

COMBAT AIR MUSEUM

→ → → Plane Talk → → →

The Official Newsletter of the Combat Air Museum

Forbes Field Topeka, Kansas

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Surviving 23 days deep in enemy territory Guest Speaker Captain Roger Locher

In 2001 an action war film titled *Behind Enemy Lines* appeared in theaters across the US. Actor Owen Wilson played the lead role of a Naval Flight Officer on a US Navy A/F-18F Super Hornet that was shot down over Bosnia during a photo reconnaissance mission. The movie is about his evading and escaping a number of bad guys until rescued by Gene Hackman, playing a Rear Admiral, who personally leads an unauthorized rescue mission. Lots of flash, bang, and booms, with Hollywood fare and flare.

Well, during our December 2013 Membership Luncheon we had the pleasure and privilege to hear about a war action in which an Air Force officer was shot down behind enemy lines in an F-4D Phantom II fighter, evaded the enemy for 23 days, and was successfully rescued. The difference between these two stories is that there was nothing Hollywood about the story we heard at the luncheon. Our guest speaker, Colonel **Roger Locher**, USAF (Ret), told us firsthand about his shoot down and evasion from capture in North Vietnam in May-June 1972.

Roger Locher is a native Kansan born northwest of Sabetha, Kansas. He graduated from Sabetha High School and attended Kansas State University (KSU). At KSU, he was in the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). He was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in 1969.

["Surviving," con't. on Page 7](#)



General John Vogt (L) with Capt Roger Locher on his return to Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base - Wikipedia photo

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Museum Hours

January 2 - February 28/29

Mon. - Sun. Noon - 4:30 P.M.

Last Entry Every Day is 3:30 P.M.

March 1 - December 31

Mon. - Sat. 9 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Last Entry Every Day is 3:30 P.M.

Closed New Year's Day, Easter,

Thanksgiving, Christmas Day

Newsletter

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Your comments are welcomed.

From the Chairman's Desk

Dave Murray, Deputy Chairman, BOD

The First World War, which progressively began in late July 1914 when Austria-Hungary declared war on the nation of Serbia, was the first truly global war. Most major European countries rapidly became embroiled within the first month, with other nations around the world joining the conflict in the ensuing four years, including the US, which declared war on the Central Powers (essentially Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey) in April 1917.

No one has ever been able to compile an exact count but, between August 1914 and November 1918, close to 10 million soldiers and 7 million civilians perished as a direct result of military actions and the disease epidemics that the war spread. Monarchies toppled in many European countries and political extremists, who took the reins of power in Russia and Germany as a direct result of the First Global War between 1917 and 1933, fostered political and military events that led directly to the Second Global World War in 1939.

2014 marks the centennial of the start of World War I. Combat Air Museum is planning to commemorate the conflict with new exhibits and an educational series of lectures and films, in direct co-operation with the University of Kansas, the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library, Kansas National Guard Museum, the Topeka Cemetery, and other educational institutions in Leavenworth, Wichita, and Manhattan. We are also hoping to get some college students from KU and Washburn University involved in helping with design and construction of three exhibits. The end game is to educate local high school and university students in the history of WWI, while additionally educating a wider audience of the general public and attracting more visitors to the Museum.

A new permanent exhibit case (code-named Grid) will be on display

from March 2014 onwards, showing the development of aircraft from the first powered flight by the Wright Flyer in December 1903 to the state of military aviation by the end of the War in November 1918. Grid will track technological developments in airframe structures, engines, armaments and tactics/techniques across these first 15 years of powered flight.

The second exhibit/diorama (code-named Aerodrome) will be designed by **Stu Entz** and constructed around the Jenny airframe, outside of the Conference Room in hangar 602. Stu and his team are planning to create a typical WWI airfield scene, complete with mannequins, uniforms and artifacts from the period.

The third exhibit, to be placed along the north wall of Hangar 602, (code-named Sandbag), will be under the direction of **Tad Pritchett**. Tad plans to change the exhibit on an annual basis, featuring some major event from the War, one hundred years before. The first effort will be to depict the Christmas Truce, a scattered event that took place in parts of the Western Front between elements of Bavarian and British forces on Christmas Day, 1914. On that day some opposing trench-line soldiers laid down their weapons and congregated in No Man's Land, to swap Christmas "presents," with some forces participating in impromptu games of soccer and the singing of Christmas carols. The soldiers also used this "truce period" to safely gather up and bury their dead left lying in No Man's Land.

A planning committee has met on a monthly basis since last October, to plan the exhibits and plot the series of lectures. The team consists of **Tad Pritchett (Chair)**, **Stu Entz**, **Sue Ann Seel**, **Danny San Romani**, **Dick Trupp** and myself from CAM, **David Coleman** from the Topeka Public Library, **Doug Jacobs** from the National Guard Museum, **San-**

Guest speaker for our next Membership Luncheon

Combat Air Museum member **Tom Gorrell** is our guest speaker for the February Membership Luncheon. Tom is a scuba diver, and he will be talking about one of his diving adventures. He dove on World War II wrecks of Japanese ships at Truk Lagoon, known to divers around the world as the "Ghost Fleet."

