



THE MISTY EXPERIMENT

THE SECRET BATTLE FOR THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL

A NATIONAL PUBLIC TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY
FOR THE 50TH COMMEMORATION OF THE VIETNAM WAR

A COLLABORATION OF

SPIRIT PRODUCTIONS
SAN FRANCISCO

STELLAR PRODUCTIONS
LOS ANGELES



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“ Like a team of Sherlock Holmes detectives briefing one another on the progress they are making, the Misty pilots became our best source of Intelligence in North Vietnam. ”

Roger VanDyken, Misty I-3

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FOR A 4-MINUTE VIDEO TRAILER, GO TO: [HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/84280156](https://vimeo.com/84280156), PASSWORD MISTYEYES





“ A lot of Americans are tempted to see only the mistakes, the atrocities, the environmental destruction committed by the United States and South Vietnamese, but don't admit to the fact that there were two sides to this conflict and that the other side was also engaged in very aggressive and brutal behavior in order to advance its cause—the reunification of the country under Communist rule.”

Jessica Elkind, Assistant Professor
of American Foreign Relations,
Southeast Asia, SFSU

INTRODUCTION

A half-century after the end of the Vietnam War, there is still very little public consensus about what happened there, or why. With the impetus of a nationwide 50th Anniversary Commemoration, American radio and television broadcasters now plan to honor the service and sacrifice of the millions of men and women engaged in that conflict by offering diverse media programs to provide contemporary audiences with renewed clarity to the issues and meaning of that distant yet painful conflict in Southeast Asia.



The original Misty squadron. 1967

In anticipation of this national commemorative campaign, and in response to the call for *original programming content* to be scheduled on **PBS** (the Public Broadcasting Service) between 2016-2020, independent production company, **Spirit Productions**, is assembling **The Misty Experiment: The Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail**, a sixty-minute documentary about a special U.S. Air Force squadron whose pilots *volunteered* for one of the Vietnam War's most dangerous air missions—the search for enemy supply transports and anti-aircraft installations concealed within the web of trail paths and waterways collectively known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and to direct on-site rescue operations for U.S. and allied aircrews who had been shot-down while flying over the jungles of North Vietnam and Laos.

The activities of *Operation Commando Sabre*, as the mission was officially named, were classified as “top secret” during and immediately following the war. And, because its endeavors occurred in the skies over North Vietnam and Laos, far above the combat action that took place in the villages, rice-paddies and jungles seen nightly on the *Evening News*, few Americans today are aware of the U.S. Air Force squadron's distinctive service.

The engaging story of this heroic unit of airmen, and of the jobs they did, will soon be revealed to public television viewers nationwide as a way of offering a *different* perspective of the Vietnam War. In many ways, within a dark and brutal chapter of military history, theirs is a ‘success story’ that will provide veterans, their families and, even those who opposed the war, an opportunity to better appreciate the significant role of Forward Air Controllers (FACs). The documentary will enlighten American audiences about their contributions to the war effort, and to American aviation history in general, made by a little-known squadron of remarkable young airmen known only as *Misty*.





“ After being shot at hundreds of times during the day, it was always relief and satisfaction to get back to the base. I beat it for another day, I’m still alive! ”

Mick Greene, Misty 30



STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Since the Civil War when hot-air balloonists scouted enemy troop movements from above battlefield treetops, the job of **Forward Air Controllers (FACs)** during wartime has been to coordinate air-to-ground operations for reconnaissance, searches and surveillance. As helpful as aerial perspectives may have been, the balloons were always easy targets and the balloonist’s mission was often his last.

In military conflicts that followed, the *fragility* of forward air controllers remained unchanged.

Even into the Vietnam War of the 1960s, the airplanes employed for U.S. reconnaissance efforts over enemy territory was the domain of slow-moving piston-and-propeller-driven Cessna-type planes that were no match against the formidable Soviet-built anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) and surface-to-air-missiles (SAMs).

As North Vietnamese air defenses strengthened, casualties to U.S. FAC patrols increased and, as a result, the southbound movements of enemy supply trucks and troops became less observed and constrained. It became imperative for American military strategists to implement a new method of air-reconnaissance over Vietnam’s artillery-infested landscape.



