

Merrill Ray Lewis, Jr.

F-105 History

05-Sep-63

5231

At the 4520 CCTW at Nellis AFB NV, Class 64-C of F-105D Operational Training Course 111506E graduated 25 pilots. The course started on 10 July 1963 and was assigned to the 4526 CCTS commanded by Maj Warren Foss. The student pilots and their home bases were:

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| Col Chester L. Van Etten - Maxwell | Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr. - MacDill |
| Capt Ralph C. Balcom - George | Capt John R. Lowry - Homestead |
| Capt Rodney B. Beckman - Itazuke 8 TFW | Capt James W. Mathews - MAAG Vietnam |
| Capt Richard A. Bevan - George 355 TFW | Capt Charles W. McClarren - Itazuke 8 TFW |
| Capt Michael P. Cooper - Itazuke 8 TFW | Capt Fredrick William Shattuck, Jr. - Itazuke 8 TFW |
| Capt Bernard J. Goss - George 355 TFW | Capt Earl L. Thornton - Itazuke 8 TFW |
| Capt Carl L. Hamby - MacDill | 1Lt David S. Graben - Itazuke 8 TFW |
| Capt Frank J. Hardy - MacDill | 1Lt Richie W. Graham - Luke |
| Capt William J. Hosmer - Nellis | 1Lt Wayne R. Kimmell - Itazuke 8 TFW |
| Capt Marvin E. Jensen - George 355 TFW | 1Lt Richard L. McDougal - Luke |
| Capt William H. Joyce, Jr. - Cannon | 1Lt John H. Schaub - Itazuke 8 TFW |
| Capt Paul M. Kunichika - Hickam | 1Lt Lee B. White - Luke |
| Capt Donald E. Langwell - George 355 TFW | |

Special Order AA-29 dated 10 July 63 in History of the 4520 CCTW, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 63, AFHRA Call # K285.543: IRIS # 0488615.

31-Oct-63

5647

In October 1963, four F-105 pilots joined the 35 TFS, 8 TFW, Itazuke AB, Japan. They were:

Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr. from MacDill AFB.
Capt John E. Lowry from Homestead AFB.
1Lt Richie W. Graham from Nellis AFB.
1Lt Lee B. White also from Nellis.

8 TFW history, 1 July - 31 Dec 63, pg 117, AFHRA Call # K-WG-8-HI, IRIS # 447600.

18-Nov-64

19-Nov-64

5584

Pilots from the 35 TFS and the 80 TFS, on TDY from Yokota AB, Japan, to Korat, flew rescap and flak suppression missions during an attempt to rescue a downed F-100D pilot in the Mu Gia Pass area of Laos. The F-100 was flying escort for an RF-101 Yankee Team reconnaissance mission.

The F-100D pilot was "Ball 03", Capt William Reynolds Martin from the 613 TFS, 401 TFW on TDY to Da Nang from England AFB, LA. (CNA Loss/Damage Database, USAF loss 40, pg E16)

"Capt Martin was flying one of two F-100s escorting a Yankee Team reconnaissance mission over southern Laos when he was shot down. The aircraft was hit by AAA near Ban Senphan as Capt Martin was attacking a gun emplacement." ("Vietnam Air Losses" by Chris Hobson, pg 12)

"The first large-scale search and rescue effort of the Indochina war took place on the 18th and 19th of November, 1964. It involved Air Force, Navy, and Air America aircraft. It began when 'Ball 3' ... was shot down while attacking an enemy AAA position." ("PJs in Vietnam" by SMSgt Robert L. LaPointe, pp 67 - 68.)

"Martin's wingman called to the Air America Air Operations Center in Vientiane that ran the SAR system in Laos. The F-100 came down close to the border with North Vietnam. An Air America C-123 was first on the scene and acted as airborne controller until handing over to a USAF HU-16 Albatross from Korat. The HU-16 [Call sign Tacky 44] called for US Navy Skyraiders, which were already airborne, to fly to the area to provide defense

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suppression for the rescue forces. The Skyraiders duly arrived and attacked the gun emplacements but were themselves slightly damaged during the action." (Hobson)

"One of the Navy pilots spotted what he thought was burning wreckage in the jungle and the airborne controller called in two HH-43 Huskie rescue helicopters [call signs Pansy 88 and 89] from Nakhon Phanom. The Navy aircraft escorted the helicopters to the fire but no wreckage was seen and the helicopters returned to base. By the end of the first day, the search had involved a C-123, two Air America H-34s, 13 F-105s, eight F-100s, six Navy A-1Es, and two HH-43s, all controlled by the HU-16 airborne controller." (Hobson)

