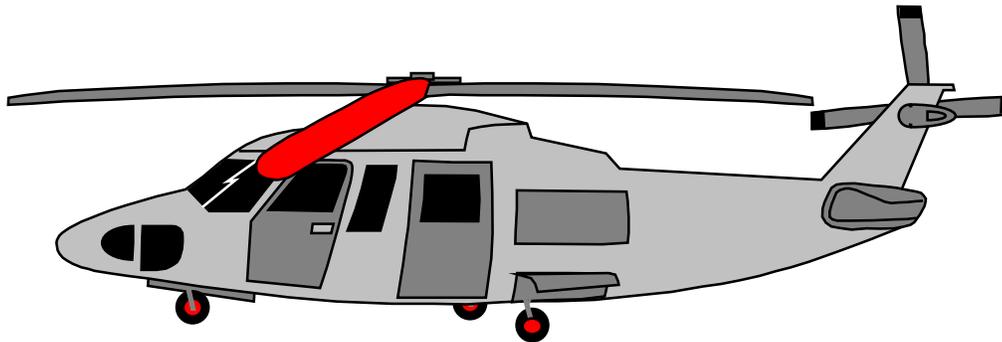


A Night to Remember

“SPECTRE 22” RESCUE

By: Sgt. Robert D. Jacobs
Gunner on the AC-130E Gunships

On March 30th 1972, while flying over Southern Laos, on my 34th Combat Mission, the aircraft was shot down. This is an account of what happened that fateful night and the rescue that followed as experienced by Sgt. Robert D. Jacobs.



16th Special Operations Squadron

This detailed account was originally written in early April of 1972 immediately after this experience happened while the events were fresh in my memory. It was copied in October of 2002 when it was transferred to the computer. The story, details and grammar were not altered, only the sentence structure was revised and some of the facts were expanded upon.

Facts

Aircraft:	AC-130E Gunship.
Aircraft Number:	69-6571 (one of only two aircraft that had the 105mm Howitzer).
My call sign:	SPEC 22 MIKE.
Location:	Area 7 in Laos, Southeast of Saravan, somewhere in the Bolovens Plateau.
Speed at Bailout:	230 plus knots per hour.
Mission Altitude:	10,500 feet.
Shot Down:	Thursday, March 30 th , 1972, approx. 2200 hours local time.
Rescued:	Good Friday, March 31 st , 1972, approximately 0930 hours local time.
Rescued by:	Air America (CIA's Air Force in Southeast Asia).
SAR	Search and Rescue
SPEC's	Code name for the AC-130 Gunships, short for Spectre
NAIL's	Code name for the OV-10 aircraft
SANDY's	Code name for the A-1E aircraft
Gomer or Charlie	The Enemy

Miscellaneous Facts

I was the first or second crewmember to bail out, (know one really knows for sure who was first to bail out, the co-pilot or me), however I was the last one to get rescued.

I had a total of 107 Combat Missions during my tour with the 16th Special Operations Squadron (SPECTRE), from 01/04/72 thru 10/18/72 and I was awarded 11 Air Medals, 3 Distinguished Flying Crosses and a Purple Heart during this time.

I received two Easter packages from home on Thursday, March 30th, 1972, one from Dad and one from Mom.

The Co-pilot and me were in the area designated "Steel Tigre East", a very hostile area for Gomers, and a very high threat area. The rest of the crew was in the area designated "Steel Tigre West", 30 to 40 miles to the west.

The majority of the Air Force Personnel, in fact a great deal of the U.S. Military Personal in Southeast Asia were working their butts off trying to get as many aircraft in the air as they could for our SAR support, (Rescue). Reportedly there were over 100 aircraft involved in this rescue. This was the largest Air Crew Rescue of the Vietnam War.

During the night I had to go to the bathroom so bad, (#1), that I went in my flight suit because I didn't want to make noise opening the zipper of my flight suit.

