

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.

SHEARON, BERNARD F. JR *S. Shearon* 18 Nov 81  
 Name (last first middle signature date)

Specific Information

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

1. Ranch Hand service: From 15 SEP 66 to 30 AUG 67. Where? TAN SON NHUT - DEC 66 BIEN HOA DEC 66 -
2. RH/C-123 training: Where/when? C-123 - HURLBURT (JUN-JUL 66) SPRAY-LANGLEY (AUG 66)
3. Rank while in RH? 1/LT - CAPT Present/retired rank? MAJ
4. Duty(s) while in Ranch? PILOT/LEAD PILOT / 1P dates? LEAD PILOT FROM COUNTRY QUIL (OCT 66) TO LAST MONTH
5. Other Vietnam service? Where/when? NONE
6. If aircrew member:
  - a. Number of missions: RH 329 Other (specify) 1 - F-100F (FAMILIARIZATION)
  - b. Combat flying hours: RH 530 Other (specify) 1:30

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.

Date

## ROUTING AND TRANSMITTAL SLIP

TO: (Name, office symbol, room number,  
building, Agency/Post)

1. PAUL CECIL

2.

3.

4.

5.

Action	File	Note and Return
Approval	For Clearance	Per Conversation
As Requested	For Correction	Prepare Reply
Circulate	For Your Information	See Me
Comment	Investigate	Signature
Coordination.	Justify	

## REMARKS

I'VE PLAYED WITH THIS IN  
A FEW SPARE MOMENTS, BUT  
WITH A FORTHCOMING PCS,  
DOUBT I'LL EVER GET IT  
FINISHED. I THOUGHT I'D  
FORWARD WHAT I'VE DONE  
IN CASE IT'S OF HELP

DO NOT use this form as a RECORD of approvals, concurrences, disposals,  
clearances, and similar actions.

FROM: (Name, org. symbol, Agency/Post)

Room No.—Bldg.

Phone No.

BERNIE SHEARON

5041-102

OPTIONAL FORM 41 (Rev. 7-76)

Prescribed by GSA

FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.206

May 2008

(Sub heading - how Zeph stories)

For a while Man Zeph and I were the only two lead qualified pilots in our flight. While TDY to Da Nang, we had flown every mission as lead for a week and a half, until we got someone else checked out (I don't remember who). The first mission after this was to the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos, I flew lead with the newly checked out pilot and Man, who was also an IP flew number 4 with a new pilot getting theaters qualified. After some time on the trail we were finishing a run, with the slower FAC about a mile behind the formation when a huge explosion (our guess was that it was a dud 750/1000 pound bomb, exploded under the formation to try to get a plane) went off at the tail end of the formation. The FAC called "I think they got number four" as we were chandelling up off the target. I looked around and saw only two behind me and called "Four, are you with us?". Another voice (Man) came up saying "Four, are you with us? Oh hell, I'm number four!" (#2 was behind me where I couldn't see him, and Man was so accustomed to flying lead, he forgot himself.)

~~On the~~ ~~two~~ most Radio Transmissions in South Vietnam when we were over there were in the clear, and when we picked up the flag at the 366 TFW Command Post we never bothered to copy down the various code words posted there. Shortly after takeoff, with Man leading we got a call from Panama (the CRC at

monkey mountain) relaying two code words to us. Man acknowledged, and kept on flying toward our target. A little later, Panama called again and asked if we had gotten the traffic. Man said yes but asked Panama to stand by. He took the formation over to the Squadron frequency and asked if anyone knew what the code words meant. Nobody did, so we all went back to Panama's frequency and Man asked Panama what the code words meant. When they responded that they were classified, he asked "Well then, can't you give me a little hint?". After a pause, Panama told us our mission had been cancelled due to weather in the target area.

During the '66-'67 winter monsoon, weather at Da Nang was frequently lousy. In ~~6~~ Vietnam, C-47 had crashed into the ~~mountain~~ GCA and Da Nang had to run lined approaches. This usually meant that delays of up to two hours in the holding patterns were frequent, so we usually made "commando approaches", which consisted of flying out a TACAN radial until you were sure you were over the water, and letting down until you saw the water.

HAVE - Number of 35mm slides/ Air Medal/ 8mm Film

7. I don't know what your definition of "special" is for the study. We were doing 2W and 20W missions in Laos out of Da Nang most of the year I was in the Ranch. In the summer of 1967, to great fanfare, the defoliation of the DMZ began. My 16mm film of the NBC News report on this was stolen in the mail back to the states. My folks had gotten it from Julian Goodman of NBC News, a neighbor, and we showed it at commander's call one month.