"The next morning, another HU-16 (Tacky 45) from Korat and four F-105s returned to the SAR area. At mid-morning, the aircraft commander of Tacky 45 sighted the downed pilot's parachute and the plane wreckage on a rocky outcropping only fifty yards from an AAA position. As the F-105s attacked the gun position, Tacky 45 contacted Nakhon Phanom and requested that the rescue helicopters and their T-28 propeller-driven escorts be scrambled. However, poor weather conditions kept the helicopters grounded for nearly two hours. Two Air America H-34s were already airborne, flying in Laos on an unrelated resupply mission. They volunteered to attempt a pickup of the downed pilot. The H-34s joined the four T-28s and proceeded to the scene of the SAR effort.

"Tacky 44, a second HU-16, relieved Tacky 45 as the on-scene commander and began to control the pickup attempt. After arriving at Ball 3's location, the copilot of one of the Air America choppers was lowered to the ground by hoist. He found that the flyer had apparently died of injuries sustained when he landed on the karst." (LaPointe)

The 35th squadron historian, Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr., described their part of mission this way. "Considerable 37 MM flak and small arms fire was encountered and the pilots returned the fire with 2.75" rockets and 20 MM. Other aircraft were launched and the armed cap continued until nightfall. A total of 17 combat missions were flown. Twelve 450-gallon tanks, nine 650-gal tanks, 285 rockets and 1500 (approx) rounds of 20 MM were expended. Results were unknown."

The 80th squadron historian, Capt Victor Vizcarra, described the 80th's contribution to this mission. "Captains Robert P. Taylor and Cecil W. Powell became the first 80th pilots to draw enemy fire and to expend ordnance. They were directed to the target through weather by a nearby GCI site and upon reaching VFR conditions under a 5,500 foot overcast, made two separate attacks on a firing AAA flak site. Reported results of attack from rescue aircraft in the target area were that half of the AAA site had been destroyed. Both aircraft returned with no damage."

Years later, Robert Taylor described this mission. "... I believe I led the first F-105 flight to be fired on by the Vietcong. We were on a top cover mission for an F-101 photo mission and the F-101 (sic) was shot down so we were attacking the flak sites. We dropped our wing tanks and only had rockets and cannon to go against 37-mm gun sites. They were using tracers at this time and it was a sight to behold watching the long arcing path of their ground fire. It also helped us move out of the way of their ground fire." (Robert Taylor, letter to Bauke Jan Douma, Dec 2, 1988.)

"Subsequent flights were scrambled in support of the search for the missing F-100 pilot shot down earlier in the day.

"A total of 17 combat sorties were flown with eight aircraft expending ordnance to suppress AAA fire at search and rescue aircraft.

"A message was received from General Moore the following day, extending his congratulations on the mission accomplishments on 19 Nov."

"With the loss of the F-100, Gen. Hunter Harris, Jr., the PACAF Commander, demanded a retaliatory USAF strike with napalm and CBU-2A munitions on enemy targets near Mu Gia Pass, believing their proximity to North

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Vietnam's border would enable Hanoi to 'get the message.' But Admiral Sharp, apparently sensing the unlikelihood of high administration approval, withheld Harris's request." ("USAF in Southeast Asia, Interdiction in Southern Laos 1960 - 1968", by Jacob Van Staaveren, pg 42.)

35 TFS history, 1 July - 31 Dec 64, Report of Deployment, pg 9, AFHRA Call # K-SQ-FI--35-HI, IRIS # 1026422
80 TFS history, 1 July - 31 Dec 64, AFHRA Call # K-SQ-FI-80-HI, IRIS # 1026421

15-Apr-65

4561

The 6441 TFW published a TDY order sending 36 pilots from or attached to the 35 TFS at Yokota to Osan AB Korea for nuclear alert and return. "Purpose of TDY: Participate in Directed Training Flights".

"This order becomes effective 23 April 1965 and expires 30 June 1965."