Truk was the largest Japanese anchorage outside of Tokyo and considered by naval planners to be the Japanese equivalent of Pearl Harbor. In order for success of the island hopping strategy of US forces in the Pacific, Truk had to be neutralized.

In early 1944, US Rear Admiral Marc Mitscher, commander of carrier Task Force 58, launched Operation Hailstone against Truk. The attack lasted for three days, and sank a dozen Japanese warships, over 30 merchant vessels, and destroyed some 275 Japanese aircraft.

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Learn more
about the
Combat Air Museum at
www.combatairmuseum.org

In Memoriam
Louise Hamilton

Member 5183
December 5, 2013
Topeka, Kansas

dra Reddish (WWI researcher from Kansas City), **Deb Goodrich** from the Shawnee County Historical Society and Friends of the Topeka Cemetery, **Jennifer Duhamel** from Kansas University, and **Jay Price** from Wichita State University.

Sue Ann Seel and Deb Goodrich will be leading the publicity efforts to gain exposure in the local area media markets with their creative writing and contacts with the press. We will also be inviting a couple of Topeka Capital

2014 Events

February

- 1 - Boy Scouts Aviation Merit Badge Class
- 10 - Membership Luncheon
- Diving on WWII Japanese Wrecks with Tom Gorrell

March

- 17-20 - Young Aviators Education Class

April

- 14 - Membership Luncheon
- History Day Presentations
- with Seaman High School Students
- 20 - Museum closed, Easter Sunday
- 26 - Annual Celebrity Pancake Feed

June

- 2-5 - Young Aviators Education Class
- 9 - Membership Luncheon
- Wright Flyer Machine
- with Professor Fredrick J. Schieszer

July

- 7-10 - Young Aviators Education Class

August

- 4-7 - Young Aviators Education Class
- 11 - Membership Luncheon

NOTE: Will be held at Museum of Kansas National Guard

The Kansas National Guard Museum with Big. Gen. Ed Gerhardt (Ret) and Lt. Col. Doug Jacobs (Ret)

September

- 27 - 10th Annual Winged Foot 5K/10K Run

October

- 13 - Membership Luncheon
- with Officers of the US Army
- Command and General Staff College

November

- 27 - Museum Closed, Thanksgiving Day

December

- 8 - History of the Citizen
- Potawatomie Nation
- with Col. Jon Boursaw (Ret)
- 25 - Museum closed, Christmas Day

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Journal reporters to join the committee, hoping, of course, to get some publicity for the project in the newspaper.

We are looking for more helping hands to construct and design the three exhibits, and this is your invitation to contact Tad directly, or via our Office Manager, Deloris Zink at 785-862-3303, to volunteer for "induction to World War One." Please join us. We need all the help we can get with this exciting new endeavor for the Museum.

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Learning some history of the Hueys in our collection

One of the easiest aircraft acquisitions made by Combat Air Museum was the Bell UH-1H Iroquois helicopter, better known as a "Huey," serial number 65-09617, currently in our collection. We acquired the aircraft on November 12, 1995, delivered directly from the Kansas Army National Guard, 108th Aviation Regiment, directly to the south of our museum.

Prior to its delivery, certain parts, components and assemblies were removed from the helicopter per military directives. We have a copy of a military message in the Huey's files from October 1995 that directed the National Guard to remove the aircraft data plate and transfer it and the helicopter's historical log books to ATCOM (US Army Aviation and Troop Command). ATCOM no longer exists.

It was absorbed into the US Army Aviation and Missile Command in 1997. So, other than knowing 65-09617 served with the Kansas Army National Guard, we had no other history of the helicopter. In 2011, we learned a bit more of the Huey's history.

Mr. Nathan Hershley of Weston, Missouri, contacted CAM via email requesting information about the Hueys in our collection. He was working on a writing/photography project of individual helicopters displayed in museums or as memorials. We provided Mr. Hershley with our two Hueys' serial numbers and what history we knew of them. His response showed that both our Hueys had combat service during the Vietnam War.

UH-1H, s/n 65-09617, was originally built as an UH-1D,

Above: A UH-1D/H in Outlaw markings at Battleship Memorial Park, Mobile Alabama - Internet photo

and served with the 175th Assault Helicopter Company in Vietnam. Information provided by Mr. Hershey, including websites, revealed that 65-09617 was involved in a combat rescue mission on April 29, 1969.

The account of this rescue is condensed from an Internet article written by **Mr. Bill Rutledge**, titled **Battle out of Moc Hoa, 28 April 1969, at the Cambodian Border**. Mr. Rutledge was a door gunner on US Navy Huey gunships flown by Helicopter Attack (Light) Squadron Three (HAL-3), the Seawolves. The Navy Huey gunships involved in this battle were Bell UH-1B Iroquois versions, referred to as "short hull." Their cabins were physically shorter than those of an UH-1D. The Hueys flown by HAL-3 in April 1969 were transfers from the US Army.