Thursday, March 30th, 1972

We were on a typical aerial armed reconnaissance mission flying above the “Ho Chi Minh Trail” in Southern Laos, firing at enemy supply trucks proceeding south on the trail. It was early in the night and we were only about an hour and a half into this mission. I was in the rear of the aircraft working the “Big Gun”, (105mm Howitzer). My job that particular night was to load the 105mm ammunition into the gun and to reset the azimuth and elevation after each firing. At this time we were not taking any ground fire (better known as AAA, **Anti Aircraft Artillery**), then around 2145 hours we started taking some 57mm ground fire at our 11 o’clock position at one location in the orbit. On each proceeding orbit, the ground fire was getting progressively closer. We would take between 20 to 30 rounds of 57mm on each orbit. Around the 3rd or 4th orbit we took a volley of 57mm that past so close to the aircraft that it lit up the tail and the ramp. The Lead Gunner, SSgt Mike Frost and I saw it whiz by and just joking around we tightened our parachute harnesses, (leg and chest straps) and grabbed our chest packs, (parachutes). We both laughed a little and went back to work loading the gun. Note that Gunners did not wear their parachutes while flying because it would impede them in performing their duties. If parachutes were needed, the Gunners would have to don them before they bailed out. However the Gunners did wear parachute harnesses at all times

In our next orbit the unimaginable happened, the I.O. (**Illuminator Operator**), called 11 o’clock, “**HOLD WHAT YOU GOT**”, they fanned us and there was no place to go. The aircraft took two direct hits of 57mm; the time was approximately 2200 hours. I felt them hit the aircraft and hesitated for a split second, then grabbed for my chute and put it on. Remember that my parachute harness was already tightened from a few minutes earlier. One round of 57mm struck the aircraft in the belly around the area of the nose wheel. It did not come through the floor of the aircraft, Thank God, probably because the “E” model Gunships have amour plating in their belly and the fact that the Good Lord was watching out for us. The 2nd round of 57mm struck the aircraft in the right wing between #3 and #4 engines around the area of the ECM Pods (**E**lectronic **C**ounter **M**eaure) and this immediately started a fire on the right wing. As soon as we were hit our pilot, Captain Waylon Fulk obtained a course from our navigator for home and then had a radio “check in” of all the personnel on the crew. After everyone checked in he proceeded to radio a “**MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY**”!

After I secured my chute to my harness I assisted in lifting the “re-coil cage” on the 105mm Howitzer so the other crewmembers would have clear access to the ramp when they had to exit the aircraft. At this point in time the pilot started losing some control of the aircraft and stated over the intercom that “**EVERYBODY IS CLEARED OUT ON YOUR OWN**”. I then disconnected from the interphone and ran up on the ramp to bail out and I noticed MSgt Thrasher (another Gunner), having trouble securing his chute to his harness, because he was a fairly large man. I then proceeded down the ramp and

helped him clip the one side of his chute that he was having trouble with. Note: I will never forget the look of fear in MSgt Thrasher's eyes and I'm sure that I had the same look of fear in my eyes. This took about 2 seconds to accomplish I then ran back up on the ramp. I noticed that I still had my flashlight in my mouth (gunners usually had a small flashlight in their mouth while they were working to keep their hands free. While we were in a combat zone we always flew with lights out inside and outside the aircraft). I then threw the flashlight on the floor of the aircraft. I hesitated on the ramp for a second or two because the aircraft was flying fairly straight and level at this time, but it was buffeting slightly and I could see the flames going past the ramp from the fire on the right wing. Note that all this time I was disconnected from the aircraft interphone so I could not hear anything that was going on with my crew. It appears that soon after the pilot gave the initial order that "EVERYBODY IS CLEARED OUT ON YOUR OWN" he gained some control of the aircraft and decided that everyone should stay onboard a few minutes longer to allow us to get over more friendly territory before we had to bail out. However, I did not hear this because I was off interphone during this time. By now we were flying at 230 plus knots because the pilot was trying to fly the aircraft as fast as possible to get as close to friendly territory as quickly as he could before the aircraft became uncontrollable. Plus he was also trying to blow out the fire on the right wing by flying fast. Note that the maximum bail out speed is somewhere around 150 knots.

