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Action Report: Memorial Day Writers' Project (MDWP)

Activity: A Tribute to our Veterans

Date: May 30, 2016

Location: Washington, DC

(Constitution Ave., and 20 St.) behind the sidewalk facing Constitution Ave.

Weather: Mid 70s (degrees), Cloudy with forecast of occasional thunderstorms.

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The weather was surprisingly nice. There was no rain. Temperature was around 75 degrees with a threatening breeze. **Barbara Morris** manned the front display table and sold books and CD's, and chatted with people as they stopped by. We had eighteen readers including several new authors (marines) who came to participate in the parade as part of the Beirut contingent. The tent was put up a day early and several authors used the tent for an extra day of book sales. The following describes several of the readers at the MDWP microphone.

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**Jonathan Myer** flew the Cessna O-1E “Bird Dog” as a U.S. Air Force Forward Air Controller



(FAC) flying visual reconnaissance (VR) and airstrike control missions over Kontum Province in the Central Highlands (II Corps) in the Republic of Viet Nam (RVN). He also had a 3-1/2 week “detour” to Dong Ha Air Base in Quang Tri province (I Corps) to fly interdiction sorties (under Project “Tally Ho”) over the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between South and North Vietnams. Jonathan sang 15 songs during the afternoon, accompanied by his 12-string guitar. They are listed here and described in an addition to this report.

- **Teeny Weeny Bird Dog.** *Introducing the O-1E, the Air Force’s first (and lasting) dedicated Forward Air Control aircraft.*
- **The Bird Dog Cannonball.** *Nineteen years later, the O-1E has achieved a mythic reputation.*
- **FAC and the Green Beret.** *A mutual spoof on both communities: taped in Vietnam, sung by others, and 30 years later became the basis for a 20-year repertoire.*
- **Frankie and Johnnie (Air Force Style).** *Transposed to an Air Force setting, the characters follow the classic plot, ending in a military funeral.*
- **How I Went IFR in Flying Buffalo Shit.** *Based on an actual landing at the Dak Pek Special Force camp, water buffalo prove more dangerous than the Viet Cong.*

- *Glory Flying Regulations (III: plus SEA & GWOT). An update of a post-WWII song, first to the Vietnam War, then to the present day — but still full of contrasts.*
- *Mission to Mang Buk. A true recounting of an overloaded Bird Dog accessing a remote Special Forces camp in bad weather, the ironies keep on coming. ...*
- *Hunting Trucks by Starlight. Another true account, this time with Project Tally Ho in the so-called DMZ at night.*
- *Orran O'Sporran, the Third. A send-up of II Corps' No. 2 FAC, and how his follies caught up with him.*
- *Skin That Tiger. A true event, featuring staff of Kontum's leprosarium, B-team warriors, and (of course) a tiger... which played a passive role in the proceedings.*
- *Tally Ho. A short account of the O-1E FAC unit that flew reconnaissance and strike control over the DMZ.*
- *My Tally Ho Hit. This mission, one of 33 over the DMZ, incurred the only hit of Jonathan's entire tour; regrettably, his Bird Dog never got its Purple Heart.*
- *My Dai Uy Hat. This was the floppy hat with Captain's pips that Jonathan put on an old man's head on the way to Doc Smith's hospital for Montagnards — and forgot to take back.*
- *Warrior Bards: Our War. This ballad begins with Irv LeVine's homage to his fellow singers, and ends with the U.S.'s abandonment of the Republic of Viet Nam.*
- *58,000 Names Carved in a Wall. This hymn expresses the meaning of "Our Wall" to those who make the pilgrimage to mourn the loss of those named thereon.*

**Richard (Dick) Morris.**



Dick was a rifle platoon leader with A Co. 2nd Bn 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division in '67 and '68. Dick sang tunes from his CD "Skytroopers." and he read excerpts from his award-winning novel "Cologne No. 10 for Men," which grew out of his songs and experiences in Vietnam. One reading was about counting bodies of dead enemy soldiers after a harrowing night ambush. Body counts were how we kept score in the war and were used to calculate kill ratios. Another was about soldiers in mangrove swamps in a cold monsoon rain discussing their last cigarette. In his "Spot of Green" reading, a soldier walking across a firebase comes upon a pile of plastic body bags, two deep, ten high and twenty or thirty long, "each stuffed with the refuse of battle and neatly tagged for shipment." It honors the fifty-eight thousand Americans who died in Vietnam — ten times as many as have perished in Iraq and Afghanistan and five thousand

more than in Korea, but only half as many as in World War I, one-seventh as many as in World War II, and one-tenth as many as in the Civil War, our most horrible war (source:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_military\\_casualties\\_of\\_war](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_military_casualties_of_war)). "When will we ever learn?" Dick sang the following songs interspersed with his readings.