On the morning of April 28, 1969, two Seawolf Huey gunships from HAL-3, Detachment 3, were refueling at their base at Moc Hoa, South Vietnam, after a reconnaissance mission. En route to Moc Hoa, the Hueys asked their tactical operations center for targets. A US Army spotter plane responded that he had a target consisting of numerous abandoned sampans at a major infiltration route on the Cambodian border. The lead Huey was Huey number 305, call sign Seawolf 38. The trail aircraft was Huey number 320, call sign Seawolf 37. Aircraft 305 carried a crew of five: pilot, copilot, two gunners, and a trainee gunner. Aircraft 320 carried a crew of four: pilot, copilot, and two gunners.

After refueling, the two Hueys flew eight to ten miles northwest of Moc Hoa to the target area, arriving at 10 a.m. The target area was spread over a large area consisting of several large tree lines and a canal with the sampans, right alongside the border with Cambodia. On the Cambodian side were two National Police outposts that were supposed to be neutral.

Seawolf 38 initiated an attack on the sampans. Seawolf 37 covered the lead gunship as they flew attack runs against these targets. Both Hueys had four external mounted M-60 flex guns, and the door gunners had hand-held M-60s. On pullout after the fourth attack run, Seawolf 38 started taking heavy fire from tree lines with several rounds hitting the cabin and cockpit. Breaking hard right, Seawolf 38 relayed the enemy firing positions to the trail gunship, and it also came under heavy fire. It was hit, and its pilot radioed that fact and that they were going down. The door gunners were seen dumping rocket pods and boxes of ammunition to lighten the load for impact. Fire was seen coming from the Huey just before or on impact. The tail hit first as the gunship became engulfed in flames, crashing just across the border in Cambodia.

Seawolf 38 called a May Day over its radio as it provided gunfire to protect the downed Huey, all the while taking heavy gunfire itself from the ground. At this time

the lead gunship also took a disabling hit and called a second May Day to broadcast their coordinates. Seawolf 38 made a forced landing in a field 40 to 50 meters from the burning wreckage of aircraft 320. The crew exited the Huey and set up a defensive perimeter around their gunship. Enemy fire came from positions in two tree lines and was intense and hitting the downed Huey. When one of the crew tried to shift positions, the fire increased. While returning fire, LCDR James Keyes, copilot, and Petty Officer Lloyd Williams, crew chief, saw a crewman moving around in the burning wreckage of Huey 320. He was Airman George Page, and he was in flames from the waist down. Under heavy fire, Petty Officer Williams ran with his M60 machine gun to 320 and grabbed Airman Page, pulling him away from the aircraft and cutting off his burning clothing. Still receiving heavy fire and with burned hands, Petty Officer Williams tried to make his way around the burning aircraft. Rockets and ammunition were exploding as he tried to locate and rescue any of the other crew in 320. He was driven back by the intense flames and exploding munitions and could not locate any others. Leaving his M-60, he grabbed Airman Page and carried him back about half the distance to Huey 305 until he had to put Page down due to the incoming fire. Petty Officer Williams then ran to 305 to get morphine and others to help bring Page the rest of the way back. The rest of the crew of 305 had been trying to keep the enemy down as best they could while Petty Officer Williams was at Huey 320. One of the door gunners, Airman Charles Larson, had been wounded but continued firing.

LCDR Keyes had been on the radio calling for help, and Outlaw 29, an Army Huey from the 175th Assault Helicopter Company, picked up the call and was inbound to the battle. Reviewing the US Army and US Navy documents on the Internet, the former about UH-1D 65-09617, and the latter about the battle, we concluded Outlaw 29 was our Huey. The tie-in fact among the documents is the name LTJG Joseph Felder Hart that appears in both the Army and Navy records. The description of the battle continues.

On the battlefield, Petty Officer Williams wanted to go out again to get Airman Page but was ordered to stay in place because Outlaw 29 was inbound, and at that time appeared on scene. It came in low and fast, encountering the same heavy ground fire as the two Navy Hueys. Outlaw 29 carried a crew of four: pilot, copilot, and two gunners. This larger Huey was know as a "slick." Although it was armed, it was not a gunship. Its weapons were those carried by the two door gunners.

Outlaw 29 landed near Airman Page taking hits from the enemy gunfire. Crew Chief/Gunner, Specialist 4 Jack

"The Hueys," con't. on Page 6



The Bell UH-1H in our collection, aka Outlaw 29

"The Hueys," con't. from Page 5

Gilmore, left Outlaw 29 to get Page and was wounded in the wrist and abdomen. Gunner, Specialist 4 Donald Van Dyke, was firing from the helicopter and was hit in the upper right leg. Gilmore succeeded in getting Page aboard, and both wounded Gunners began firing on the enemy who was now shooting from the area to the rear of Huey 305.