SAM gun crew

The Misty Experiment: The Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail documents that urgent adjustment in U.S. strategies, and tells of the psychological and physical challenges faced by the airmen who volunteered to test tactical theories. Theirs was an uncompromising trial: To seek out, identify and impede enemy movements of supplies and artillery throughout the region, and to direct from above searches for and rescues of pilots—from all Service branches—that had been shot down by enemy fire. The Misty squadron’s reputation as “courage-under-fire warriors” grew quickly among military branches, but the perilous nature of its mission cost greatly as it suffered the War’s second-highest loss rate—23%—as 36 of the 155 volunteers were shot down, captured or imprisoned, and/or ultimately declared missing or killed in action (M.I.A. or K.I.A.).

Although the service and sacrifice of the Misty pilots remain relatively unknown to the American people today, these bold aviators performed feats that were remarkable in the annals of warfare—and did so long before the advent of laser technology, computerized drones, and precision-guided targeting.

“Maryland Public Television is very excited about your project. In our role as National Presenting Station for *The Misty Experiment: The Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail*, we will advise to ensure it falls within MPT and PBS’ technical and editorial guidelines. You have our enthusiastic permission to inform potential underwriters that we are serious about *The Misty Experiment*.”

Steven Schupak
Chief Content Officer
Maryland Public Television

- MPT directly serves a #5 Demographic Market Area that includes Maryland, Washington DC, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia and Pennsylvania.
- And as a flagship ‘entry station’ to the Public Broadcast Service’s (PBS’) National Programming Schedule, MPT will actively promote *The Misty Experiment* to more than 350 member stations across the U.S. and parts of Canada, consulting with their program directors as to the program’s carriage, scheduling, and promotion.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

In order to complete critical efforts to secure broadcast and distribution endorsements, Spirit Productions has thus far absorbed costs of development and pre-production of **The Misty Experiment**. Now, with national Public Television distribution arranged, sponsorship participation is *essential* for **The Misty Experiment: The Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail** to be fully realized and delivered to a nationwide audience.

SEEKING **\$154,000** TOTAL

Sponsorship Levels:

EXCLUSIVE
\$154,000

As the **Exclusive Sponsor**, your organization will be positioned as the lead contributor in getting **The Misty Experiment** realized and distributed.

- Receive two 15-second verbal-visual ‘billboards’ with your logo and corporate message. These acknowledgments will remain part of the program throughout its entire 3-year PBS license time.
- Publicity materials will include your company’s name, logo and role as the program’s exclusive supporter.

Major | \$75,000 - \$100,000

- Receive two 10-second billboards with your logo and corporate message.
- Your participation will also be acknowledged in all publicity and distribution materials surrounding the program’s broadcasts during its 3-year run.

In-Part | \$25,000 - \$50,000

- Receive two on-screen acknowledgements 4-to-7 seconds in length, in proportion to your sponsorship amount.
- Your sponsorship will also be acknowledged in all publicity materials surrounding the program’s broadcasts during its 3-year run.

Sponsorship contributions, at any level, are safely held in a restricted “Misty Account” by Spirit Productions’ 501(c)(3) fiscal sponsor, The Mid-Peninsula Community Media Center, a non-profit corporation that will provide you and the Internal Revenue Service with an official letter indicating your organization’s tax-deductible contribution.

“ We find sponsorship of programs on public television a marketing plus for Mobil. We find increasingly that the viewers of Mobil programs tend to buy our products or otherwise support our business. ”

Herbert Schmertz,
former Vice President of
Mobil Corporation



“ An engaging production with an important story! ”

Duncan Niederauer,
CEO & Director, NYSE

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF SPONSORSHIP

ON-AIR RECOGNITION:

A company that underwrites **The Misty Experiment: The Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail** will receive prominent on-air identification and credit on all national public television broadcasts. *A program of this significance usually enjoys numerous repeat telecasts.*

NAME IDENTIFICATION:

In addition to national television visibility, sponsors will benefit from identification in all printed promotional material, press releases, and other information presented to the public about the documentary.

CORPORATE PROMOTIONS:

The use of **The Misty Experiment** in association with a sponsor's own advertising, press releases and publicity campaigns is encouraged. *This could include video excerpts for company websites and/or printed material such as in-house newsletters, posters, flyers and other forms of corporate communications.*

WEBSITE LINKS:

A short description and a "logo link" to sponsors' website will be included on Spirit Productions' website - www.TheMistyExperiment.com.

TRAILER/SHORTS IDENTIFICATION:

Depending on level of participation, sponsors may be given on-air credit in any highlight reel made with excerpts from the program that, in turn, would be given to distributor(s) for use in their own unlimited promotional use.