I then jumped; I will NEVER forget that moment in time. I didn't think about jumping or Charlie on the ground. In my mind jumping was the only thing left to do, the only thing that ran thru my mind was that the aircraft was going to explode with all the fuel and ammunition on board. When I hit the slipstream it was an unbelievable shock and from this point until the time I hit the ground it is all very hazy to me. When I jumped I could feel the heat hit me from the burning right wing and I remember pulling the "D" Ring on the chute immediately after I jumped (just like they taught us in Survival School which is if your not sure of the altitude when you bail out, you should deploy your chute immediately plus you should do this in case you blacked out from the bail out). Also after we were hit we did lose altitude plus I wasn't sure how high the mountains were in the area. I remember the chute coming past my face as it opened; this is probably how I got the bad scrape on my chin and neck. I also remember the opening shock when my chute opened, but on the way down to the ground it is all very hazy to me. Floating down I do remember a feeling of pain in my crotch area from the parachute harness straps. In Survival School we called this suspended agony when they suspended us in the parachute harness for training. This meant that my parachute harness straps were not tight enough.

Gunners only had "chest pack" parachutes, which had smaller canopies than the standard "backpack" parachutes. The reason for this is that the Gunners had to work very hard while flying, loading and maintaining the guns and the larger back pack

chutes would hinder their work. As stated earlier, Gunners could not even wear their chutes while flying; they had to don them when they were needed. I must have been essentially knocked out from the opening shock of the chute plus hitting the slipstream at such a high rate of air speed. I do not remember hitting the ground or unlatching the chute from my harness. I do remember the horrible feeling that I was going to be captured right away, then tortured and killed. When I started realizing what I was doing I had one of my radios in my hand, (I kind of remember taking it out of my survival vest). I lost the earphone to the radio right away, probably because I was shaking so bad from fear. At this time I remember saying to myself that I better settle down and not panic.

I'll stop here to state I will never forget how I initially felt when I landed on the ground. I was so over taken by fright and fear that I really had to fight to keep my head together and not panic because like they told us in Survival School, PANIC KILLS! I was so scared and I was so ALONE, "God only knows how lonely and forsaken I felt". When I first hit the ground I was saying to myself "This couldn't be happening to me", but it was. I thought Charlie would capture me right away because I knew they saw the aircraft on fire and me descending in my chute. I landed in what seemed to be, because of the darkness, a level field of Bamboo, Elephant Grass and brush about 6 to 8 feet high. I didn't move from my chute because I remembered what they taught us in Survival School, and that is if you ever bail out at night you should wait until first light so you can see where you have landed and get your bearings at that time. I also let my chute lay where it was because if I were to gather it up it would have made a lot of noise. I even stayed in the same position that I landed in most of the time I was on the ground. My knees were up off the ground, a couple of pieces of bamboo were holding them up, my feet were hanging down, my back was on the ground and my head was up.

I listened up on my radio for about a minute (in Survival School they told us to wait at least 20 minutes before we started to broadcast but I wanted to talk to somebody NOW) I didn't hear anybody transmitting so I started my beeper then my call sign, although I said SPEC 21 MIKE at first instead of SPEC 22 MIKE, that's how scared I was. After I transmitted my call sign a few times SPEC 04 answered me almost immediately. Talking to SPEC 04 took some of the loneliness away and I started to calm down. I then tried to find the compass in my vest, which took awhile because I didn't want to move around and make noise. While I was looking for my compass I was trying to listen for SPEC 04's engines. At this time an F-4 was also flying around me, I could hear him off in the distance. Oh yes, the moon was 100% full which gave off lots of light and it was partly cloudy. These two factors were probably why we got hit in the first place. I could hear the F-4 off in the distance but I could not see him because of it being dark. I told this to the F-4 pilot and he then proceeded to light his after burners so I could get a fix on his position in comparison to me. By doing this he risked his safety by letting the enemy gun pits around me also see him. Well he flew almost directly

overhead so I told SPEC 04. Now they had an idea of my position. One more thing, SPEC 04 told me to switch to “C” Channel on my radio soon after I first started to transmit. The radios had “A”, “B”, “C” and “D” Channels.