Outlaw 29 lifted, turned, and made its way to the surviving Navy crewmen. The wounded Airman Larsen was loaded first, followed by Airman Dennis Miley and Petty Officer Williams. LCDR Keyes and LTJG Joseph Hart, pilot of 305, then got aboard. Petty Officer Williams and Airman Miley started to work on Airman Larsen's wound, who refused help saying the others needed it more than him. The two then helped Specialist 4 Van Dyke with his wound, while LTJG Hart worked on the wounded Crew Chief Gilmore who was still firing. As Outlaw 29 lifted off LTJG Hart was hit by an enemy round that killed him instantly.

Clearing the kill zone under heavy fire, Army Warrant Officer 1 Dennis Iannazzo piloted Outlaw 29 back across the border into Vietnam and to Moc Hoa, delivering the wounded to awaiting ambulances. When checked, no one could believe Outlaw 29 was still flying with damage to its airframe, engine, transmission, flight controls, and a large hole in the lower left fuel cell pouring out fuel.

Airman George Page, badly burned in the crash of Huey 320, was airlifted to the United States and died of his wounds in Oak Knoll Hospital, Oakland, California, six weeks after the battle. Of the remaining crew of Huey 320, the remains of LTJG Castle and Petty Officer Schafner were recovered, identified, and returned to the United States about 10 months after the battle. The remains of LTJG Reardon were recovered in 2000 and positively identified in 2003.

Documents provided from Cambodian Prince Sihanouk after the battle stated the Seawolves were shot down by Royal Cambodian Forces one mile inside Cambodia when the Seawolf fire team over flew the border. One Seawolf survivor disputes that they were shot down by the Cambodians, relating they were shot up and going down from the fire at the border not from the Cambodian Outpost.

An incident report on US Army Helicopter UH-1D, serial number 65-09617, describes damage incurred to the helicopter during a Combat incident, specifically a Rescue and Recovery mission for Rescue of Persons. The report shows two casualties wounded in action. These would be the Army door gunners. It also lists L/JG [sic] HART JOSEPH FELDER KIA. The incident took place 04/29/1969. Until proven otherwise, we consider 65-09617 to be Outlaw 29.

With this account, we acquired one more piece of history about the UH-1H in our collection. To be sure, there is more history out there for this helicopter. Bell Helicopter

The toll of this battle included:

Lead Aircraft: Seawolf 38,
aircraft 305, US Navy, HAL-3
- shot down

Pilot/Fire Team Leader -
LTJG Joseph Hart; Killed in Action
aboard Outlaw 29
on rescue

Copilot - LCDR James Keyes
Crew Chief/Gunner -
ADJ 1 Lloyd Williams;
Wounded in Action
Gunner - Airman Charles
Larson; Wounded in Action
Gunner Trainee - Airman
Dennis Miley

Trail Aircraft: Seawolf 37,
aircraft 320, US Navy,
HAL-3 - shot down
Pilot/Aircraft Commander
- LTJG Reardon;

Killed in Action
Copilot - LTJG Hal Castle;
Killed in Action
Crew Chief/Gunner - AO3
Mike Schafernocker;
Killed in Action
Gunner - Airman
George Page;
Wounded in Action,
died of wounds

Rescue Aircraft: Outlaw 29,
US Army, 175th AHC -
serious damage

Pilot - WO1 Dennis Iannazzo
Copilot - WO1 Mike Boden
Crew Chief/Gunner - SP4
Jack Gilmore; Wounded in Action
Gunner - SP4 Donald Van
Dyke; Wounded in Action

delivered the Huey to the US Army in January 1966,
and it served some 29 years. Perhaps as time goes
on, other records will surface to tell more of its story.

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"Surviving," con't. from Page 1

During the Vietnam War, then Captain Locher was assigned to the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron, the *Triple Nickels*, of the 432nd Tactical Reconnaissance Wing at Udorn, Thailand. There were two squadrons of F-4D Phantoms and one squadron of RF-4Cs in the Wing. Locher flew in the back seat of the F-4Ds as a Weapon Systems Officer (WSO).

Colonel Locher saw his first MiG fighter, a MiG-21, in December 1971. He said F-4s of the 555th worked with Forward Air Controller (FAC) aircraft and sometimes escorted AC-119 and AC-130 gunships. He flew missions as an FAC in the F-4, as well as flying on bombing missions. He said they flew both day and nighttime missions. When they flew with the gunships, the F-4s provided Combat Air Patrol (CAP) against possible MiG fighters during the usually four-hour long missions. Locher said a flight from Udorn, Thailand, to Hanoi, North Vietnam, was about the same distance as flying a mission from Topeka to St. Louis. Captain Locher and his pilot, Major Robert "Bob" Lodge, shot down their first MiG fighter, a MiG-21, on a night mission on February 21, 1972

Haiphong harbor in North Vietnam was mined on May 8, 1972. MiG activity notably increased that day, and the team of Captain Locher and Major Lodge shot down their second MiG-21. The following day, May 9, Locher flew a FAC mission.