- "The Bong Song Bridge," a catchy tune about the easy time spent guarding the Bong Son Bridge (in Binh Dinh Province). • "John Wesley," a song about a 1st Cavalry Division point man who volunteered for point for an entire year and killed a dozen VC.
- "Chanh Giao Cave," a song about the Rockpile Operation of A Co. 2/5, a 13-day siege where 179 NVA were extracted from holes between the rocks.

- “When’s The Sun Gonna Shine On Camp Evans?” monsoon season at the northern HQ of the 1st Cav. • “Lonesome for You,” a love song from Richard to his wife, Barbara.
- “Diggin’ A Hole,” about digging foxholes and sleeping holes, an activity soldiers performed daily all over Vietnam. This song received a finalist award in the Vocal Jazz & Blues category of the 23rd Annual Mid-Atlantic Song Contest in 2006 ([www.saw.org/masc.asp](http://www.saw.org/masc.asp)).
- “The Chaplain” is his song about a fictitious chaplain who leaves the field with battle fatigue. He dedicated it to the soldiers who come home with PTSD.
- “I Got A Lonesome Me,” a silly song about all his body parts (except one) that were lonesome
- “Mirage,” a love song he wrote to his wife (of 43 years, now) while sitting on a sand dune overlooking the South China Sea
- “Go To Sleep,” a lullaby he wrote for his yet-to-be-conceived children. "Go To Sleep" is also on his daughter's CD, "Imagine That" (see [www.rickandaudrey.com](http://www.rickandaudrey.com)).

**Tom Glenn.** Tom read three excerpts from his novel *Friendly Casualties* (2012) which was drawn from Tom's personal experience. The first described a skirmish between the Viet Cong and two officers, one South Vietnamese and one American, who worked to save each other's lives. The second told of the farewell during the fall of Saigon between a Vietnamese amah and the American child she had cared for. The third was a monologue by a retired military officer mourning his son, an army lieutenant, killed in combat in Vietnam. Tom said he was honored and humbled by the rapt attention I got from the audience.



**John Monagle.** John is an active member of several poetry workshops in the Washington, DC area and is a frequent reader at local poetry venues. This was John's first time reading with us. John presented several poems starting with *A Soldier's Woman*: a poem about the women we leave behind with the possibility of their men not coming home; *Letter to a Name on the Wall*: a poem in two voices, one from a young woman who has remarried and another from her veteran long ago boyfriend who remains a young man at war; *Bill at the Wall*: A letter from a soldier's son updating his deceased dad on recent events and family news; *A Minute in a Soldier's Day*: a soldier contemplates what he will do after the war, if he survives; *The Veterans Evening*: a poem about being with one's family and yet feeling as if you are still somewhere else; *The Grenade*: an interesting poem about a thrown grenade with motion slowed by one's mind; *Shelter*, a poem about the differences or similarities between us and the defined enemy; and *It's Just a Name*: a poem about the lives behind each of the 58,000+ names carved into the Vietnam Memorial.

**Jim Smith.** Jim and I are members of the same workshop group which meets at the Kensington Bookstore along Antique row in Kensington, MD. Jim read four short stories, two of which have been picked up *O-dark Thirty* and another by *Poems Against War*. If I remember correctly, this is the first time Jim read with us at the Writers' Tent. The first reading was titled *Life Story*, an over simplified one page summary of one's life in nine couplets; *Two years Later*, a brief comparison of a downpour in a farmer's field at a '67 Folk Festival and a downpour in a rice paddy in the Iron Triangle; *War Souvenir*, a poem about a photo taken from a deceased soldier's wallet; and *Washing the Wall*, about Jim's participation with the Solver Spring VVA Chapter, whose service includes the early morning washing of the Vietnam Memorial.