SPEC 01 arrived on the scene because SPEC 04 had to RTB (**R**eturn **T**o **B**ase) because he was running short on fuel. By this time I found my compass from my Survival Vest so I started giving the position of SPEC 01 in comparison to me, but as I heard the aircraft disappear in the distance I realized I must be doing something wrong, well I was. It appeared that I was holding my compass too close to my radio and it was interrupting the readings I was getting from the radios slight magnetic field. I corrected this problem and SPEC 01 then took up a general orbit around me. Note: all during the night when I was talking on my radio I was whispering because the jungle is a very quiet place at night and I didn't want to make noise so the enemy would hear me. After I was rescued the different SPEC Pilots that were flying cover above me during the night told me that they could hardly hear me and thought I was surrounded by the enemy. To get a perfect fix on my position, SPEC 01 asked for me to initiate my strobe with the IR (**I**nfr**a** **R**ed) filter attached. I wasn't sure what pocket in my survival vest it was in so I asked SPEC 01 where it was located in the Survival Vest. I didn't want to make noise by moving around looking for it. Before they had a chance to tell me I found it in my top left vest pocket. I remember the pilot telling me to turn it on and I said it would take a little while to get it ready, which he replied “you have all the time in the world”, I then answered, “I don't want THAT much time”. I was trying to joke around a little to help me calm down and I'll have to say that it really did work because I started to settle down. The Co-pilot Andy Anderson later told me that he and the Pilot (from SPEC 01), were trying to calm me down so I wouldn't panic and when I said that “I didn't WANT that much time”, everybody on there aircraft started laughing because here they were trying to calm me down and I'm cracking jokes on the ground.

I finally got my strobe ready and turned it on, it really makes noise in a very quite jungle, which I told the Air Force when I was debriefed. Well, I bet it didn't bleep more than 3 times when they said they had me located on their I.R. Sensor (**I**nfr**a** **R**ed), which greatly helped my morale. After they had my position they were trying to contact my Co-pilot, I later found out that he was unconscious all this time. When the Co-pilot jumped he exited the aircraft from the Right Scanners Window, he was the only person to bail out from this position, which is why he was knocked out. He must have bounced along the side of the aircraft at 230 plus knots. The rest of the crew exited the aircraft from the rear ramp. After the Co-pilot and me bailed out, the rest of the crew waited a few more minutes before they bailed out. Like I stated earlier they wanted to get closer to friendly territory. SPEC 01 finally located the Co-pilot and then left the area to help locate the rest of my crew. I had two flasks of water in my flight suit that I drank from during the night, however I didn't have any food.

I thought my crew was around the same general area, however when I listened to my radio I heard the SPECS talking to the individual crewmembers, but I could not hear the crewmembers talking to the SPECS. I knew we had line of sight radios so I knew something was up. After the rescue I found out that the rest of the crew, except for the Co-pilot, were 30 to 40 miles West of our position. Also I found out later that the Rescue Squadrons were worried about the two of us because we were in the middle of a very bad area for Gomers. One of the enemy's main staging areas in Laos and the night we were shot down was the night they started the major enemy Easter offensive in 1972. If we would have been shot down a day or two earlier the Co-pilot and me would probably have been captured, tortured and killed. Remember, the enemy didn't take prisoners in Laos.

Good Friday, March 31st, 1972

During the night I continued to check in on my radio about every 30 minutes, I was trying to conserve my batteries. Twice I had trouble checking in, I mean nobody would answer me. I started to worry, I tried both of my radios, I thought they were both broken, but they weren't. Somebody finally answered me; I guess they were just too far away at times to hear my signal. During the night I heard hammering and all sorts of strange noises and voices to the East of my location. The Air Force kept F-4's flying over me all night, which gave me a feeling of security. Night passed very slowly without any action, Thank God. I must have landed fairly close to the Ho Chi Minh trail because during the night a few trucks drove past with Gomers yelling and hollering. I guess they were trying to flush us out of the brush.

