

Item # 9

RANCH HAND HISTORY PROJECT

Form No. 7687

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.

Robinson William F JR. William F JR 11/5/82
Name (last first middle signature date)

Specific Information

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

1. Ranch Hand service: From ^{1st} 12/61/2/63 to ^{2nd} 6/62/6/63. Where? SAIGON
2. RH/C-123 training: Where/when? LANGLEY AFB VA.
3. Rank while in RH? CAPT Present/retired rank? LTC (Retired)
4. Duty(s) while in Ranch? Ops Off (1st Tour) C.O. (2nd Tour) dates? 12/61-6/62 + 2/63-6/63
5. Other Vietnam service? Where/when? NONE
6. If aircrew member:
 - a. Number of missions: RH ~~400~~ 25 Other (specify) _____
 - b. Combat flying hours: RH ~~400~~ 79 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.

7. Initial flight to Viet Nam 12/61. After four (4) months in Viet Nam and ready to return to U.S. to resume Aerial Spray Flights' normal operation, we were diverted by White House to Iran to fight annual Locust infestation. Worked Iran and Afganistan for six (6) weeks, then returned to Langley AFB. First, and I believe the only C-123 to fly around the world. See attached crew list and itinerary.
10. & 11. See attached statement.
13. Very crude. Majority of missions were single aircraft. Coordinates were passed down by 2nd ADVON, given to the Navigator and we flew off into the "Wild Blue Yonder". Only one problem. Since all targets were approved by Washington, and the ARVN, the V.C. knew before we did and did very nicely in setting up a reception committee.
14. Became a member of the 4500 Special Aerial Spray Flight (SASF), Langley AFB in May 1959. At that time we were flying C-47's and L-20's. Transitioned to C-123 in the Fall of 1961. In October (?) of 1961, all members of SASF were asked (told) to volunteer for a special TDY of 120 days, destination unknown. We did have an idea where we were going because of certain happenings. i.e., Six C-123's were being modified at Harrisburg, Pa. Capt. Mario Cadori (ex-member of SASF) at that time stationed in Korea had been sent TDY to Viet Nam to train the Viets to aerial spray. His letters to us indicated the program was impossible.
15. We were told that the chemicals were toxic and that if exposed we should wash and change clothes. This was standard procedure for SASF. Working with 24D and 245T was considered no more dangerous than the chemicals we had worked with in the past, i.e. DDT, Malathion, Dibrom and Dieldren.
16. The happiest: (1) Flying into strange airfields and using the C-123 as it was designed to be used, (2) Not knowing who owned the airfield, and after finding out the V.C. had control, getting out before they got you, (3) Air dropping ice cream to the Special Forces in the jungle. Saddest: (1) leaving our Vietnamese friends behind with an uncertain future, (2) Having "Break-bone fever", and laying in bed for 3 days wishing you would die.
17. While flying target for an F-102 one night we decided to get smart and duck under the radar to prove that we could penetrate undetected. While cruising along about 200 ft., 40 miles south of Saigon, we suddenly lost the left engine. We headed for Saigon and found we could climb only 100 ft. per minute with max power on the good engine. We leveled at 400 ft, rather than burn up the other engine. We found out later that the prop did not feather. Cause: one 9 mm slug had taken out the throttle and prop control and penetrated the fuel line.
19. The first two (2) weeks we lived in Tent City on the Tan Son Nhut. Then we moved to a two (2) bedroom apartment in Saigon with hot water. Saigon at that time ('61 & '62) was still known as the Paris of the Far East, and the living was nice and easy. The war was fought between 9 & 12 and 2 & 5, and Charlie bought just as many drinks as we did. The water was bad, but who needed it when 12 year old Chivas was \$2.00 a fifth. That should tell about the parties.

We even built our Christmas tree out of bottles (have picture somewhere). The "anything else" cannot be printed.

Routine Day: On spray mission days (which were not too often) we took off around 0430 am, returned around 0800, debriefed and got home about 1200. On other days we went to work around 0800, sat around until the powers to be decided whether we would haul trash for our sister outfit, or pick up bodies that day. Normally we would be home around 1500 or 1600 hours, unless we had to fly night target for the 102's.

There are a lot of other stories about Farm Gate and Ranch Hands, i.e. Command problems, maintenance, lack of recognition, etc. Since I am only about 40 miles down the road from you, maybe we could get together.

STATEMENT

On 1 February 1962 I, William F. Robinson Jr., Captain, AO 3035534, acting Operations Officer for Tactical Air Force Transport Squadron Provisional No. 1, did schedule Captains Larson and Groves to fly aircraft 56-4370 on the morning of 2 February 1962 at 0830 hours. The Squadron Commander directed on 1 February 1962 that three aircraft would fly aerial spray training missions the following morning. Crews were scheduled and notified that afternoon of the next days activities.

On 2 February 1962 at 0730 hours I briefed Captains Larson and Groves on their mission. Captain Larson was to be Aircraft Commander and fly the left seat. Captain Groves was to act as co-pilot and because of his experience in aerial spraying he was to supervise and instruct Captain Larson on spray techniques. The briefing contained the following information.