8. DFC, Air Medal with 9 clusters. DFC was for a mission on a crop target along the coast north of Hue. I led a flight of 3 with FAC and fighter (366 TFW F-4s) cover. We took a short burst of automatic weapons fire in the cockpit, right engine, and forward right fuselage. (the battle damage has grown far greater over the years). This knocked out the right engine, slightly wounded (scratch) the Navigator (Walt Marshalek, his second purple heart in two days), and the flight mechanic. Feathered the engine and dumped. Number 2, piloted by Mick Hilary, dropped in under our left engine, and we flew to Hue Phu Bai and landed. Heard a couple of shots on the way to Phu Bai, but neither plane took any additional battle damage.

9. Yes. Don't remember the dates, but there was a mortar/rocket attack on Da Nang (Feb 67?) and one at Bien Hoa (Jun 67?) while I was there. At Da Nang, we all dove under our beds in the dormitory, since the mortar bunkers there had all been removed (allegedly for base beautification). At Bien Hoa, we all made it to the bunker. Bill Borkowski, the first one out of our hooch (353) ran right through the screen door on his way to the bunker, making exit for the rest of us easier. No damage to Ranch facilities resulted from these attacks. On the other hand, a parachute flare dropped from an AC-47(?) did crash through the roof of the hanger at Bien Hoa one night and land on the operations officer's desk, ruining some paperwork. (Early summer '67?).

10. No.

11. Yes. In June/July '67, I led a mass gaggle (8-10 airplanes) on a crop destruction target in IV Corps area. We took sporadic ground fire throughout the spray run. About halfway through the run, a single round came through the open right hand cockpit window of one of the planes and hit Capt Tom Davies in the throat. He was the copilot, Maj Ragland was the pilot, Capt Robinson was the navigator. I don't remember their position in the formation, but with a navigator on board, may have been number two. They broke out of formation and headed for the "aircraft carrier" (I don't remember the airfield name, but the entire runway was surrounded by water. It looked like an aircraft carrier) Lt Col Dennis, the squadron commander, was flying in last position and escorted them. Tom bled to death enroute. Rags and Robby didn't fly missions after that. Rags went down to the TACC at Ton Son Nhut, and Robby became the squadron targeting officer.

12. While stationed at Tan Son Nhut, we took a round straight through the front of an engine, which holed a jug without touching the skin of the aircraft. Since we didn't find any bullet holes on postflight, we took off and flew the second mission of the day. On the last mission of the day, we got an excessive magneto drop and changed to the spare plane. When we returned, the ground crew told us about the damage to the engine. (Testimonial for the R-2800.)

13. In the sense that the lead crew planned the tactics to be used for

the daily frag order, yes. The usual procedure was for the lead crew, intel, and targeting to get together the afternoon before the mission at squadron operations and decide what tactics would be used. (direction of attack, descent point, rate of descent, whether to run in to the target at low level, or plan our descent to just slow down to 120KIAS at spray on, direction of echelon, formation spacing, emergency headings). Occasionally if the fighter cover was stationed at Bien Hoa or Da Nang, we would get together with the fighter lead and discuss fighter cover tactics. Sometimes we would do this just before briefing time. Usually these tactics were discussed over the radio in the clear after we had rendezvoused with the FAC and fighters.

14. When I got to Hurlburt for C-123 CCTS, we were told that there would be two Ranch Hand slots in our class. John Beakley volunteered for one, and Joe Dougherty was picked(?) for the other. At the end of the class at Hurlburt, we were all gathered together and told that due to the buildup in the Ranch, 10 of us would be going to the Ranch. Everyone picked slips of paper out of a hat to determine who would go to the Ranch and who would be a Trashhauler. I didn't get a Ranch slip, but by that time I had had a chance to talk with Joe Chalk, who had returned to Hurlburt as an IP, and had decided that I would prefer the Ranch. I quietly traded slips of paper with one of the other members of our class, who had drawn a Ranch Hand slip, but had no desire to fly Ranch Hand missions.

15. What they were...2,4,D or 2,4,5T combined in an oil or water base, for defoliation and a dessicant for cereal crop destruction. How long they took to work. Wind and temperature limitations for application. That they were not harmful to people.

16. Happiest...don't know. I enjoyed the tour. Saddest...Tom Davies' death in a formation I led, or Al Stearns' death in a crash in II Corps in July '67 which killed all on board, members of my flight. I heard about it on the radio in Taipei where I was delivering a plane for IRAN.

17-20. The presentation of the "Ranchhandus Purpulus" awards at Da Nang dining ins...A box with toothpicks and yellow, green and brown strings to Bill Borkowski after he lost the Ranch Hand Flag from the top hatch, and it went through a prop; a calendar with a 14 day week in it to someone who had overstayed a leave in Japan due to lack of transportation; The certificate for the development of novel high altitude defoliation techniques to someone who had accidentally hit the dump switch instead of the arm switch while setting up for a run. The tradition of not permitting guest speakers to speak at the dining ins by loudly cheering them as soon as they stood up.