGREED THAT WE WERE PROBABLY SAFER UNDER OUR BEDS IN CASE OF AN ATTACK THAN RISKING THE EXPOSURE IN GOING TO A BUNKER. ONE PROBLEM THOUGH, THE LOW CLEARANCE MADE IT DIFFICULT TO GET UNDER THE BED QUICKLY. CAPT BILL MUECKER AND I SOLVED THAT PROBLEM BY GETTING A SET OF THE PIPES THAT WERE USED TO MAKE TWO BEDS INTO BUNK BEDS, AND SINCE THEY

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WERE QUITE LONG WE HAD THEM CUT IN HALF AND WE EACH HAD A SET OF "BOOSTER" LEGS ABOUT 6 OR 7 INCHES LONG. WE INSTALLED THEM ON OUR BEDS AND CAPT DENNIS DELUCHI BEGAN TO TEASE US ABOUT THEM SAYING THAT WHEN THE SIREN WENT OFF WE WOULD HAVE FOUND WAYS TO GET UNDER OUR BEDS WITHOUT THE EXTRA CLEARANCE. DENNIS LIVED IN THE CUBICLE ACROSS THE "HALL" FROM MINE SO I CAUGHT A LOT OF TEASING ABOUT THOSE LEGS. I THEN WENT TDY TO THE RANCH DETACHMENT AT DA NANG WHERE I "CELEBRATED" TET. WHEN I RETURNED TO BIEN HOA, I WAS TOLD THAT WHEN THE ATTACK STARTED, DENNIS ROLLED OFF HIS BED, TRIED TO GET UNDER IT BUT COULDN'T, AND SPENT THE NIGHT UNDER MY BED!

19. THE QUARTERS WERE A GRAPHIC EXAMPLE OF WHAT A GROUP OF DETERMINED PEOPLE COULD DO DESPITE A COMPLETE LACK OF MATERIALS & SUPPLIES.

THE PARTIES IN THE RANCH WERE FREQUENT (TWICE A MONTH), AND INCLUDED A LOT OF DRINKING, SINGING, AND FELLOWSHIP. THERE WERE NUMEROUS OCCASIONS FOR PARTIES BUT THE MOST COMMON WERE "CHERRY" PARTIES WHICH WERE THROWN BY TWO OR THREE PEOPLE WHO HAD GOTTERN THEIR FIRST HIT.

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20. AT BIEN HOA, WE WERE BASED WITH 3 FIGHTER SQUADRONS PLUS NUMEROUS SMALLER OUTFITS. THROUGH OUT THE TIME THAT I WAS AT BIEN HOA THERE WAS NO QUESTION THAT THE RANCH HAD THE HIGHEST MORALE AND PRIDE IN THEIR MISSION OF ANY UNIT THERE, OR PROBABLY IN THE AIR FORCE FOR THAT MATTER. I HAVE HEARD DIFFERENT EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS, AND I HAVE A PET THEORY, BUT WHATEVER THE EXPLANATION, THE FACT IS THAT THE RANCH WAS A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO HAD A DIFFICULT JOB TO DO AND THEY DID IT WELL. AND SERVING IN THE RANCH WAS AN EXPERIENCE THAT NO RANCH HAND WILL EVER FORGET.

Good luck on the project Paul. I would have liked to have written more but I to am in academic and getting ready for a new semester which starts next week. I have some slides which I took plus a number that I had copied from the 7th AF collection but I have not culled through them yet. If you are interested in them or if there are other areas that I can expand on please let me know.

To the Ranch,
Eric Grueneler