



American Military Heritage Foundation

**Dedicated to preserving, in flying condition, a Vintage PV-2 Harpoon
in memory of all who fought on behalf of the United States of America**

**“What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind
of difference you want to make.”**

Jane Goodall,

primatologist, anthropologist, conservationist

October 2020

Well time continues to move on and at a much faster rate than I really like. I had this grand delusion that when I retired last October, I would have all the time I needed to accomplish all the things I had been putting off. Most of them are still

on the list of things to do. Almost every day I am reminded of what my father said after a month or so of retirement, "if he got any busier, he was going to have to hire help." Should you doubt me on this you might just check it out with Rich or Kevin. On the brighter side one should be thankful they are still able to continue doing things. However, we seem to find it easier to complain.

I would like to send a thank you to everyone who pitched in to help with the open house at KMQJ. We had not tried out anything like this before, so we were unsure of what to expect. It turned out very well and we even acquired some new members. We also learned some things that we had not thought about before. All of these will be discussed at the next BOD meeting and see how we can implement them the next time we have an open house. All in All, it was a success and we were able to raise some much-needed funds and picked up a few pointers we can use at future events.

The plane is now moved back over on the west ramp, tied down, and the D-Check is started. The D-Check is necessary to be ready for the next airshow season. It takes a lot of work and time to complete. Naturally, the more people we have come out to help the easier it goes. Therefore, if you have some time you can donate it would be appreciated. We have tried to implement some new ideas to hopefully make life during this time a bit less hectic. We have done a bit of organizing in the hangar allowing us to get to all our hardware without having to move something or climb over it. The items we are going to be using are in the front and easy to get to, like carts, air compressor, and electrical cords. We are also planning our stop time to allow us to move everything back to the hangar unload, put in order, add anything that might be needed for the next workday, and empty all the trash. We are trying to eliminate late night work, now I am not saying it will not happen. However, I will try my best to not do it. Yes, I know this sounds like a very strange concept. However, I thought it might be interesting to give it a try. For the month of October our work schedule is 9:30 until 4:00 on Wednesday and 9:00 until 5:00 on Saturday.

Well that brings you up to date on the events of the past month. If you have anything that might help either with the work on finances, please let one of the BOD know. Also, you will find another interview attached. I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed talking to the individual.

Have a great month,

Gaylon

Bill Finney CW2

United states Army



It is remarkably interesting how some of the interviews that I have had the privilege of doing come about. Probably the strangest one was in a restroom. This individual had on a Sea Bee hat. Now that is a bit like the coast Guard you just do not see them very often. From that I have learned we need to be friendly, speak to people, and show some interest in what they have done, in most cases, you will come away with a story. Now the one today takes a different road. One

of the individuals that I send the newsletter to, sent me the names of three other people she knew that would like to hear about our organization and Bill Finney was one of them. She then realized that I had served in Vietnam and informed me that Mr. Finney was an Army pilot in Vietnam. So, I contacted him, and it has only taken about a year to get together. Then on September 12th he flew down to KMQJ in his O-1 Birddog and we sat under the wing of the Harpoon and reminisced about our time in Vietnam making it very interesting to hear his story and the sort of strange road his career in the Army took.

He was drafted on July 23, 1969 sent to Ft. Knox, Kentucky. For those of you that never had the experience or privilege to enter the Army basic training program, just let me say it is a definite change to your lifestyle. The first week is pretty much taking a test or getting some sort of shot. During this week of testing Bill scored well enough allowing him to take the test for Warrant Officer flight Training, WOFT.

Basic training took place at Ft. Polk, La. Because it had the closest climate and topography to Vietnam. The WOFT was broken up into four phases A, B, C, and D.

He then journeyed to FT. Wolters, Texas for what the Army called preflight. So, this is where it helped if you already had a pilot license and could prove it. This would allow you to go fixed wing rather than helicopter. Bill had a private license and 86 hours logged.