The pilots were:

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Capt William Baechle | Capt Kenneth D. Edwards | Capt Jerry N. Hoblit |
| Capt William G. Bailey | Capt Kenneth D. Furth | Capt Wayne R. Kimmell |
| Capt Robert W. Becker | Capt Thomas W. Gallagher, Jr. | Capt Joseph B. Klaumann |
| Capt Orville B. Boone, Jr. | 1Lt Richie W. Graham | Capt Merrill R. Lewis |
| Capt James T. Brown, Jr. | Capt Robert Greskowiak | Capt William D. Lockwood |
| Capt Fred Vann Cherry | Capt Carl L. Hamby | Capt John R. Lowry |
| Capt Thomas H. Curtis | Capt Charles A. Hanson | Col Maurice L. Martin |
| Capt William G. Donovan | Capt Frank J. Hardy | Capt Bobby J. Mead |
| Capt Warren L. Efting | Capt Leroy Herrman | Capt Sam P. Morgan, Jr. |
| 1Lt Richard L. Pack | Capt Robert Leland Tidwell | |
| Lt Col William R. Peters | Capt Richard A. Triebes | |
| Capt Edward T. Rock | 1Lt Miller F. West | |
| Maj Henry Shudinis | 1Lt Lee B. White | |

Temporary Duty Order - Military AF Form 626, dated 15 Apr 65 from 6441 TFW DCO received from Ed Rock 9 Aug 2005.

01-Jul-65

5564

Key personnel in the 35 TFS, 6441 TFW, Yokota AB, Japan, were:

Lt Col William R. Peters -- Commander
Maj William D. Lockwood - Operations Officer
Capt Kenneth T. Blank - Asst Operations Officer
Capt Kenneth D. Furth - Echo Flight Commander
Capt Alan K. Rutherford - Foxtrot Flight Commander
Capt Frank J. Hardy - Golf Flight Commander
Capt Warren L. Efting - Hotel Flight Commander

The squadron's attached pilots were:

Col Paul P. Douglas, Jr. - 41 AD Commander
Col Allen K. McDonald - 6441 TFW VC
Lt Col Edward D. Thomas - 5 AF Chief of Safety
Maj Henry Shudinis - 6441 TFW Ops & Training
Maj Marvin A. Wicks - 6441 TFW Flight Test Officer
Capt Robert B. Bennett - 6441 TFW Flying Safety Officer
Capt Frank A. Buchanan - 5 AF Flying Safety Officer

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Capt Bernard G. Lyons - 6441 TFW Ops and Training

The squadron's 30 line pilots were:

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|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Capt William Baechle | Capt Jerry N. Hoblit |
| Capt William G. Bailey | 1Lt Phillip J. Kelley |
| Capt Robert W. Becker | Capt Wayne R. Kimmell |
| Capt Orville B. Boone, Jr. | Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr. |
| Capt Edward R. Bracken | Capt John R. Lowry |
| Capt James T. Brown, Jr. | Maj Bobby J. Mead |
| Maj Fred V. Cherry | Capt Sam P. Morgan, Jr. |
| Capt Thomas H. Curtis | 1Lt Richard L. Pack |
| Capt William G. Donovan | Capt Robert R. Reed |
| Capt Kenneth D. Edwards | 1Lt Randolph S. Reynolds III |
| Capt Thomas W. Gallagher, Jr. | Capt Robert W. Spielman |
| 1Lt Richie W. Graham | Capt Richard A. Treibes |
| 1Lt Richard E. Guild | Capt Ralph D. Watkins |
| Capt Carl L. Hamby | 1Lt Miller F. West |
| Capt LeRoy Herrman | 1Lt Lee B. White |

35 TFS history, 1 July - 31 Dec 65, AFHRA Call # K-SQ-FI--35-HI, IRIS # 419883.

18-Apr-66

5176

The 6441 TFW selected the pilots for the squadron that became the 34 TFS to deploy to Korat. Most would come from the 36 TFS; consequently, the 36 TFS was slated to disband.

Bob Pielin from the 36 TFS, who had already flown 87 combat missions during temporary duty tours to Korat and Takhli, remembered how he helped select the pilots for the new squadron. "Fitz [Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron's Operations Officer] and I initially made out a list of 25 pilots from the Wing resources to go as 34th members. The list was bounced back from HHQ as being too overloaded in pilots with over 50 missions. They recommended 6 guys in the 0 to 20 mission category, 6 in the 21 to 40, 6 in the 41 to 60, 6 in the 61 to 80, and anyone with over 80 to go TDY." This distribution was to spread out their eventual departures from Korat as each pilot completed his 100-mission tour. Capt Pielin and Maj Fitzgerald reworked the list "... with some pronounced disapproval from those that were removed from the [original]. ... A 1.5 aircrew/aircraft ratio was authorized for 27 pilots plus Commander and Operations Officer. ... Bob Jones [Capt Robert H. Jones] was removed from the first list since he had his papers in to be discharged. When he found out about the 34th going PCS to Korat, he volunteered to go with [them] and get 100 missions before he got out. Red Dog [Lt Col Howard F. 'Red Dog' Hendricks the squadron commander] worked a 'deal', and he went TDY." (Bob Pielin e-mails, 23 Sep 2006 and 7 April 2007.)