Also all during the night I prayed every chance I could. I honestly believe that the Good Lord was beside me the entire time I was on the ground giving me the strength to go on and the courage not to panic. I felt as if I was talking to God one on one asking him to get me out of this situation in one piece and promising that I would be a better person from this point on. It was a feeling that I can't explain or describe. Only those that have experienced a similar situation can genuinely know what I am attempting to state.

When dawn approached I started to worry again because I couldn't hear aircraft above me and the SAR (Search And Rescue) effort was supposed to start at dawn. I also knew that my chute would be very easily seen when daylight came and I didn't feel safe without aircraft above me in case I heard Gomer again. Also when dawn arrived I noticed that two short tree stumps were keeping me from rolling down a very steep grade, almost a cliff hundreds of feet deep. To the East of me, where I heard the hammering, was a mountain ridge. When I landed during the night I thought I was on flat land. I see now why they taught us in Survival School to stay put until first light if we had to bail out at night, it pays to listen to your instructors.

During the night I used my camouflage stick that was in my survival vest to camouflage my face and hands. Shortly after dawn a bird landed within 6 inches from my face, which made me feel confident in the way I was camouflaged. I also must have been lying on an anthill because ants were all over me; it felt as if they were digging into my legs. However, I did not move for fear of making noise.

Finally around 0530/0545 hours the SAR began. They told me to switch to “D” channel on my radio at this time. The SAR started with OV-10’s (call sign of NAILS). They calmed me down right away with the way they talked to me. They told me to dig in as best I could, so I would not get hurt when they started placing “Air Strikes” around me. Then they asked me if I heard anything during the night. I told them about the construction noises and hammering that I heard to the East of my position. They went in to take a look and they told me they saw a bunch of tarps and construction going on in that location and then proceeded to destroy it. The NAILS told me to check in with them about every 15 minutes, they were going to look over the area for Gomers and try to pinpoint my location. They also said that if they should see anything suspicious and need to place a quick air strike around my location, they would rev up their engines to let me know. About 30 minutes passed before they started placing air strikes around me. F-4’s were dropping napalm and hard bombs, (500 lbs bombs) out a ways from my position and the NAILS were putting in rockets and mini gunfire from the four M-60’s in their nose, close to my position.

One of the first things they did was to drop gravel around me. Gravel is anti personnel land mines, that are kept frozen, (more than 200 degrees below zero), until they are dropped, then when they thaw out, (which happens quickly in the Southeast Asia heat), they are armed and ready. If anybody should step on or disturb them when they’re armed they explode. So after they did this I didn’t move at all. When the NAILS first started there air strikes one pilot told me that he saw a Gomer in my general location. He told me he thought he destroyed him but he wasn’t sure. At this time I got my good old 38 cal pistol ready because I thought if there were only one, I’d get him. The NAILS also stated that if any of the munitions they were dropping around me came too close to my position that I should come up beeper on my radio right away. But it all sounded beautiful the closer it got to me. This portion of the SAR air strikes went on for about 2 to 2 ½ hours.

During the night I kept saying to myself that if I ever get out of here alive I was going to quit flying, but when I saw all this action going on around me, just for me, I knew I couldn’t quit flying, I just had to stay in SPECTRE. I mean the U.S. Government stopped the entire air war to concentrate on saving 15 air crewmembers. They spent millions of dollars and most importantly all those pilots above me were risking their lives to save me. I actually had tears in my eyes at one moment during the night. This is why I couldn’t quit flying.