**James W. Stewart** (aka “Tanker”) hopped a train from OK to spend Memorial Day with us at the Writer's Tent. Jim told us about several incidents with his

tank where not all went as planned and shared some of the unhappy events that make each of us who we are. Jim spent the next two days with me and we walked through the woods along the Northwest Branch and every inch of Union Station (we wore each other out).

**Claudia Gary.** Claudia is an active poet from Virginia and writes a column for the *VVA Veteran*. Claudia submitted the following input for our After Action Report:

It was a pleasure to hear and take part in the May 2016 MDWP, after letting too much time go by. I was moved by the poems, songs, and stories read by veterans and others there. It's been seven years since I left *Vietnam Magazine*, where I was senior editor until 2009. Currently I write articles on health and other topics for *The VVA Veteran* and other magazines. Although I'm not a veteran, this work has led me to meet quite a few Vietnam veterans and hear their first-hand accounts. I've become friends with some and (I hope) helped many others, first by preparing their accounts for publication, and now through my articles on health and other subjects for *The VVA Veteran*.

But this has also forced me to write quite a few poems. I say "forced" rather than "inspired," because I've always written out of necessity, as a way of getting through life. I don't go around looking for inspiration or subject matter. I just write down ideas that won't leave me alone, as a way of trying to work them out or understand them better. That's the origin of the war poems that are now in my chapbook "*Let's Get Out of Here*." Reading from it at MDWP on May 30, I was deeply grateful that some of the poems resonated with those who were present.

For anyone who'd like to read a few of the poems online, here's a link to four of them:

<http://www.mezzocammin.com/iambic.php?vol=2012&iss=1&cat=poetry&page=gary>.

If you missed the event and might like to obtain a copy of "*Let's Get Out of Here*," you can contact me through the email address at [http://www.pw.org/content/claudia\\_gary](http://www.pw.org/content/claudia_gary).

**Maritza Rivera and David Martin.** These two poets from the Washington area read several poems in two voices. I recall two of the poems read early in the day by Maritza. *The Encounter*, a Marine on patrol encounters a female civilian and makes a quick decision and *Camouflage*, a poem about preparing for deployment with the sights, sounds, thoughts and the endless waiting to say goodbye. When David arrived, they read several two voice or two part poems about the precarious relationship we have with our environment and to remind ourselves that we are the stewards of the earth for generations to come.

**Bruce Curley.** We haven't seen Bruce for several years and it's good to have him spend Memorial Day with us. Bruce read a new poem in tribute to the two men who were killed when a hijacked airplane smashed into the Pentagon and a poem reminding us of another act of war, the holocaust.



**Elisa Camara.** Elisa is the sister of SGT Mecot Camara, USMC. Elisa read passages from her book *American Brother* published by Hellgate Press. She is currently working on a series of patriotic-themed children's books. Elisa's brother was a causality of the Beirut bombing of the Marine barracks, Oct 1983. Thanks to **Jake Schneider** for inviting Elisa to read with us.



**Julia Torres.** Julia was brought to us via Jake Schneider (USMC), a local Marine veteran I met at Fred Foot's poetry workshops at Walter Reed. Julia participated

in the veterans parade as part of the Marine contingent representing the **Beirut Marines** and the bombing that took place October 23, 1983. Julia served in Operation Desert Storm and as a civilian, worked for the State of New Jersey Dept of Justice. Julia read from her recent books *Still Standing*, revealing her wartime experience in Kuwait and Iraq and *Bolder and Braver*, a firsthand account of her undercover work in law enforcement.

**Curt Nelson, Jr.** Curt arrived in Long Binh USAECAV - HQ on August 31, 1969 and was assigned to 26th Public Information Detachment as editor of KYSU' Magazine. Curt spent most of the day taking photos of MDWP participants and for others who wanted photos of the activities on the National Mall. Curt read a humorous poem written by an AFC Frank West. The poem reminds us of the difficulties and pleasures of a typical Airman's life and how a sunny disposition always helps to get us through the rough patches. The poem appeared in a 1969 in Stars and Stripes.