On May 10, 1972, a concerted bombing effort was made against the Paul Doumer railroad and highway bridge on the northeast side of Hanoi, North Vietnam, and the Yen Vien railway marshaling yards, also near Hanoi. Captain Locher and Major Lodge were paired again that day and assigned lead of a CAP with three other F-4s to escort the aircraft of the strike package. Colonel Locher said the attacking force air refueled over southern Laos.

The strike package consisted of thirty-four F-4s carrying laser-guided bombs against the targets. A laser designator was mounted in the back seat of one F-4 in each flight of four Phantoms. The F-4s with the designator flew in a left hand circle, and the back seater had to light the target with the laser as a guide for the bombs.

The time over the target was scheduled for 10 a.m. About 9:50 a.m. MiG-21 fighters were committed to oppose the strike package, and there were flights of MiG-21s reported in the air. The strike package's approach to the target was at 500 to 600 feet above the ground before they gained altitude to avoid SA-2 surface to air (SAM) missiles.

When the MiG-21s came within range of the CAP the Phantoms engaged with air-to-air missiles. Colonel Locher said they (Locher and Lodge) fired a Sparrow missile at 12 miles range, but the warhead malfunctioned. They fired a second Sparrow at 7 miles and hit a MiG-21. The number 2 F-4 in the flight fired against another MiG-

"Surviving," con't. on Page 8

"Surviving," con't. from Page 7

21, scoring a hit, and the numbers 3 and 4 F-4s took on another four MiG-21s. Locher locked on to a second MiG-21 and planned to fire a Falcon missile. (The Colonel said they were unreliable). Their F-4 was climbing to the northeast at the time. Colonel Locher said that a flight of three MiG-19s had taken off after the flights of MiG-21s and had just jumped into the flight. He remembered the number 2 F-4 saying, "Lead, break right," and then what felt like a mid-air collision. MiG-19 cannon fire had hit the right engine of their Phantom.

Locher told his pilot to turn to the southwest. The Phantom lost all hydraulics pressure, and Major Lodge had no control. The left engine of the F-4 was still working, but fire was starting to come through the firewall, and the cockpits were filling with smoke.

Colonel Locher said he ejected at about 5,000 feet. Major Lodge did not request to go and told Locher to leave. He remembered the cool air after ejecting, and then remembered he was only some 45 kilometers from Hanoi, northwest of the city. As he descended in his parachute he saw a fireball on the side of a mountain, later determined to be his F-4. Colonel Locher said it took about 45 seconds from the moment he ejected to when he landed in some trees on a very steep slope. His position was between the Red River and northwest of a railroad. He told us that too many US rescue helicopters had been lost in 1967 [presumably over North Vietnam], and he knew he had to move out of this area on his own. His choices were to go west to the Red River or go east and try to get to the Gulf of Tonkin.

The remainder of the F-4 CAP flight flew away. Unknown to Locher at the time, Major Robert Lodge did not survive the shoot down, and as no one else in the other Phantoms saw Locher's parachute, he was presumed killed in the crash.

Captain Locher's seat pan was snagged, and he had difficulty moving. He could not make his hands and fingers work to open the zippers on his rucksack and get out his water. He gathered things he felt he did not need and "kicked stuff" downhill toward the crash site to make the enemy think he had gone that way. He went down southeast about 50 yards, then turned to the northwest and went that direction about 100 yards. Colonel Locher said he then just laid down and sucked in air. He thought he was probably in shock and can remember feeling winded, very winded. After getting some air, he calmed himself and was in control of his body and senses.

Captain Locher hid in a bush and at some point heard voices. He thought they were coming straight at him, but he was not found. There seemed to be four or five people moving up and down the hill on the side opposite from him. He waited until dark and moved west a small distance. He did not get much sleep.

At first light men, women and children came up the hill

looking for him. They beat the bushes all morning on the other side of the ridge line. Colonel Locher said two kids came close to his hiding, rested, and left. After dark, he moved about another one-quarter mile down the hill. He was able to get two bags of water out of a banana plant.

The next morning brought heavy rain. Captain Locher collected water from the leaves of elephant ears plants, and drank and drank. People began searching for him again about 10 a.m. Using the rain as cover, he made good time in the daylight. The people looked for him for a period of time, then went to work in the fields. Colonel Locher said that he realized he had made one big circle, and that reminded him to use his compass.

Captain Locher was making good time on the fourth day when he saw some bushes moving. He thought it was a kid who found him out, but it was a big monitor lizard. He tried shooing off the lizard, and it eventually went its own way.

Colonel Locher then provided some general background material about the first few days and his situation. He called with his radio beacon when he was first shot down. He had two radios and four spare batteries. He told us he stayed off the radio as he did not want to give away his position. Locher knew he had to travel some 90 miles to the southwest to get to a rescue area. There were ant hills in the area where he was initially hiding. Colonel Locher said black ants were friendly, red ants were not. He also said there was a lot of bioluminescence in the jungle.