EDUCATIONAL AND HOME VIDEO MATERIALS:

Sponsor identification is included in the basic packaging of educational materials. However, interested sponsors are permitted to develop educational guides of their own for employees, schools or cultural organizations. Furthermore, Spirit Productions will jointly work with the exclusive sponsor's own footage should it wish to create a corporate-specific video of its choice—up to 12-minutes in length—that can be attached to all DVD or Blu Ray copies of the documentary *manufactured for home or educational sales and distribution.*

HOSTING OR CO-HOSTING

THE PREMIERE SCREENING PARTY:

Sponsors at any level will be invited to host, co-host or otherwise participate in premiere screening parties for **The Misty Experiment** in selected cities and at other specified locations. Special previews and receptions can also be arranged for Sponsors.

*Spirit Productions has received firm interest in a "premiere event" for **The Misty Experiment** prior to its PBS broadcast at the Newport Beach Film Festival in April 2016.*

POINT OF VIEW

The Misty Experiment is set within the context of political and military facets of the Vietnam War, yet it makes no claim to document, as do some other films, the larger issues of the decade-long conflict. Rather, our story is a small chapter covering a mid-way point, from early 1967 through late 1970, in which increased escalation by both sides only raised the stakes and prolonged the warfare.

The program's content is provided through *personal accounts* of several squadron veterans, and will not center on any single individual or single point-of-view. While each pilot brought their specific set of skills to their tasks in Vietnam, the Mistys worked together as a team, and their testimonies, combined, will give television audiences a humanistic view of combat's often-inhuman nature.

“ We’d do anything to help the guy on the ground. Our job was to protect him until the rescue forces got there...but rescues were always dicey, dicey situations, you know-- trying to keep the bad guys away from him, using only 20mm strafes at low altitude against bigger guns.. ”

Don Shepperd, Misty 34



With their work kept undisclosed from most military personnel and nearly all civilians, the Misty veterans remain “unsung heroes.” Among the numerous deeds of courage that can be found in the hearts of all American soldiers, why was this mission defined as key to winning the war? And why was it considered the most innovative air operation of that war? What exactly was expected of them, and what were the physical, psychological and political ramifications of the job they stepped forward to do? What possible reasons could explain why these men *volunteered* for such highly dangerous work? While the participants differ in these topics, they shared a resolute sense of honor and pride: To perform their jobs to the best of their ability, to help bring the bloody and tireless conflict to an end, and to return to their hometown, family and friends.

REMARKABLE MEN AND THEIR FLYING MACHINES

Among the veterans interviewed for **The Misty Experiment** are many remarkable individuals who endured their high-risk wartime experiences as Mistys to, later, achieve equally admirable distinctions. As stated by the squadron's Flight Surgeon in his interview, *"The Misty pilots were a breed apart."*

In addition to the distinguished servicemen below, many other Mistys achieved notoriety following their tour of duty: Nearly two dozen aerospace engineers and corporate CEOs, commercial airline pilots and two NASA Shuttle astronauts, a director of Project HOPE, and a test pilot who commanded the first non-stop unfueled flight around the world. Their level of success, by any measure, is extraordinary. While many Vietnam veterans today may have difficulty in discussing their wartime experiences, the men of Misty prefer to share their experiences—not as stories to bring glory to themselves or to war, but to serve as *lessons to be learned from the past*.

A veteran of WWII, Korea and Vietnam, **George "Bud" Day** was selected as the first commander of the Misty squadron. While on a routine search mission, Day was shot-down, captured and spent more than 5 1/2 years in a North Vietnamese prison. Bud is considered to be the "most highly decorated U.S. soldier," second only to General Douglas MacArthur. He is the only recipient of both the *Air Force Cross*, the highest combat award for airmen, and *The Medal of Honor*, the nation's highest award for valor. Colonel Day passed away at age 88 on July 27, 2013 and it is to him that this national documentary is dedicated.

Upon completion of his tour with the U.S. Air Force's aerobatic flying team, the Thunderbirds, **Tony McPeak** volunteered for the specialized high-speed forward air control unit housed at Phu Cat AFB, South Vietnam. He became the squadron's tenth commander during its relocation to Tuy Hoa AFB in 1969 and, in 1990, was appointed 14th Air Force Chief of Staff.

The year before he volunteered for Misty's Fast Forward Air Control unit, command pilot and parachutist, **Ron Fogelman** had been shot down while on a strike mission over an enemy stronghold. Evading capture by clinging to an Army helicopter Cobra gunship, he was carried twenty miles to the safety of a Special Force camp. In 1994, Fogelman was appointed the 15th Air Force Chief of Staff to succeed his former Misty colleague, Tony McPeak.