**Dick Epstein** read several poems in between several readers. Dick read *The Flower Next Door*, a poem about his next door neighbor in Qui Nhon; *Close Call*, about almost falling out of a C-130 during takeoff; *On a Jungle Trail*, about riding motorcycles in the woods somewhere near the Saigon River; and *Feeling No Pain*, about his first trip where he had to hitchhike to a communication site the delta and several others. Aside from his own work, Dick read a poem by Clyde Wray (a great tribute to Briah Connor) and one written by Rod (Doc) Kane.



**Conclusion:** It was a great day, being together, honoring the memories of veterans we knew and those we didn't know. Thank you all for sharing yourselves, for raising your voices so that others won't forget, so that names on the Wall will never be just names. I Hope to see many of you again next Veterans Day. P.S. Your donation is most welcomed to help pay for the rental of our tent on the Mall and the wonderful sound system we use.

Thank you to all of you who participated and to those who help sponsors MDWP activities on the Mall. Special thanks to **VVA 227** for their monetary support. Our best wishes to our brother USMC **Briah "Gunny" Conner** who is with us in spirit. If you have any suggestions for corporate sponsorship, let me know. Don't forget to visit our website: [www.memorialdaywritersproject.com](http://www.memorialdaywritersproject.com) or contact me at [www.dick\\_epstein@hotmail.com](mailto:www.dick_epstein@hotmail.com).  
God Bless.

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[ADDITIONAL DETAILS OF Jonathan's tour of duty in Vietnam and songs sung during Memorial Day 2016:]

**Jonathan Myer** flew Cessna O-1E "Bird Dogs" as an Air Force Forward Air Controller (FAC), primarily over Kontum Province in the Central Highlands (II Corps) in the Republic of Viet Nam (RVN). He was assigned administratively to the 21st TASS (Tactical Air Support Squadron) but operationally to the 24th STZ (Special Tactical Zone) within II Corps, which comprised both Kontum and Pleiku provinces to focus on enemy infiltration via the tri-border area of Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam.



Kontum was the largest province (and had the highest mountain) in South Vietnam, while Pleiku was the headquarters for II Corps. A Province (or Sector) FAC's primary missions were:

(1) Visual reconnaissance (VR), as part of the intelligence-gathering process for both the U.S.-led joint-Service Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), and for the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) forces as part of MACV's assistance to the government of RVN and its armed forces; and —

(2) Control of air strikes, by U.S. and Coalition forces, as both “preplanned” (based on intelligence reports and ground force operations), and “immediates” (against fleeting targets or to support “troops in contact” (TICs).

Jonathan's Kontum work yielded to a 3-1/2 week diversion to Project “Tally Ho,” based at Dong Ha Air Base in Quang Tri Province, the northernmost part of I (or “Eye”) Corps bordering on the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between South and North Vietnam. His 33 sorties over the DMZ (i.e., part of Route Package 1 of the six “Route Pack” divisions for air attack operations against North Vietnam) gained a month off his tour, which lasted from early April 1966 through end-February 1967.

Jonathan sang 15 songs during the afternoon, accompanied by his 12-string guitar. Here are his more detailed song notes about when and why they came about, and what they described or documented.

**1. Teeny Weeny Bird Dog.** (1997) (*Tune: It wrote itself.*) Thirty years after my Vietnam tour, 14 years after retiring from the U.S. Air Force, and following an invited performance of my vintage “FAC and the Green Beret,” I began to write songs again. The O-1E Bird Dog, with its limited performance and ubiquitous value, was an obvious subject. A prop-driven high-wing aircraft with fixed main wheels and a tail wheel, the O-1E cruised at 80 mph (70 knots) and rarely exceeded 100 mph. A World War I-equivalent aircraft acting as “battle manager” in a post-WW-II conflict, it was a contradiction both on the ground and in the air. Yet practically everybody who flew it in combat loved what it could do — which was good, because until the end of my tour (early 1967) there was no formal replacement, and even when the twin-engine O-2A and then the specially designed OV-10 arrived in-theater, the Bird Dog continued to fly . . . and even today many are still or again flying under private ownership, as represented by the International Birddog Association (IBDA).