Now it was off to Ft. Stewart, Ga. For phase A & B flight training in the T41B, Mescalero. This is a 210 HP version of a 172 including constant speed prop. They received approximately 90 hours of time in this plane. Next it was off to Ft. Rucker, Al. for phase C & D, multi engine and instrument in the T42A Beech Baron. This covered another 60 hours of flight time. After that it was over to the Birddog and another 60-hour block of time. D phase was in the Birddog learning how to operate from short unimproved fields, mostly cow pastures and sometimes we had to chase the cows off to land. We considered 1200 ft. to be a long runway, one was 700 ft. We then went into low level navigation (75' above the treetops-this was a hoot). Next was firing smoke rockets, and observation of convoy routes or possible enemy activity. We climbed to 300' for observation. the Birddog training all finished and graduation it was now necessary to sign up for three years of service from that date. Then it was off to transition school where

they trained in the U-21A which did not have all the radios and antennae on board. This made it much lighter than the RU-21D they used in Vietnam. This training lasted four weeks adding another 39 hours of flight time.

When Bill had finished all the flight training, he was sent to Ft. Huachuca, AZ. for radio research training. This covered 18 days to learn radio direction finding and transmit classified information in code. When you look at the picture of the plane you can tell it is for snooping around. Looks a bit like a porcupine.

After completing all the flight training and schools he was sent to Vietnam in December of 1970. On arriving in country, he was stationed at Nha Trang, South Vietnam and later would be moved to Long Thanh North, South Vietnam.

Some of Bill's friends told him one thing that he needed to do was stay away from Laos and Cambodia, main reason being they had been known to shoot down American planes. He looked at me, grinned and said the area he flew in was where Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam came together. So much for avoiding that area. He explained that a normal mission was about four hours. It was about one hour each way and on sight for two hours. The powers to be decided that it would help if they could stay on location longer. So, the brain powers went to work, it was decided they would land at Pleiku for fuel then back to Nha Trang. This would allow them to stay on location three hours. When he was transferred to Long Thanh North and they went back to two hours on location.

If you have been reading some of my other interviews you know I have told you that our service men will always figure out some way to at least make things interesting. They flew with a co-pilot, so the Army saw no reason for an autopilot. On one of the missions one of the crew needed to use the relief tube which is located aft in the plane. For him to get there the other individual had to move out of the way first. Now you have moved probably close to four hundred pounds aft. This will cause the nose of the plane to pitch up and if not corrected it will continue climbing. Bill turned the intercom to the two pilots only and told his co-pilot to watch the back. He let the plane continue up to almost a stall then pushed it over into a nose down attitude allowing the plane to accelerate before bringing it back to level flight. The co-pilot was laughing so hard and gasping for

air that he could not even talk. I am not going to describe what was taking place in the aft of the plane any further. It is best to just let you use your imagination.

On a more serious note they used an inertial guidance system for navigation, and it was necessary to set in place and let it totally engage before moving the plane. They were sitting on the ramp at Nha Trang with engines running waiting for the guidance to come up to speed. The area they were flying in required some fully accurate navigation because it had to be plotted on military grid charts. These charts allow for a flat earth so at some point on the globe they will overlap. Yes, if you guessed Vietnam you would be correct. While they are waiting for the guidance system to come online the co-pilot grabs the power levers kills both engines without saying a word, dives over the steel plate protecting the inertial guidance system and out the back door. At that point Bill heard the explosion and saw the smoke and dust coming up. He then started his exit skinning up a leg while getting over everything. Everybody made it out of the plane safely and to the bunker. After all clear they went back to the plane sorted everything out and completed the mission.

Bill told me that as he taxied out, they had to taxi around the mortar crater. He said that was the one time he really felt someone was looking out for him. Had the guidance system been up and ready they would have been moving and just about right where the shell hit.

On another occasion they were on a mission out of Long Thanh when he noticed the left engine was losing torque. He increased the power on it and brought the torque back up. It continued to drop little by little and each time he would move the power level forward bringing the torque back. After doing this a few times the power lever was all the way forward and the torque was still below normal. At this point he elected to end the mission early and return to base which was about 100 miles away. As he began his descent to lower altitudes the power started coming back up and it was almost normal. Then when he was about two miles out the engine quit. At that point he feathered the prop and proceeded to land. They found it was a problem in the fuel control unit.

I would like to thank Bill for allowing me to tell this story and for his time serving our country. He explained to me when we started that his career in the Army was

mundane and not overly exciting. It might also be noted that he logged 700 hours during the year he was in Vietnam. I will let you the reader decide for yourself.

