

By George, He Flew Right Into the Action



S&S Vietnam Bureau

GIA NGHIA, Vietnam — Air Force Maj. George R. Lattin volunteered for Vietnam because he wanted to get in on the action.

In just three weeks, he's seen enough to last a lifetime.

Thirty minutes after Lattin stepped off the plane for his new assignment as a forward air controller with Air Liaison Advisory Team 32 here, he was circling in his tiny O1 Birddog over the ill-fated Fire Support Base Kate, directing jet air strikes and dodging enemy 37mm anti-aircraft and machine gun fire.

Two weeks later Lattin was flying just east of Bu Prang when he saw VNAF A37 jets dive — bombing their own troops by accident. In a death-defying maneuver, he flew his Birddog in front of the jets to warn them away before they

could make another bombing run. This prevented further deaths, although more than 20 ARVN had been killed.

Three days after that, Lattin's plane was shot up as he directed fire against enemy artillery shelling the Bu Prang Special Forces Camp 110 miles northwest of Saigon.

"Hawk. Hawk. I'm hit. I'm hit. I'm going down," Lattin screamed into his headset as bullets smashed into the cockpit, destroying most of his instruments and control cables.

"Hawk" is the call-sign Capt. William Albracht used at Kate before he led his men back to Bu Prang in a desperate night escape. The two men are good friends.

"Don't worry, baby," shouted Albracht. "We're coming to get you if we have to send out a whole regiment."

But Lattin didn't need it. With

only slight rudder movement for control, he brought his plane back to Bu Prang for what Air Force observers called one of the most astounding landings they had ever seen.

Lattin soared in through a rain of artillery and mortar fire as a heavy crosswind swept the dirt airstrip. He just missed a wire and wood barrier that frantic soldiers were struggling to pull out of his way. Albracht talked him down.

Lattin and his co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Walter C. Phillips, received only minor facial scratches in the action. Both are back flying over Bu Prang.

Lattin, 38, was born in Huntington, W. Va. He joined the Air Force as an enlisted man in 1948 and was commissioned in 1955 after attending Aviation Cadet School. He has more than 9,000 hours of flying time, mostly in

troop transport planes. He served a six-month tour of duty in Vietnam flying a C47 transport with the 1st Air Command Group, the Air Force equivalent of the Special Forces, in 1963.

"I've never flown a jet," he said. "I always thought a plane without a prop was like a train without a smoke-stack." He specifically volunteered to fly the Birddog in Vietnam.

Lattin has also served in Okinawa, Japan, Korea and Laos. He last worked in a staff job in the Special Air Warfare Center at Hurlburt AFB, Fla.

Lattin said he has enjoyed his first three hectic weeks in Vietnam, even though he works a "25-hour day."

"I fly all day, debrief at night, talk to the crew, drink two beers and hit the sack," he said.

Lattin's home is now Dover, Del., where his wife and two sons await his return.

Angels Adopt 390th

DA NANG AB (Special) — Crews of the 390th Tactical Fighter Sq. here don't claim a guardian angel but they do claim a certain rapport with 13 heavenly bodies attending classes at Michigan State University.

The stars are the members of the university's Angel Flight, a coed auxiliary of the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps' Arnold Air Society.

As a university service organization, the Angel Flight decided to sponsor a Southeast Asia fighter squadron. The 390th TFS of the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing was selected. The sponsorship program consists of letters, cards, small holiday gifts, and pictures sent to the men.

AF Unit Cited for Valor

PHAN RANG AB (Special) — The Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with "V" device for valor was presented to the 14th Special Operations Wing here recently by Maj. Gen. Robert J. Dixon, vice commander of Seventh Air Force.

Earned for exceptionally meritorious service against enemy forces in Southeast Asia from June 1967 to June 1968, the award was received by Col. Clyde S. Cherry of Denver, wing commander. Some of the outstanding wing achievements included killing more than 4,200 enemy soldiers, destroying or damaging 344 enemy trucks and 158 sampans and conducting psychological operations which resulted in the surrender of 15,000 enemy troops.