**2. The Bird Dog Cannonball.** (2015) (*Tune: Wabash Cannonball.*) I picked this mix of history, bragging and fantasy as a “bookend” to “Teeny Weeny Bird Dog” — over all the other Bird Dog and related ballads then in between. The “history” part recounts how the Army “L [for Liaison] - 19” was officially redesignated “O [for Observation] -1” for Air Force and Navy versions, though each Service had its own variant identifiers depending on configuration and equipment. My own “history” included: flying up to 10,000 feet to safely clear the RVN's highest mountain —jungle-covered Ngoc Linh, at 8,524 ft MSL —to see if there was an enemy observation post there (there wasn't); flying between the sun and a cloud layer, thus making a prism visible as a rainbow around my shadow. (Other such anomalies are featured in other songs,) As for the “brags” and “fantasy,” they are easily recognized.

**3. FAC and the Green Beret.** (1967) (*Tune: Wabash Cannonball.*) When I left New York City for Saigon, a newly minted FAC and Bird Dog pilot: Robin Moore's “Tales of the Green

Beret” was a best seller, and even had a comic strip; Randall knives were “the thing” for military folks Vietnam-bound (I had mine, a survival model with hollow handle and 5” blade); and Nancy Sinatra’s “These Boots Are Made for Walking” was high on the Hit Parade, and in-country the prime souvenirs were a captured AK-47 or “blood-stained VC flag.” During my tour, I did locate a Green Beret patrol . . . on the wrong mountain. I dropped in at their A-team camps whenever practical, and gave some of them rides to recon the terrain for an upcoming patrol. Written and recorded late in my tour, I made fun of both ends of our FM radios, the Green Beret slyly insulting, the FAC snotty and self-involved — until “the ‘fit’ hit the ‘shan.’” The song itself then explores what could have happened if a Green Beret team got into trouble, needed close air support, and everything that could go wrong — did. . . !

**4. Frankie and Johnnie (Air Force Style).** (2005) (*Tune: Frankie and Johnnie.*) In 2004 I spent several months in Hawaii on family business. Renting a 12-string Fender guitar (like my own), I managed both to keep my finger-tip calluses and to learn some more folksongs. The next year, I decided to change (1) the characters to Air Force principals and processes, and (2) the original “barrel-house” funeral to a military funeral at the Arlington National Cemetery (many of which I had witnessed by then); only the late-1800s sexist libel against “Nelly” Bly (a top investigative reporter, famous for a 72-day travel around the world, and an early suffragist) was retained, for simplicity. The rollicking finale gives Johnnie a black-humor send-off:

*The squadron gave Frankie Johnnie’s coffin flag, / Threw nickels on the grass,  
Sang “Hallelujah, let’s head for the bar, / ’Nuther fighter jock lost his ass!  
He was her man — till he done her wrong . . .*

**5. How I Went IFR in Flying Buffalo Shit.** (1997) (*Tune: Strawberry Roan.*) Toby Hughes’s use of that tune for his classically understated “Tchepone” (where a supposed “milk run” to bomb that “sleepy” Laotian town gained him six holes in his F-4) gave me the ideal melody and tone for a real sortie of mine, namely my landing at the Dak Peck Special Forces camp on July 30, 1966. First, “IFR” (instrument flight rules) means that a pilot cannot fly by outside references, usually referring to flying in weather or at night. In my case that day, when water buffalo chips were hurled up and onto my front windshield on touchdown, I was definitely IFR! Further, my open side windows allowed additional dollops to plaster the rear seat . . . and this is the “fiction” part: I was really flying solo that day, so no crew chief was there to be “spattered.” But hey, it makes a good story, though, right?

**6. Glory Flying Regulations (III: plus SEA & GWOT).** (1999 – 2008) (*Tune: Battle Hymn of the Republic.*) Those of us who have performed or written songs about the Southeast Asia War and our roles in it owe a large debt to two men: Bill Getz, who collected Air Force songs in two volumes,<sup>[1]</sup> and Oscar Brand, who made two records of songs from WW-II through the Korean War,<sup>[2]</sup> which inspired my first squadron around 1960 and gave a basis to our Society of Old Bold Aviators (SOBA) nearly 40 years later.<sup>[3]</sup> I “updated” Brand’s “Glory Flying Regulations” first to our Vietnam era, and then to our current era, where manned aircraft were yielding to unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), while the cost of hi-tech aircraft diminished their force size. Throughout, the theme remains: a sense of boredom and frustration following the challenges and exhilaration of combat. PTSD anyone?