The following list contains the positions and names of the initial twenty-nine pilots assigned to the 34 TFS. This is the revised list after Capt Pielin and Maj Fitzgerald reworked their original to provide a broader base of experience. One of the pilots, Gordon Walcott, annotated his copy of the printed list, dated 18 April 1966, with this comment: "This was the original 34th TFS crew roster when formed as an all-volunteer squadron from the 35 TFS, 36 TFS, and 80 TFS (Yokota AB, Japan)"

Commander - Lt Col Howard F. "Red Dog" Hendricks who had been commander of the 36 TFS.
Operations Officer - Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald

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| India Flight | Lima Flight |
| Flight Commander - Maj Wayne N. Whatley | Flight Commander - Capt James E. Hayes |
| Capt Robin K. Nierste | Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr. |

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Capt James I. Miholick
Capt Douglas G. Lauck
Capt Robert H. Jones
Capt Robert R. Reed

Capt Gordon M. Walcott
Capt Stanley S. Gunnensen
1Lt John Bernard Sullivan III

Juliet Flight
Flight Commander - Maj Kenneth T. Blank
Capt Carl L. Hamby
Capt Thomas H. Curtis
Capt David H. Groark
1Lt Phillip J. Kelley

Metro Flight
Flight Commander - Capt Robert D. Pielin
Capt Alan K. Rutherford
Capt Ralph D. Watkins
Capt Wayne D. Hauth
Capt Rainford "Ray" McMaster Tiffin

Kilo Flight
Flight Commander - Maj Jack R. Stresing
Capt William O. Lessard
Capt John R. Layman
Capt Rex L. Dull
Capt Clarence E. Fox
1Lt Denis D. O'Donoghue

E-mail from Monty Pharmer, 22 Sep 2006 forwarding letter to him from Lt Col (Ret) Gordon Walcott dated, 29 Jun 1988, which included a roster of 36 TFS pilots, dated 18 April 1966.

21-May-66

4956

On Saturday, 21 May 1966, an advance party of the 34 TFS deployed by C-130 from Yokota AB, Japan, to Korat RTAFB, Thailand. The C-130, "Chalk 1", took off from Yokota at 0503. The group consisted of four pilots and maintenance and administrative personnel along with maintenance equipment. The four pilots were:

Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron Operations Officer
Capt Robert D. Pielin
Capt Stanley S. Gunnensen
Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr.

Capt Lewis brought with him on the C-130 the squadron mascot, a dog he owned named "Roscoe". Roscoe was from a litter of pups originally belonging to Capt Roscoe E. "JR" Anderson from the 80 TFS who had died in an F-105D accident near Yokota on 8 September 1964.

E-mail from Lamont Pharmer, 22 Sep 2006, with attached letter to him from Bob Pielin dated 11 July 1988..

20-Jul-66

F-105D 624308 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by 85-mm AAA near the Vu Chua RR bridge (JCS 18.74). Crashed in RP-6A, North Vietnam. 21-34N 106-40E Capt Merrill Raymond Lewis, Jr. 34 TFS pilot ejected. MIA. ("Rosco's" master) Call sign: "Crab 01". Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr. flew as Crab Lead, a flight of four on a strike on Vu Chua Railroad Bridge, 12 miles NE of Bao Chiang, North Vietnam. Other members of the flight were Capt Gordon M. Walcott, Capt Stanley S. Gunnensen, and 1Lt Denis D. O'Donoghue. The flight took off from Korat at 05:52 and Maj Lewis was shot down at 07:43.