Water was not a problem, but food was. The first seven days were very hot, and food was not that big a deal. He did very much need the water, though. Days seven through fourteen were the worst for food. He said he would dream about meals. After the fourteenth day he could turn on or off the thoughts about food. As time went on, he did become weaker and lost 30 pounds.

Colonel Locher said that generally, he stayed off trails. He knew he was behind on time and had to pick up the pace. His goal was to get to the Red River and that meant he had some 60 miles to go. During the first seven days people started looking for him about two hours before daylight.

Day 13 almost proved to be an unlucky one when Captain Locher was walking during early daytime and nearly walked into a village. He saw traces of people's footprints and lay down and covered himself with leaves and brush. It was around 7 a.m. He saw two kids and could hear the sounds of pots and pans from the village. About 11 a.m. an adult male passed behind him about 100 yards away. Captain Locher observed the village people eat lunch, take an hour-and-a-half nap, then go back to work or farming. While still under cover, Locher felt someone cross his right thigh. A kid went by, then he heard more noise and voices close by. The kid ran into the village, and then came back with another, older boy. Locher thought it was over for him. What happened was the younger boy, with another boy, were trying to herd a water buffalo into the village.

The buffalo stopped beside Locher and would not move. The Colonel thought perhaps the animal smelled him or somehow sensed his presence. With the help of the older boy, the three boys got the water buffalo moving again. The buffalo had been standing on a sapling, and that was what was pressing on Locher's thigh.

Captain Locher's position was still secure. After dinner, two boys came out from the village and came nearby to smoke cigarettes, then returned. After everyone else went to bed, Captain Locher came out from his cover and headed back up to the ridge line. The close calls and associated thinking that his capture was imminent were the mind games he dealt with. He said his mind could be his worst enemy psychologically or it could be his best friend psychologically.

Colonel Locher said he still had his life preservers. His intent was to get to the Red River and then use the preservers to float down the river to the rescue area. Doing this meant he would have to drift through Hanoi.

Circumstances changed for Captain Locher on May 31st. It had rained all night, and he suffered some hypothermia. He woke up late, about 9:30 a.m., and people were working down below in fields. In the distance he saw the smoke trails of two SAMs from near the Yen Bai MiG base. That meant US or Allied aircraft were in the air. Locher had earlier decided he would not use his radio until he could positively see a US aircraft.

The following day, US aircraft were in the area again. Locher keyed his radio beacon and transmitted by voice the call sign of his aircraft the day he was shot down, *Oyster One Bravo*. He requested that anyone hearing his transmission shift to the guard frequency. F-4 pilots picked up his transmission, and Locher made voice contact with one of the pilots. About five minutes later, the F-4 pilot said contact was made with *King*, a call sign for a C-130 Hercules command aircraft. The pilot said *Sandys* and *Jolly Greens* were on their way. A *Sandy* was a Douglas A-1 *Skyraider*, a large, single-propeller ground-attack aircraft developed too late in World War II to see action, but had certainly earned it keep in Korea and now Vietnam.

The *Jolly Greens* were Sikorsky HH-53 heavy lift transport helicopters modified for combat search and rescue.

They were dubbed *Super Jolly Green Giant* and replaced the smaller HH-3E *Jolly Green Giants* used earlier in the war for CSAR.

Colonel Locher told us there was genuine concern on the parts of both rescuers and himself about his radio call. He had been downed on May 10, and now, on June 1, he was making his first voice contact with friendly forces. He was presumed dead. From the rescuer's view, the questions were, "Was it really him on the radio?" If it was, "Did someone have a gun to his head?" The possibility of an ambush was very real. From Locher's view, he was concerned about the rescue force flying into a hot area, and he was also worried about the force drawing attention



Colonel Roger Locher, USAF (Ret)
- Sue Ann Seel
photographer

to his location, but he did not say not to come.

A pilot in one of the *Sandys* asked Locher an authenticator question. Colonel Locher said he got it right, but it was an easy one. Rescue forces still thought he was a fake. As the *Sandys* entered the area they encountered heavy antiaircraft fire. Locher could see this, and he radioed to them where he was in respect to their position. A MiG was in the vicinity and adding to the problem was a low fuel state

in the helicopters. The rescue was called off for the day.

Colonel Locher told us recorders in the aircraft recorded his voice transmissions and these were listened to back at the US base(s). Personnel determined the voice on the recordings belonged to Locher. That still did not tell them if he was evading or captured. That evening, **General John Vogt**, commander of the Seventh Air Force, canceled all planned missions over North Vietnam for the next day and directed all forces be diverted for the rescue of Captain Locher. The rescue mission would total nearly 120 aircraft including the CSAR helicopters, their A-1 escorts, F-4 Phantoms, F-105G Wild Weasel fighter-bombers, EB-66 electronic jamming aircraft, an HC-130 command aircraft, and KC-135 refueling aircraft.