**7. Mission to Mang Buk.** (1999) (*Tune: Wreck of the Old 97.*) Mang Buk, the Special Forces camp in the northeastern corner of Kontum Province was even trickier to get into than Dak Pek in Kontum's northwestern corner. First, one had to climb from Kontum's airfield (at 1836 ft MSL [main sea level]) to about 4000 ft MSL to cross a broad plain called Plateau Gi ("the plateau" in my ballad, which had its own A-team), and then climb another 1000 feet or so until facing a waterfall to the northwest. (If the top of the waterfall was covered in cloud, I'd found, the safest thing to do was spiral up through the cloud and then set a course for home, looking for a hole in the weather for a final descent.) This day, I was able to top the falls, squeeze under the clouds, and face a quartering gusty headwind to land on Mang Buk's snotty-wet PSP (pierced steel planking) runway. . . . Had I mentioned that I had a 6-ft 6-in lanky passenger with heavy supplies for the A-team, as well as our combat gear, making my Bird Dog grossly overweight? No? Well, those details were graphically enumerated early in my song. So I managed to stick the airplane on my second attempt and taxied back to our A-team host — forgetting that I'd seen a spike flash by, just inside my right wheel, which could have ripped my Bird Dog's belly out if I had been centered on that PSP! Instead, I gratefully accepted the beer offered by the camp commander. . . . The return trip was uneventful, and I'd learned (1) a solid lesson on how the Bird Dog could stretch normal limits, which (2) 33 years later provided enough detail for this barely believable tale.

**8. Hunting Trucks by Starlight.** (1999) (*Tune: Great Speckled Bird.*) Flying over the so-called Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) differed from province FAC-ing mostly because we flew missions around the clock, looking for trucks and other signs of enemy infiltration from North into South Vietnam. Also, because it would be impractical to try a forced landing at night, I'd be sure to buckle my parachute to enable a bailout and wore my flak jacket across my chest for maximum coverage. Finally, we had two pilots for the night missions: the front seater flew the plane and controlled the fighters' airstrikes, while the back seater operated a Starlight scope, which magnified whatever light was available (from moon and stars) and showed terrain in monochromatic green, with moving targets as blips. If marking a stationary point, he'd drop a log flare to mark an aim point, while calling "Hillsboro," the Airborne Command Control and Communications ("AB-Triple-C") C-130 for fighters and "Blind Bat" (the flare-ship) to illuminate the target area. All that happened on this mission. If memory serves, "Salty" Harrison was in the back seat, while I called the strikes. We'd timed the fighters to catch the truck on a mile-long straight stretch of road before it could reach the next coverage of trees — and, against the usual odds, that truck disappeared under the exploding bombs.

**9. Orran O'Sporran, the Third.** (1999) (*Tune: Abdul El Bulbul Emir.*) This is a true series of anecdotes about the II Corps Air Liaison Officer (ALO) for much of my Kontum tour; only his name is disguised to protect his identity. He had a reputation for firing FACs for the least cause. To avoid that risk, I tried to stay out of his way, though on the couple of occasions our paths crossed he was friendly enough. Nevertheless, the incidents I have documented happened, except the last: I'd thought he'd been lost overnight when he was reported missing on a return flight from Nha Trang (without maps!). I'd been flying when I heard a couple of Tigerhound FACs making contact with another O-1, and it turned out to be our II Corps ALO. But my second Kontum ALO at the time, Lt Colonel James "Bill" Bradbury, told me decades later that he had been on the Pleiku ramp when our hero returned — later the same afternoon. "Where have you been, [Oxxxx]?" Bill had asked him. "It's Secret and I have to report to HQ. *Lives are at stake!*" was the only reply. . . . My map check was that he had overflown Pleiku on his attempt to return above clouds and with a

high tail wind, had landed at Attopeu in Laos — a forbidden area — had been refueled and hurried on his way . . . and, as he was close to the end of his tour, may have been hustled back to the U. S. of A. to avoid a diplomatic incident.