AREA	: Target RH-8 along route 15.
ALTITUDE	: Maintain 150 feet (Above trees)
AIR SPEED	: 130 kts. (120 kts minimum in turns)
POWER	: RPM - 2300; Mixture - Auto Rich.
MANIFOLD PRESS	: To maintain 130 kts (120 kts in turns)

Engine starting and take-off was normal with the exception of myself. I was delayed fifteen minutes by photographers who were to take pictures of areas we had previously worked.

At approximately 0850 hours I crossed over RH-8 at 2500 feet heading South. All crew-members observed aircraft 370 performing his mission as briefed. We continued to head South and three minutes later saw our third aircraft below us heading North. (In the direction of 370).

We turned to a heading of Southwest at the town of Baria. As we leveled out the co-pilot (Capt O'Kelly) called my attention to a column of smoke at our three o'clock position. We both had the same idea of what could have happened and headed immediately for the smoke with high power. It took us about five minutes to reach the area and by this time we had determined the smoke was just North of Target RH-8. (Where an aircraft would be making his turn for another spray run). As we approached the South end of the target I noticed another C-123 in the same area where 370 had been working. We believed this to be 370 and felt quite relieved that they were still flying. As we crossed over, the other C-123 turned abruptly in the direction of the smoke and started a descend. I was not close enough to get the aircraft number, so we decided to follow to see what was causing the smoke. On the first pass over, at approximately 800 to 1000 feet, I identified several Vietnamese troops in the area and thought the wreckage was a truck. When coming around for a second pass, I heard the other C-123 talking to Paris control (Radar). We identified the other C-123 and then went in for several low passes over the wreckage. We recognized the tail of a C-123 and on the third or fourth pass could make out the number 70 on the rudder.

Statement Continued: Capt William F. Robinson Jr., AO 3035534.

Since our third C-123 in the area had radio contact we remained silent. We remained in the area for another ten minutes then returned to Tan Son Nhut and landed.

WILLIAM F. ROBINSON JR., AO 3035534
Captain, USAF

Lt. Col. William F. Robinson, Jr.

Depart LFI	0945 hours		November 24, 1961
Arrive Pope, N.C.	1120 hours	Qtr.	November 24, 1961
Depart Pope	0815 hours	"	November 28, 1961
Arrive George, Cal.	2305 hours	"	November 28, 1961
Depart George	0815 hours	"	November 29, 1961
Arrive Travis Cal.	1045 hours	"	November 29, 1961
Depart Travis	2200 hours	"	November 30, 1961
Arrive Hickam	1230 hours	"	December 1, 1961
Depart Hickam	0405	"	December 3, 1961
Arrive Johnston Is.	0905	No	December 3, 1961
Depart Johnston	1020	No	December 3, 1961
Arrive Wake Is.	1700	Qtr.	December 4, 1961
Depart Wake	1435	"	December 5, 1961
Arrive Anderson (Guam)	2055	"	December 5, 1961
Depart Anderson	1010	"	December 6, 1961
Arrive Clark (Phillipines)	1840	"	December 6, 1961
Depart Clark	0930	"	December 22, 1961
Arrive Saigon	1430	No	December 22, 1961
Depart Saigon	2030	"	December 26, 1961
Arrive Clark	0130	Qtr.	December 27, 1961
Depart Clark	1155	"	January 7, 1962
Arrive Saigon	1745	No	January 7, 1962
Depart Saigon	1040	"	May 8, 1962
Arrive Calcutta, India	1955	"	May 8, 1962
Depart Calcutta	0825	"	May 9, 1962
Arrive Karachi, Pakistan	1700	"	May 9, 1962
Depart Karachi	0940	"	May 10, 1962
Arrive Tehran, Iran	1700	"	May 10, 1962

Depart Tehran	0900 Hours	No	May 25, 1962
Arrive Kandahar, Afganistan	1355	"	May 25, 1962
Depart Kandahar	1025	"	May 28, 1962
Arrive Kabul, Afganistan	1200	"	May 28, 1962
Depart Kabul	1050	"	May 29, 1962
Arrive Kandahar	1250	"	May 29, 1962
Depart Kandahar	0835	"	June 1, 1962
Arrive Tehran	1335	"	June 1, 1962
Depart Tehran	0630	"	June 2, 1962
Arrive Istanbul	1405	"	June 2, 1962
Depart Istanbul	0630	"	June 3, 1962
Arrive Aviano, Italy	1430	Qtrs	June 3, 1962
Depart Aviano	1035	"	June 4, 1962
Arrive Chateauroux, France	1455	"	June 4, 1962
Depart Chateauroux	1040	"	June 7, 1962
Arrive Lajes, Az.	2000	"	June 7, 1962
Depart Lajes	0800	"	June 9, 1962
Arrive Harmon Nfld.	1930	"	June 9, 1962
Depart Harmon	0830	"	June 10, 1962
Arrive Langley	1320	Home	June 10, 1962

Crew List for Flight Around the World

Robinson, William F. - Capt. Mission Comdr.
 Hagerty, Charles - Capt. Aircraft Comdr.
 Adkins, Bud - Pilot
 Hodgins, John - 2nd Lt. Navigator
 Roe, Leon - T/Sgt Engineer