

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.

Hutchinson Merle David Merle Hutchinson 12 Nov 1981
 Name (last first middle signature date)

Specific Information

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

1. Ranch Hand service: From July 27/67 to July 1968. Where? Bien Hoa.
2. RH/C-123 training: Where/when? None
3. Rank while in RH? SMS. Present/retired rank? SMS-1970 ^{AD012}
4. Duty(s) while in Ranch? Maint. SUPERINTENDENT dates? July 1967-July 1968
5. Other Vietnam service? Where/when? NONE
6. If aircrew member:
 - a. Number of missions: RH NONE Other (specify) NONE
 - b. Combat flying hours: RH NONE Other (specify) NONE

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.

**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE BRONZE STAR MEDAL
TO
MERLE D. HUTCHINSON**

Senior Master Sergeant Merle D. Hutchinson distinguished himself by meritorious service as Maintenance Superintendent for the 12th Air Command Squadron while engaged in ground operations against an opposing armed force at Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, from 9 July 1967 to 4 July 1968. During this period while exposed to the hazards of hostile rocket, mortar, and ground attacks, Sergeant Hutchinson established an outstanding record of performance while supervising all maintenance. The exemplary leadership, personal endeavor, and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Hutchinson in this responsible position reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

Form # 7444

7. Took maintenance personnel 6 several places for special missions, but cannot recollect what they were. Also at Ranch Hand - We went several places (mostly unfriendly) to get aircraft back to base. These involved aircraft that generally went down on strips, with maintenance problems and battle damage.
8. Bronze Star - copy attached.
9. Yes, I was there during TET Offensive could write a book on this. Over run by V.C, but being I had my people armed, we held our own.
10. Yes, In Delta One LTC, Major and Engineer was killed. The Major was from South Carolina. I do not remember his name, but he and I had attended A/E School at Chanute AFB back in 1949 together. He was one of my technical advisers along with LTC Kellogg. This happened around May 1968.
- ? 11. or 12. Yes, We repaired our own battle, replaced fuel tanks and such. Damage - Except in cases where extensive then aircraft was released by me for one time flight to Iran and Taiwan.
13. Mission planning was done by ? operation, but I was briefed everyday on what was happening. The personnel on operations was elite in the fact by keeping me well informed maintenance schedules and flying schedules were easily maintained. Of course our average day was sometimes eighteen to twenty hours a day.
14. Unknown - just assigned Form #7444. Did not know that such an organization existed.
15. Never was informed till after arriving in Ranch-Hand. Then was never informed of any possible after affects. We maintained all the herbicide equipment not only in the aircraft - but even entered the tanks and deslugged them at times. Who could ever forget the smell. Of course, now we find out later that the Agent Orange could be dangerous. Most of my people no doubt had more contact day-day with the agent than anyone.
16. (A) Christmas Day 1967 - All the troops came from Danang ^{AND} and we all got together and sang Christmas carols.

Form # 7441

(B) When aircraft and crew was lot in Delta.

17. N/A

18. N/A

19. Quarter were suitable, a few rats and spiders. Routine days were long and on several occasions several days one. Partys - Good Fellowship.

20. I can only say, yes a very special outfit with very special people.

This experience will never be forgotten.

Remember

PART II - I ~~remember~~ our group commander from the 315th was bit by shapnel one morning just before take off. One of the rare occasions of 122 rockets during the day.



*Sorry for the delay
Hope this can be of some help*

*Walter H. H. H.
WAF. Ret.*