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Dave Fetters' Audio Letters - 1969

Tape #15 27 October Continued

Like when we were mortared one night and rounds landed on the teamhouse right and out in the back of the commo bunker and all that stuff. I'd say "Holy mackerel that's close," you know? I would have just talked to myself, more or less, would have gotten worried just talking to myself, but with Ron there, we'd kind of look at each other and say, "Holy mackerel, that was close," you know, and kind of get a little chuckle out of it and crawl underneath the table with a radio in one hand and flack jacket and steel pot and weapon in the other hand, and just kind of hide under the table waiting for the next round to land close. We'd give each other some moral support. It was much more bearable that way.

Anyhoo, I'm just rambling on. I had a few drinks tonight, so I'm kind of talkative. I'm also tired. So I'll probably just wait until this side runs out, let it run out, and then tomorrow night finish it off. I may get a tape from you tomorrow, I may get a letter, may get nothing. So I'll just finish it off tomorrow night and mail it to you Wednesday morning.

The letter I got today was postmarked the 24th and today is the 27th, no it was postmarked the 23rd and today's the 27th. So that's four days, that's pretty quick. I got my crossbow here all wrapped up, taped up, ready to go. It is possible to mail it in the mail but I think what I'll do is hang on to it and bring it to you in Hawaii when I see you [for R&R] and let you carry it home. 'Cause I'll go through Customs in Hawaii and everything and I'll pass, no sweat, because something like a crossbow does not have to be registered or anything, and I can carry it home with me. So I'll carry it to Hawaii, I'll give it to you, and I'm sure you won't have to go through any Customs or anything. If you want, we can wrap it up in paper but otherwise just leave it open and you ought to be able to carry it right back home with you, which is probably what I'll do because if I send it now, it will probably arrive while you're in Hawaii and there won't be anybody there to pick it up. Or I was also thinking maybe I'll wrap it up and just mail it to my folks, which is what I might do anyway. I don't know. I haven't made up my mind. The crossbow that I have sitting here right in front of me is a real good one, quite powerful. It's neat looking.

30 October 1969

Thursday

Okay you. You. Okay okay. Thursday night, the 30th. Almost November, almost my birthday. Twenty minutes to eight, got off work late tonight. I meant to get off early,

'cause it was my turn to go home at 6 but instead I didn't get to leave until quarter to 7, so I rushed into the mess hall and gulped down my food and got up here at 7 o'clock and just finished listening to your tape. I read your cute little Halloweenie card, Happy Halloween card. Read that while I was eating and almost choked I was laughing so hard.

Okay, oh, I drove to work last week, one morning, and it was so foggy, well, after I got out of Bien Hoa, I drive up a little knoll, then down into a valley, then up into another little knoll. Well down in that valley, it was so foggy, I was crawling along about five miles an hour and honking my jeep horn all the time because it was so bad. I've never been in fog so thick in my life. You just can't imagine it. I had my lights on, I tried everything. Nothing helped. I kept going off the shoulder of the road, you know, I kept going on and off the shoulder of the road to find out where I was, you know, because there was a little bump there about a four or five inch drop so I could tell easily when I went off the road. I was just crawling along. It took me about five times as long to get over there. It usually takes me ten minutes. Shoot it took me almost an hour to get over there.

Boy that fog was thick, I couldn't believe it. So I stayed over at Second Field Force for awhile until the sun got up higher in the sky and burned that stuff off, then when I came back it was a lot better, a lot lot better. Boy that stuff was thick. Really neat, really something to see. Heck, the way those dumb water buffalo and stuff wander around the streets and cross the roads and everything I had to go real slow to make sure I ran into none of them.

Lieutenant Valez, remember? Eddie Valez? The guy who was out at Thien Ngon with me, got back from Australia. He bought me a real nice boomerang, a real beauty. It's got some painting on it but it really looks neat. It's a real dandy. So that's great. He didn't charge me anything. It cost him about five bucks I guess. In turn I had some clothes and stuff washed for him. Okey doke. So I got a real nice boomerang.