- 10. Skin That Tiger.** (2006) (*Tune: Casey Jones.*) In the summer of 1966, I learned that a tiger was going to be skinned at the Special Forces B-team, across the wire that bordered our MACV compound. A Montagnard had killed this tiger with his M-1 carbine, and gave the tiger to Soeur [Sister] Marie-Louise, the nun who managed the leprosarium for Montagnard a few clicks (kilometers) southwest of Kontum City. She in turn asked the B-team XO (executive officer) for assistance, and there was the tiger, hanging head down from a crossbar, while a couple of Green Berets were stripping off its skin. They were joined by a petite younger nun, Soeur Martine, who rolled up the sleeves of her habit and was cutting and slashing alongside the lads. All the while, a young Montagnard boy in red pantaloons, Paolo, hands on hips, was watching the show. . . . Later, having given some boxes of children's clothes (sent by wife Brenda) to Soeur Marie-Louise, I asked her if she could get me a tiger skin also. A few weeks on, she presented me with a skin, ready for packing, for \$100 in scrip. . . . It's still in its box in our basement.
- 11. Tally Ho.** (2002) (*Tune: Engine 143.*) In late spring of 1966, Major Bill Fields, Commander of the Tigerhound FACs (who flew their Bird Dogs "out-of-country" — Laos operations were Secret, back then) left Kontum to help set up a unit of Bird Dogs to operate over the DMZ. In late September, I got orders to join them; pilots were rotating so fast that experienced FACs were needed to fill in until the FAC pipeline could catch up. I wound up enjoying the mission — round-the-clock flying with no additional duties or distractions — that I tried to stay. Unfortunately, after 3+ weeks of the actions mentioned in my lyrics, I made the mistake of flying back to Kontum to pick up clothes and mail — and my ALO, Lt Col Charles V. Gibson, refused to let me return. In retrospect, my experiences flying "Tally Ho" sorties had turned me into a "war lover." At our first "Mother-of-All-FACs Reunion" in the year 2000, I was able to explain to other Tally Ho FACs about my absence. And a couple of years later, I got details about the beginning and end of Bird Dog flying over the DMZ from Cal Anderson, who had not only been a regular Tally Ho pilot (before and after my stint), but also a Tigerhound pilot flying out of Kontum — and became the first president of the FAC Association established in Y2K, the "year two thousand."
- 12. My Tally Ho Hit.** (2016) (*Tune: Engine 143.*) Earlier this spring, it suddenly occurred to me: Despite the disproportionate number of ballads I have attributed to my short time with Tally Ho — less than 10% of the flying days in my 10 months of actual duty — I'd totally overlooked the one hole my Bird Dog had accrued, naturally during a Tally Ho flight. This time, while I included references to events in my first "Tally Ho," they were lead-ups to the mission I flew as Jim Kerwin's No. 2, . . . three days after he'd landed his own Bird Dog with no aileron control. Jim took off first, with me following some 150 meters in trail. As we climbed toward our DMZ separation point, a pair of F-4s were about to cross our path at our altitude. Naturally, we descended for clearance, with me a bit lower, still in trail. As Jim and I resumed our climb, I noticed some farmers scattered in the field below. After Jim had passed them, I heard a few pops and felt a light ping. Not seeing any damage myself, I asked Jim to look me over. He saw nothing, so we resumed our course, and then separated to our planned areas for reconnaissance. It was only after a routine landing and exiting my Bird Dog that I was shown my nearly severed aileron cable. Well, I thought, if Jim had managed a safe landing, I probably could have matched his example.

But now I realize that he'd had plenty of altitude before coming in for a landing, whereas if my cable had fully snapped during the landing itself, I might well have *not* been able to regain control in time. Hmm. As I've often said: Better lucky than smart!