When the NAILS left the area, the A-1E's (SANDY's) arrived and they started hosing the entire area down with 20mm canon fire, rockets, mini guns, etc. By now they had the choppers waiting to come in. I got 3 flares ready in case they were needed, however I didn't need to use them. They rescued the Co-pilot first in one of the two choppers; because he was hurt. Then about 9:30 hours the other chopper came in for me. I told the chopper pilot that I was about 25 feet South of my chute and they spotted me almost immediately. At this time I unzipped my flight jacket and took off my harness, vest and jacket because it was all tangled up in the brush. When the chopper came in the prop wash was almost enough to knock me over. They lowered a harness that must have had dozens of straps hanging from it. I was a little concerned when I saw that mass of straps and buckles coming down, but then I remembered what they taught us in Survival School and that was to take the longest continuous strap, with the buckle in front and make a simple horse collar with it. Note that in Survival School they picked us up in a U.S.A.F. helicopter using a "Tree Penetrator" at the end of the hoist, which is a modern piece of Air Force equipment that Air America didn't have. They had a little trouble getting the harness to me because the prop wash was blowing it all over the place. I finally grabbed it and had it hooked up in about one second. I then motioned to the man in the back of the chopper to start hoisting me up, but I don't think he believed I was hooked up so fast because he waited about 5 long seconds before he started hoisting me up. That hoist up to the chopper took so long, I felt like a sitting duck for any Gomer that wanted to take a pot shot at me. As I was being hoisted up in the chopper, I saw an A-1E SANDY orbiting above me waiting for a gun or two to come up so he could silence it, but none came up, Thank God. I left all my equipment on the ground, which I shouldn't have done, but it was all tangled up in the brush and I didn't have time to untangle it

I'll never forget the feeling I had when I got aboard the Air America HH-34 Chopper. At this time I didn't realize that it was an "Air America" crew that rescued me. I had to be the happiest person in the world. I felt so happy and glad to be an American. The guy in the back of the chopper, (he looked like a Thai National), gave me a cold canteen of water and a tuna fish sandwich that really tasted out of this world. I thought I was the second one on my crew to get rescued so I felt a little guilty because I thought the rest of my crew was still on the ground. I was on "D" channel (on my radio) all morning like I was told to do so I was out of touch with the rest of my crew.

It took us about one hour and 15 minutes to get to Pakse, Laos. Pakse is a friendly Laotian outpost in the Southwest corner of Laos. We were going to fly directly to Ubon Air Force Base, Thailand (Home Base), but they didn't know how bad the Co-pilot was injured so they wanted to check him out at the hospital in Pakse, Laos first to make sure he didn't have a life threatening injury. When we landed at Pakse I did not even get a chance to thank the pilot and crew of my chopper. I thought they were going to land, but they just touched down and I jumped off and then they lifted off immediately. I felt

really bad about not thanking the crew of my chopper personally, but I really thought that they were going to land. I did salute and wave to them and they knew, without a doubt, that I was one happy Airman because I had a smile on my face from ear to ear. The Co-pilot was on the other chopper; they took him off in a stretcher. We then proceeded to the hospital, this is when some Air Force PJ's (**Para Rescue**) personnel came running up to me and told me that "Air America" had just rescued the Co-pilot and me. Air America was the CIA's (**Central Intelligence Agency's**) Air Force in Southeast Asia operating as a clandestine unit in support of the U.S. Armed Forces. Air America supposedly received \$10,000 from the U.S. government for each person they rescued, but I'm not sure about this fact, it was money well spent however if this fact is true. I also found out at this time that I was the last one on my crew to get rescued and everyone else was back at Ubon Air Base already. At first I thought they were only saying this to make me feel good and not worry, but later I found out it was true. When I got off the chopper everybody there was looking at me. I saw kids no older than 10 carrying M-16's fighting the Communists. We stayed at Pakse about 20 minutes, and then went by Air Force Jolly Greens (HH-53's) from there to Ubon Air Base, Thailand. The PJ's gave me water, apples and meat loaf on the way home.

When we landed at Ubon Air Base, around 1200/1230 hours, needless to say, it was a greeting that I'll NEVER FORGET. There must have been 300 people there and when I got off the chopper they all swarmed around me, patting me on the back and yelling. Then big Dave Burns came up to me and handed me a bottle of Champagne. Everybody there was congratulating me, the Wing Commander, Squadron Commander, all my friends, everybody. They were all happy to see the Co-pilot and me since we were the last two to get rescued. After they got the Co-pilot in the ambulance I got in and they took us to the base hospital. Everybody was treating us really nice there. I walked in the hospital carrying my bottle of Champagne. The nurses then took me in to see the rest of my crew, they were all in bed and happy to see me safe and sound and I was also happy to see them. After talking to them for a while I took a shower. They were going to keep the entire crew in the hospital over night for observation. The crew was all kidding me about being the first one out of the aircraft. We were all happy to be back home at Ubon Air Base. The Squadron Commander came in to see me and I told him that I was sorry for leaving my equipment behind especially my radios. I then took a nap in the afternoon and ate a little supper, I wasn't that hungry, just glad to be back on the Base. I did have a little headache that night. We all talked most of the evening and I thanked the pilot of SPEC 01 for doing so much for me. That night the entire squadron threw a party for us but none of us could attend because we were restricted to the hospital until morning. A few of the officers did come to the hospital with some champagne, which they gave to everyone with a glass.