The rescue force went in the next morning, June 2. It included four CSAR helicopters. One of them had a transmission chip light (a warning light that the transmission may be failing and making metal.) This helicopter was carrying special gear. Colonel Locher said it took two bus loads of mechanics to successfully get the helicopter out of a rice paddy and back to base for repairs.

The C-130 command plane and its teams were ordered to launch out of Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, commonly referred to as "Naked Fanny." The jets were in the rescue/target area, staying out of missile range.

Captain Locher sat and waited. There was no radio traffic. The North Vietnamese farmers were working below. Then, twelve F-4 Phantoms attacked the Yen Bai airfield. As the attack took place Locher received a radio transmission with another authenticator question. However, this one was not one of the questions he had put on his personal list. The caller was **Ron Smith**, one of the A-1 *Sandy* pilots.

Smith: "What's Kites?"

Locher (after a confused pause): "A place to drink beer."

Smith: "What?"

Locher: "Beer!"

Smith: "Sounds like you're the one I want."

Locher: "Damned right I'm the one you want."

"Surviving," con't. on Page 10

"Surviving," con't. from Page 9

Kites (Kites Bar and Grill) was (and still is) an establishment in an area of Manhattan, Kansas, known as "Aggieville," popular with Kansas State students. A member of the 555th Squadron knew Locher had gone to Kansas State and figured he would know what Kites was. It was an impromptu authenticator made up to ensure that it was really Captain Locher on the ground and that he was not under duress.

Locher called and gave a better idea where he was. He was told to hold his radio key down. He waited for the sound of the incoming helicopters but heard nothing. Locher called again and told the rescue force to go back to where they had been shot at the previous day, and he would guide them in. The response was, "Thanks a lot, buddy," but the *Sandys* complied. They took some anti-aircraft fire and gave return fire. Captain Locher gave them his location in relation to where they were. They replied, "OK" and left.

Colonel Locher said the air raid siren stopped. People continued working in the fields, and then four *Sandys* overflowed him and went by. He got out his signal mirror and attracted the attention of the fourth *Sandy*. One of the pilots radioed that he had a *Jolly* inbound. **Captain Dale Stovall** piloted his HH-53 right over Captain Locher. Locher called this fact on his radio and hit the helicopter with his signal mirror. The *Jolly* returned and lowered a device known as a static or jungle penetrator to the ground. The penetrator was a device pointed on its bottom that had flat arms folded up against its body so it could penetrate a jungle canopy. The person being rescued unfolded the arms and sat on them while holding onto the body of the penetrator while riding this "seat" up to the helicopter as the cable was reeled in. Until Locher actually got onto the helicopter's rescue hoist there was still some concern this was all an ambush in waiting.

Colonel Locher said he was winched up to the helicopter and the cable slacked a little to bring him inside the cabin. He said a six foot, six inch PJ (Pararescue Jumper) pulled him in and threw him down. Another PJ jammed a can of cookies against him, a care package from home. Colonel Locher said he immediately put the cookies in his radio pouches in case they were shot down again.

To clear the area, Captain Stovall had to fly to the north and then west to get around the SAM missile sites. Once that was done, the helicopter headed southwest. It took one-and-a-half hours to get out of North Vietnam, and the *Jolly* needed fuel. They successfully hooked up to a C-130 with a hose and drogue system for an air-to-air refueling. The helicopter flew on and landed at Udorn, Locher's home base. Despite the proximity of the Yen Bai MiG airfield only 5 miles away and its well-developed anti-aircraft defenses, there were no losses during Captain Locher's rescue.

Colonel Locher said the bottom line was he was rescued by people who intentionally went into harm's way to rescue him. He told us by all rights he should have been a POW for 10 months. He also said people still send him tapes of the rescue operation.

In 1977 President Carter tasked Leonard F. Woodcock to lead a mission to Vietnam and Laos to determine the fate of US servicemen missing in action during the Vietnam War and to return 11 sets of recently recovered remains. One of the sets of remains was positively identified as Major Robert Lodge. Colonel Locher said he did not know if Major Lodge got out or stayed in the plane. He did not know if he was killed by North Vietnamese Army personnel. Major Lodge's remains were buried at the Air Force Academy.

Colonel Locher said that upon landing at Udorn, he was given a Coors beer. He went to the hospital where he was able to get cleaned up and shave. He said it took about a week for his gut to work right again, but he had no contamination or parasites in his blood or internally. He did not get hepatitis.

In response to a question, Colonel Locher said he did carry a Blood Chit. Basically, a Blood Chit is a notice that is carried by the military, usually aircraft personnel, that displays messages aimed at local civilians asking them to help the service member in case they are shot down.

The rescue ended combat for Captain Locher. He was ordered stateside. On the way home he stopped at the jungle school at Clark Air Force Base, Philippines, and spent three days briefing school instructors and students.