**13. My Dai Uy Hat.** (1999) (*Tune: Mary Had a Little Lamb for "choruses."*) I hadn't played this one for several years, but when Tanker told his story about stopping an advancing native and, rather than shooting him as a threat, convinced him with gestures to open his suspicious backpack — to reveal a baby . . . I thought my giving an old Montagnard and his baby grandson a flight from Dak Pek to Kontum, and then a jeep ride to Doc Smith's hospital for Montagnards a dozen clicks northeast of our airfield . . . would offer a parallel. The note the Montagnard gave to Doc Smith read "From A-team medic:" [who hadn't met us at the airfield] "Take this baby to Doc Smith's hospital, he needs his asshole overhauled" —And Doc Smith and I both laughed. Moreover, I didn't realize I'd left my floppy Dai Uy hat still on the old 'Yard's head. . . . But the difference between Tanker's and my Montagnards and their babies is that Tanker, by his care, saved *his* 'Yard baby's *life*, while I just gave *my* 'Yard and baby a ride. . . .

**14. Warrior Bards: Our War.** (JM: 2008 – 2015) (*Tune: All Around the Water Tank.*) The first part of the lyrics was by "Yodelin' Irv" LeVine, (c. 2000), to honor his fellow-singer-songwriters of the Vietnam War. In order of mention and association, he included Toby Hughes ("Tchepone"), Chip Dockery (harmony), Jonathan Myer (O-1E), "Bull" Durham ("Jolly Green"), Dick Jonas ("I've Been Everywhere"), Chuck Rosenberg ("Friendly FAC"), Saul Broudy (green T-shirts), the High Priced Help, Bill Ellis, and himself, Yodelin' Irv LeVine.

My part was to add musical FACs, first by replacing myself with Ron Barker (O-1E and F-100), Jim Roper (Ravens), Dave MacKay (Ho Chi Minh Trail), and finally me (DMZ and Kontum). Then our war itself: Actions of political leaders, military forces, and key results (especially the return of our POWs), the anti-war activities of (Navy Lieutenant) John Kerry and Jane Fonda, Kissinger's Nobel Peace Prize (and Le Duc Tho's refusal of his), the resumption of the NVA's invasion after U.S. forces had been withdrawn and Congress cut off further funding, which fatally undermined the RVN. In short order, all of Indochina fell to communist insurrections, along with massacres adding 2+ millions of Asian dead. A shameful end by a divided USA.

**15. 58,000 Names Carved in a Wall.** (*Tune: Its own.*) (Original poem "*The Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall in 58,000 Names*" by Native American woman Johnnie Rainwater, whose tribal name means *Warrior Princess*. The song: "*50,000 Names*" © by Jamie O'Hare; also recorded by George Jones, et al. Renumbered via increments (50,000 ... 54,000 ... 58,000) by Irv LeVine (2005); updated by Jonathan Myer to its current official total of **58,315** (May 12, 2016).

By the end of the war, the DoD listed KIAs at 47,434, while anti-war sources claimed 58,220, the difference being 10,786 deaths (almost 11%) by other causes. President Jimmy Carter affirmed the higher number, which has gradually increased as corrections and new data emerge.

Jonathan says: "In so many ways, this song is a sublime representation of what 'Our Wall' means, not just to us Vietnam veterans but to the families of those whose names are on it, and to people who visit it from all over the world. Maya Lin's design was controversial at first, condemned as a 'gash in the earth,' but its combination of simple design and methodical accounting for all known KIAs and MIAs steadily grew on people. I myself have gone from years fearing to visit it to strong emotion when I did, finding the names of fellow-FACs and others, and (thanks to Mike Sloniker, aka

'Loadhacker') even using its listing by casualty dates to identify an F-4 crew, Coyote 41, who had remained for me an anonymous loss for over 30 years.”

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[1] C.W. “Bill” Getz, editor: *THE WILD BLUE YONDER: Songs of the Air Force (World War I through the Vietnam War), Volume I*, © 1981; & *The Wild Blue Yonder: Songs of the Air Force, Volume II – Stag Bar Edition*, © 1986.

[2] Oscar Brand: “The Wild Blue Yonder” (1956 Eureka); & “Out of the Blue” (1961 Eureka).

[3] Jonathan Myer & Professor Lydia Fish, co-directors Society of Old Bold Aviators (SOBA). For information about Jonathan’s and SOBA’s CDs, contact: [jbmmyer@gmail.com](mailto:jbmmyer@gmail.com)