Upon graduation from the U.S. Air Force Academy, **Donald Shepperd** was thrust into the Vietnam War, during which time he flew 247 combat missions. At the war's end, he joined the Arizona Air National Guard in August and, from 1989 to 1994, he served as the deputy director for the Air National Guard at the Pentagon, followed by his directorship of the Air National Guard until his retirement. He is a writer and occasional military aviation analyst for CNN.



Tony McPeak



Ron Fogelman



Donald Shepperd



Bud Day



PROGRAM FORMAT

The story of the Misty squadron is told with high-definition (HDTV) audio/video interviews of veterans, themselves, without intrusion of a host or voice-over narration. Their personal recollections will be augmented with never-before-seen squadron footage and general archival combat footage. Photographs of key people, events, music, sound effects, maps and illustrative animation will be dramatically interwoven with the interviews to render “immediacy” to the events of fifty years ago. And to best unfold **The Misty Experiment**, keep the story organized for its viewers and in proper historical context to its chronology, “chapters” are employed to structure the program content:

A NEED ARISES sets the stage for the documentary by taking a brief look at military strategists’ misuse of U.S. air power in the war, and the mounting losses of Air Force, Army and Navy reconnaissance aircraft to the lethal anti-aircraft artillery built and supplied by North Vietnam’s Communist partners.

THE HUNS is all about the process of selecting “the right tool for the job,” and why thirteen-year-old Korean War “training planes” were pulled from the mothballs to alter the course of American reconnaissance efforts in the region.

THE ORIGINAL 16 explores how a special group of combat-experienced fighter pilots was sought out and recruited, and trained on-the-job to participate in tactical experiments never yet before tried in the history of military warfare.

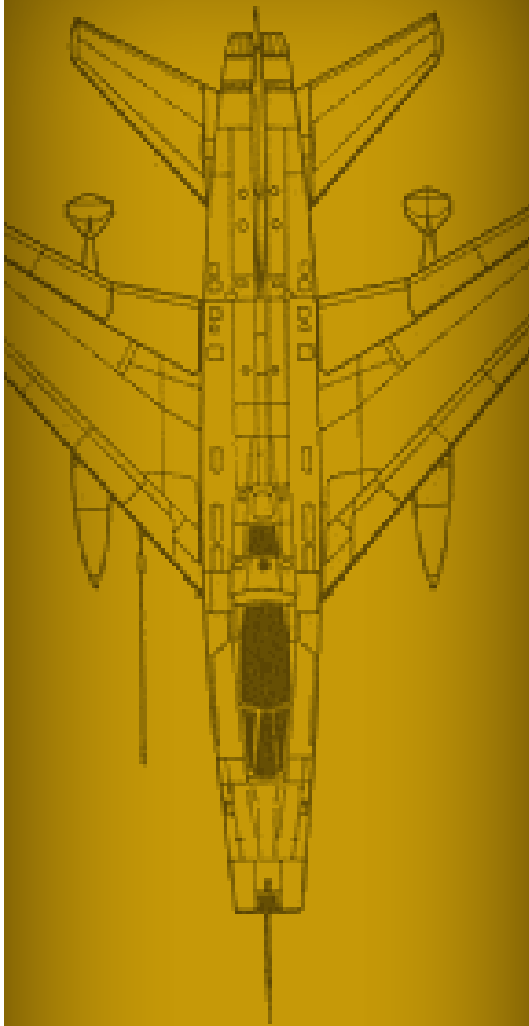
THE PACK AND THE TRAIL describes how the geographical regions of North Vietnam were designated in order to organize both the U.S. and South Vietnamese military’s ground, air and sea forces. As well as the country’s physical conditions where Misty was stationed and accomplished its interdiction missions against enemy movement and artillery installations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

CAMOUFLAGE COLLEGE provides testimony to the Misty pilots’ prime mission—the identification of ground objects from their fast-moving aircraft 4,000 feet above—and the tactics developed to make these efforts successful.

THE VIETNAMESE provides respectful discussion about both America’s South Vietnamese allies and its North Vietnamese opponents.

SHOOT-DOWNS AND RESCUES offers recollections about various combat and rescue actions that were part of the Mistys’ normal workday.