In response to questions about sleeping and eating during his evasion, Colonel Locher said it was hard to sleep on a hillside. One night he slept on flat, moist ground, and got leeches. He ate a lot of nuts and grasses. He said it was too early in the growing season to get many foods, but there was plenty of water. One day he found and ate a taro root. He said it looked like a sweet potato or ginger root. He took one bite and said it was like fishhooks were in his tongue. He put two fingers in his throat to salivate. He told us he found out later that taro root should be boiled two or three times to counteract its protein. The protein looks like a cocklebur under a microscope. He went on to say anything red - don't eat.

Another question asked was about the air space management of all the Seventh Air Force aircraft sent north to affect the rescue. Colonel Locher said that US Navy flights were sent some distance south to avoid possible collisions. This ended Colonel Locher's presentation, and **Gene Howerter** presented him with a Certificate of Appreciation.

Captain Roger Locher survived 23 days on the ground, deep in enemy territory. It was the longest duration between shoot down and rescue and the deepest penetration for a rescue during the Vietnam War. He had walked some 12 miles from where he was shot down to where he was

hoisted aboard the rescue helicopter. He was flying his 407th combat mission when shot down.

Roger Locher remained in the Air Force and later re-trained to be a pilot. In 1985-1987 he commanded the 4453rd Test and Evaluation Squadron which was responsible for testing the F-117A Nighthawk stealth fighter.

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Calendar of Events

February

Saturday February 1

Boy Scouts Aviation Merit Badge Class
Jean Wanner Education Conference Room
9am - 12pm

Monday, February 10

Membership Luncheon
Jean Wanner Education Conference Room
11:30 am
CAM member Tom Gorrell will talk about his diving on World War II Japanese shipwrecks in Truk Lagoon.

March

Monday - Thursday, March 17 - 19
Young Aviator Education Class
9 am - 12 pm

There is no Membership Luncheon in March.
The next luncheon will be Monday, April 14.

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Supporters

New Supporters

Ted & Cindy Berard
Christopher, Anne, Aria
& James Gunn
Robert D. Henderson Sr.

Renewing Supporters

Jon & Peggy Boursaw
Len Faulconer
B. Kent & Susan Garlinghouse
Ernest Hedges
Jane Holley
Bob & Mary Ann Kelly
Jim Leighton
Col Hollis Logan
David & Sharon Lybarger
Jerry Milbradt
Ray Miller
Roger & Lois Miller
Richard Painter
Don Thun
Victor Tyler
Dr. Howard & Marilyn Ward
Merton Wilch

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Visitors

During **November**
the Museum had
393 visitors
from 26 states, and
Canada
Netherlands

During **December**
we had
335 visitors
from 23 states, and
Canada
Czech Republic
Germany
Netherlands
Poland

→ → →

2014 Young Aviators Education Classes

Come and join the fun at the Combat Air Museum. "Young Aviators" Classes, for youth age eight to twelve years, will be held on the following dates in 2014:

Spring Break Class: March 17 - 20, 2014.

Summer Classes: June 2 - 5, 2014; July 7 - 10, 2014; and August 4 - 7, 2014.

The four-day courses are held from 9 am until 12:30 pm. The class fee is \$50 per student. The instruction sessions will cover a brief history of early aviation, fundamentals of flight theory, aircraft structures, including control systems and engines, weather, and how to read aviation charts and maps. There will be hands-on time in the Museum's computer Flight Simulator, the phonetic alphabet, used for aviation contact and control, and a guided tour of the museum.

Visits outside the classroom will include the 108th Aviation Regiment of the Kansas Army National Guard (H-60 Blackhawk helicopters), the 190th Air refueling Wing of the Kansas Air National Guard (KC-135 tankers), The Metropolitan Topeka Airport Authority Fire, Rescue, and Security Station (Firetrucks) and The Topeka Regional Airport Control Tower.

Enrollment in each four-day session is limited to 20 students per class, and the Museum will accept youth on a first-come-first serve basis.

For details, please call the Museum's Officer Manager (785-862-3303) between 9:30 am and 12:30 pm on weekdays. →

2013 Attendance Summary, Combat Air Museum

The following is a summary of recorded visitor attendance at Combat Air Museum for calendar year 2013. We finished the year with **9,247** visitors. The recorded visitor attendance summary:

- (1) 3,655 (39.53%) of the total were from Kansas, outside of Shawnee County.
- (2) 2,204 (23.83%) of the total were from Shawnee County.
- (3) 2,777 (30.03%) of the total were from the remaining 49 States, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.
- (4) 195 (2.11%) of the total were from 29 other countries.
- (5) 416 (4.5%) of the total were from residences not known.

NOTE: Residences of visitors during the three day Warbirds and Legends event were not recorded.

1st Quarter	1,582
2nd Quarter	2,984
3rd Quarter	3,305
4th Quarter	1,376

Museum tour-guides conducted 53 scheduled tours for a total of 1,710 visitors.

The top five states outside of Kansas were Missouri (540), Texas (270), Colorado (161), Illinois (145), and Oklahoma (123).

The top five countries were Germany (28), Canada (27), Great Britain (25), Australia (13) and Italy (9).

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