"The following is an extract from the statement by Captain Gordon M. Walcott, Crab 2: '... the flight was approaching pullup for bomb delivery as 85-mm radar-controlled guns began firing with bursts at #1's altitude. Shortly thereafter, Lead called that he had been hit and started a right climbing turn. Crab Lead jettisoned bombs and called that he was jettisoning his canopy. I observed the canopy separate from the aircraft and that fuel was streaming from the aft section. Crab Lead continued to turn to 060 and rolled out. I called Lead to turn to 090

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several times with no response. Approximately 1½ - 2 minutes later, the aircraft caught fire and porpoised. Lead ejected at approximately 4 thousand feet, 450 knots, and about 5 deg nose down. I observed the seat leave the aircraft but lost sight of the seat during it's descent. I made 3 orbits at 2 - 4 thousand feet and then descended through a scattered cloud layer and made 3 more orbits at approximately 1000 - 1500 feet. Doppler read out was 2134/10640, but I believe the position may have been at 2147/10652. There was no beeper and I could not get contact with Lead on UHF Guard... SAR was not conducted due to the location of the crash site. The area of the pilot's last known position consisted of a farming area within a flat valley and was sparsely populated". ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 2-096, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640.)

Later, Gordon Walcott recalled Lewis' loss. "I was with him when he bailed out with a fouled chute near the China border." (Gordon Walcott, letter to Monty Pharmer, 29 July 1988.)

Stan Gunnensen was element lead in Lewis' flight and recalled more details. "#1 Ray Lewis, #2 Gordy Walcott. #3 Gunnensen, #4 Denis D. O'Donoghue. We went the water route and the target was, I think, a submerged bridge on the NE road system. We were loaded with two 3,000-lb bombs. We were at medium altitude, probably about 8,000 feet because there were no SAMs in the area. A few minutes out from the target 85-mm guns were walking their rounds up #1s tail. I called it out to Ray at least twice and told him move it. He stayed straight and level. I had just started to break into him to try and break their radar lock. He was hit before I could swing my element behind him. Not sure why he didn't respond because his radio was working and he transmitted he was hit. Suspect he was concentrating on navigating since there were lots of lower broken clouds. As #3, I was having a hell of time figuring out where we were. I just knew we were about 2 min out and the target was on our nose.

"I next made a bad decision and told Gordy to escort Ray out and I took Denis on in to the target. Figured we would catch back up with them in a few minutes. Could not get to the target because of weather. On the way out Gordy said Ray had bailed out but did not separate from the seat. Do not know if you remember how well armed Ray was when he flew but he carried a 2' machete and a machine gun that I think was an Israilie Uzzi (sp?). Never looked at how he strapped that stuff on but suspect it caused him to hang up with the seat."

Capt Lewis was the owner of the mascot of the 34 TFS, the dog "Roscoe", that he had brought with him from Yokota when he had arrived at Korat on a C-130 on 20 May 1966 as one of the four F-105 pilots in the 34 TFS advance party. After Ray Lewis' loss, the pilots in the 34th continued to care for Roscoe.

"The day Ray went down I sat on the steps of our hooch with Roscoe for a long time. I swear I think that dog knew something bad had happened to Ray." (Stan Gunnensen, e-mail to Bob Pielin, 3 Oct 06.)

Captain Lewis was born 17 August 1932 in Kansas City, MO and entered the service from Indianola, Iowa. He was declared dead on 15 January 1979. His body was recovered. His name appears on the Vietnam Memorial Wall panel 09E line 48.

U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & Robert P. Taylor, former 80 TFS pilot, letter 13 Mar 1994.

20-Jul-66

6528

1Lt Denis D. O'Donoghue from the 34 TFS received the Air Medal (8th OLC) for the mission he flew as "Crab 04" when his flight lead was shot down and KIA. The members of Crab flight were:

- #1 - Capt Merrill Raymond Lewis, Jr.
- #2 - Capt Gordon M. Walcott
- #3 - Capt Stanley S. Gunnensen
- #4 - 1Lt Denis D. O'Donoghue

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Their target was the Vu Chua RR bridge (JCS 18.74) in RP-6A.

"First Lieutenant Denis D. O'Donoghue distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 pilot over Southeast Asia on 20 July 1966. On that date, as a member of a flight of four F-105s bombing a heavily defended railroad bridge, Lieutenant O'Donoghue continued to press his attack through intense flak which had downed his lead. After finding he could not strike the bridge because of adverse weather conditions, he continued still deeper into hostile territory to search out and bomb a main highway. The professional skill and airmanship displayed by Lieutenant O'Donoghue reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

Award Citation provided by Denis O'Donoghue via e-mail 6 April 2010.