The Red Cross arrived at the hospital late that evening, (a real nice older couple, probably in there 70's) and placed free emergency calls home for everyone on the crew.

I called home about 0030 that night, the connection was bad and I didn't talk to Mom for very long. I told her not to worry no matter what she heard and that I'm all right. I was told by the Air Force that every member of the crew was listed as MIA (Missing In Action) while we were on the ground in enemy territory and that the Air Force may have already sent a letter to our parents telling them we were MIA. I knew this would have really affected Mom if she ever received a letter like that. It turned out the Air Force never sent the letter, Thank God. After the phone call they gave me two sleeping pills and when I awoke the next morning we were all released from the hospital. Every one on the crew had to fill out several documents before we departed the hospital and the following day, Sunday morning (Easter), each member of the crew was debriefed on this incident. Oh yes, the I.O. and one of the Gunners were flown to the hospital at Clark A.F.B. in the Philippines because they had very severe injuries. Years later I learned that that gunner committed suicide in the mid 1990's.

In conclusion, AN EXPERIENCE THAT I'LL NEVER FORGET. What a GOOD GOOD Friday it was for my crew and me.

THE END

Note: On Thursday, August 24th, 2000 a Mr. Bruce Jachens contacted my Mom by phone, at the Johnstown, Pennsylvania address. Bruce introduced himself and stated that he was the pilot of the "Air America" H-34 helicopter that rescued me. My Mom gave him my e-mail address and the phone number of my Everett, Washington residence. Then on Sunday, August 27th, 2000, around 9pm Washington time, Bruce telephoned, I knew right away he was the pilot that rescued me because he knew about the "Tuna Fish Sandwich" as described on page 9, and only the H-34 rescue crew members would have known about that. We talked for a long time and I thanked him many times over for rescuing me. He stated that he had tried to locate me over the years because he was always curious to find out what ever happened to that young air crew member he picked up from the Laotian Jungle many years before on that fateful Friday morning of March 31st, 1972. I also learned a few new facts from Bruce about my rescue that I never realized before. Which are, when he came in for my pick up he was worried about two things. I was located near a ledge and Bruce had to hover over me in close proximity with the ridge. On a flat surface, a helicopter will benefit from a cushion of air formed from the down draft of the rotor system. The weight capacity while hovering in ground effect is far higher than hovering out of ground effect. The elevation was not terribly high, but any elevation decreases the horsepower of the Wright Cyclone Engine in the H-34. Bruce could see he would not have benefit of ground effect due to the uneven terrain. He also had another problem. My chute was right next to me and the rotor wash could cause it to billow up into the blades.

Bruce located me by contacting the Spectre Association in Fort Walton Beach, Florida and they provided him with my Moms home address and phone number. I intended to meet with Bruce at the 2000 Spectre Reunion in Fort Walton Beach, Florida in October of 2000. At the last minute however, there was a scheduling change at my place of employment and I had to attend a two-week Boeing Manufacturing Engineer/Planning School during that time. I didn't want to miss this training course because working as a contractor; Boeing doesn't like it when you fail to attend one of their training courses for any reason. I wasn't that concerned however, because I just figured that I would meet Bruce at the next reunion the following year. Sadly Bruce passed away on February 24th, 2001. So I never did get to thank him personally, although I will always remember that phone conversation and the e-mails.

I verify that all 12 of these pages were written by me and as experienced by me.

Signature of Robert D. Jacobs

Date