THE WAR AT HOME/GOING HOME shares summarizing anecdotes: about how these men felt regarding duty to their country and to each other, life-on-the-base, standards of ‘character’ and ‘responsibility’ versus military mistakes made, the ease of friendships or bonding of strangers when thrown together in harm’s way, and how the loss of fallen comrades, personal news from home, and stateside anti-war protests affected their work and state-of-mind while there and upon their return.



www.spiritprotv.com

KEY PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

DANNY MCGUIRE, Executive Producer-Director, is a versatile media professional who, for thirty-five years, has provided quality-driven program-making services as a writer, producer, director, cameraman and executive producer for commercial and public television stations and networks, and for freelance projects under the independent banner, **Spirit Productions**. Credited with more than 230 broadcast and non-broadcast films and videos, McGuire's projects have garnered over three-dozen industry awards, including Emmys and other prominent honors. For his national public television projects, he has achieved notable recognition for numerous documentaries and entertainment programs, including three special offerings of PBS' signature series, **Great Performances**.

JACKIE ZABEL, Co-Producer, began her professional career as a medical news reporter at KCBS-TV, Los Angeles, yet soon established herself as a freelance screenwriter and "script doctor." She has developed many television and feature film scripts for Disney, Hallmark, Nickelodeon and HBO. In 2007, Jackie penned a medical thriller, **Pandemic**, for Larry Levinson Productions that brought her the prestigious Writers Guild of America Award for "Best Long Form Original." Subsequently, she executive produced **13 Families**, a documentary honoring the victims of the 1991 shootings at Columbine High School.

BLAKE MCHUGH, Principal Videographer, first collaborated with Spirit Productions when serving as film editor for McGuire's Emmy-winning documentary, **The Spirit of Allensworth** (PBS, 1978), and has teamed many times since. An excellent editor, Blake shifted his craft energies exclusively to video-lighting and shooting, serving as director of photography for PBS' highly praised series about microbiology, **Intimate Strangers: Unseen Life On Earth**. Blake continues to serve **60 Minutes**, **60 Minutes II**, **Dateline**, **Good Morning America**, and various Travel Channel and Discovery Channel documentaries as a contributing cameraman.

LYNNE CUDDEN, Video Designer-Editor, worked as a prepress technician for InfoWorld Magazine, and was then recruited by Sun Microsystems as one of its web-designers. She returned to college to hone her video skills and, subsequently, worked as an associate editor with Transvideo Studios, one of the largest web-and-video production facilities in Silicon Valley. With the arrival of her daughter, Zoe, Lynne now works freelance projects for corporate, commercial and non-profit/ educational clients including Camp Creative, Spirit Productions, The Lancaster Group, CreaTV and Siebel Scholars.

AL ABRAHAMS, Spirit Productions' Director of Corporate Development, has been in professional sales since 1981, with the additional recent 20 years as a Development Executive for local and national public television fundraising. Possessing strong ethical beliefs, Al is an affable communicator who anticipates clients' needs, fulfills them promptly, and believes in and practices the credo that client service is Job #1.

SUMMARY

“ Viet Nam is embedded deep in the American psyche. To many people, it is a name that brings to mind haunting images of a brutal war in a far-off corner of Southeast Asia. To some of those who supported the war, it is a humiliating memory, the nation’s first military defeat. To those who opposed the war, the memory is of a tragic and immoral blunder. And for a good number of the soldiers who fought the war, it is one that has never really ended. ”

Lou Dematteis, A Portrait of Vietnam

The objective of newspaper, Internet, and radio-television broadcasters in their efforts surrounding the upcoming *50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War* is to allow renewed opportunity for each of us to remember, irrespective of our particular points-of-view, that more than 58,000 American servicemen and women perished while doing what their country asked of them.

No writings of words or documentary films will ever be fully worthy of their service—or any honor ever truly befitting their sacrifice. But it is important that we remember with respect, and that our policy-makers and military leaders learn from the mistakes made. Moreover, we must know in our hearts and minds that it is never too late to show gratitude to the men and women who answer the call of duty with courage and valor—in Vietnam or wherever else military conflicts may arise.

While **The Misty Experiment: The Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail** may be a mere paragraph when compared to the countless pages of human stories of the Vietnam War, its producers believe this commemorative national television documentary, with your support, can help heal deep divisions that have endured since that conflict’s end.



*The Misty Memorial,
Colorado Springs, CO*



THE MISTY EXPERIMENT

THE SECRET BATTLE FOR THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL

TO DISCUSS SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES:

AL ABRAHAMS, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT

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