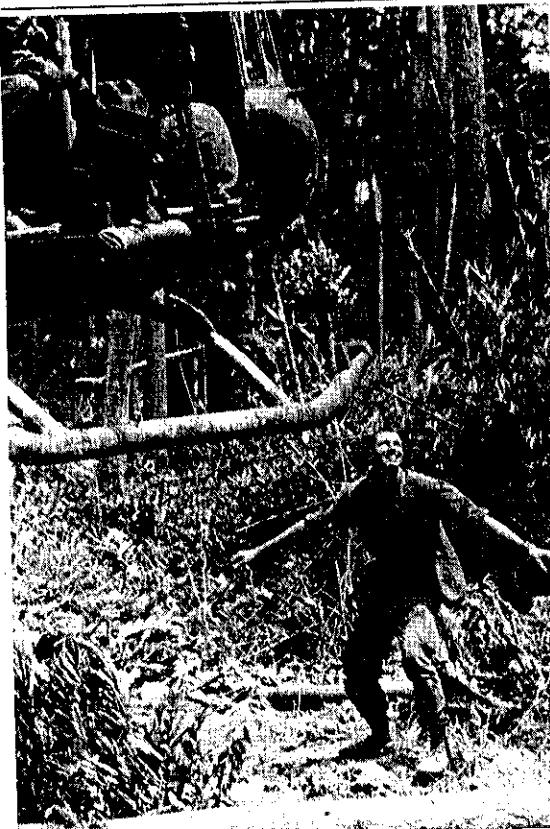
Top 'Gunfighter'

DA NANG AB (Special) — Air Force Capt. Harold L. Castell was recently selected as "Gunfighter of the Month" for his accomplishments as an F-4 Phantom pilot with the 366th Tactical Fighter Wing here during October. Castell, who flies with the 421st Tactical Fighter Sq., maintained the highest average bomb damage assessment throughout the month.

Aviators Win PUC

LONG BINH (Special) — An air cavalry team from the 1st Aviation Brigade has been awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for its efforts in a two-month-long operation against the enemy in early 1968.

Troop C, 7th Sq., 17th Air Cav. was selected for the high honor along with the unit it supported, the Americal Div. 1st Sq., 1st Cav. They killed 1,046 of the enemy while sustaining only 11 fatal casualties themselves in the operation.



Giving Huey a Hand

Sgt. Ralph Wilson of D Co., 1st Bn., 12 Cav., 1st Air Cav. Div., spreads his arms to direct a supply-laden Huey helicopter to a landing near Landing Zone Grant. (USA)

Airman's Project

City Comes Through for Kids

BINH THUY AB, Vietnam (Special) — Airman 1st C. Terence A. Sasek of East Detroit, Mich., a special vehicle maintenance repairman with the 632nd Combat Support Group, began a "summer" project in early June to obtain clothing and toys from families in his hometown for Vietnamese orphans.

His project lasted nearly five months. Seeking the help of East Detroit Mayor Walter Bezz, Sasek asked for the items because "... these kids are too little to help themselves. Most run around in nothing more than rags." The East Detroit Council of Fraternal and Veteran organizations went to work gathering clothes and toys.

A shipment of 18 boxes weigh-

ing nearly 400 pounds was to be flown to Saigon by military aircraft. Instead, it went by faster commercial carrier with the city of East Detroit picking up the tab.

The shipment went to Hong Kong where it was to be transferred to another airline to Saigon. When it landed in Bangkok instead, cooperative officials of Trans World Airlines helped locate it and get it back to its proper destination.

From Saigon the clothes were flown to Can Tho, near Binh Thuy AB. However, the customs declarations which must accompany packages in international transit were misplaced somewhere along the line. Back to Saigon went the clothes.

There they stayed for weeks. Sasek could not convince anyone to let him have the packages. He traveled from Binh Thuy to Saigon twice before he left Vietnam for leave in Australia.

After his vacation, he again journeyed to Saigon where he contacted the civic action officer at Tan Son Nhut AB. Together, they broke through the red tape entangling the runaway shipment.

Again, the clothes were sent to Can Tho.

His "summer" project finally succeeded, but more in time for Christmas than for summer. With only a week left on his tour, Sasek delivered the gifts to the Providence Orphanage in Can Tho.

In one document, Viet Cong province officials called for three persons to be "eliminated" and 30 threatened in each hamlet. The victims, the paper said, could be selected by the local Communist cell, but all must be listed on a "blood debt" roster and tried by a peoples court.

"Death penalties will be given by the courts to heighten the pride of the revolutionary movement," one captured document said.