This morning, I keep jumping around, I'm sorry, but this morning on the way to work again, I was held up. I was just getting to the market place, the market area, and there's a big conglomeration of these little three wheeled taxis and motorbikes and people and women carrying their loads on these little sticks with a basket on each end. Everything was blocking the road, and then to top it all off there was a doggone funeral.

For funerals, what they do, they have a couple guys out in front, they stop all traffic, push them off the road, kick everybody off the road, and they just walk right up the middle of the road with about 50 or 60 people and they push, it's a car frame with a wooden bed built on it and some kind of a fancy little pedestal thing with fringe on top like a little surrey top, painted black and white and everybody wears black and white, black pants and white ao dai. The men have a white shirt, black tie, black pants. They're all wailing and pushing the stupid cart along with a coffin on

it, some guy up in the front steering. If you don't get out of the way they just run into you. They hit this big round thing, it looks like the top of a garbage can. They hit it and it goes "bonk, bonk." Well, it's kind of funny to see. If I had had my movie camera I would have taken some pictures.

Speaking of movie cameras, that cotton picking thing, well, I guess it's not the movie camera's fault, but I can't buy any penlight batteries over here that are strong enough to power it. I guess by the time they get over here from the States and sit around in this weather they just poop out. I burned up all the ones you sent me. So when I get to Hawaii I'll have to get some good ones. I'll get to more about that movie camera in a minute.

Oh man, we got that crazy [Hollywood personality] Martha Raye kicking around here. She's been here for about three days now and is she ever a pest. She's just a pain in the ass. We're supposed to get a chopper for her every day, take her where she wants to go, you know. She makes out her own itinerary, does what she wants. She doesn't eat at all, doesn't eat any meals. All she does is drink. She drinks vodka straight, just vodka on the rocks. She just pours that stuff down. There's not a man here that can out drink her. There's not a man here that can keep up with her. I only saw her once at a distance and well, I saw her once. I walked right behind her and she was sitting in the club. I just saw the back of her head and heard her big mouth yakking away. Golly, she's a character. Goll, what a jerk. What a lush.

She talks as dirty as any man around here. Her call sign, for the helicopter, is "Sweet Motha ." We told her, well, they did, whoever met her, told her that she'd have to think up some kind of a call sign for herself so when she's flying around she can say, "Well, this is Sweet Motha , I'm coming in." So she said, "Okay. Let me think for a minute." She thought, and then she said, "Okay. I'll be Sweet Motha" and I won't say the other word because everybody knows what it is anyway." I think you do too. It starts with an F and ends with an R and it's got six letters in it. So she said, "That's going to be my call sign."

Anytime she's here, she's in the club drinking. Anytime she goes to visit any place else, of course out on an A-site, the place where they congregate is in the club. Naturally they offer her drink and she'd take it. About the whole time she's here she's a little bit tipsy from drinking so much and all the time. Boy, how anybody can live off of a diet like that, I don't know. But she does.

She's a real pain in the butt, though. She makes up her mind to do something, to do this, and "have a helicopter down on the pad at 8 o'clock for me and I'll be ready to go out to B-32" and 8 o'clock comes around, helicopter lands and we try to get her out there so that the helicopter pilot doesn't have to shut down his chopper, because you know it takes a little bit to turn one of those things off and tie the blades down and then to get it started again. So they wait and they

wait and he's sitting there idling out there on the pad for 10 or 15 minutes waiting for her and she's sitting in the club, you know, and she just won't go. So we'll say, okay, shut it down. He no sooner gets it shut down then she'll jump up and say, "Okay. Let's go." Boy, the blades will just stop turning, and she'll come screeching up in a jeep and hop out with a drink in her hand and waving at everybody and yakking her big mouth at everybody and away she goes again. Oh well. I shouldn't talk like that. She sure is a pain. I guess everybody likes to see a star movie figure, whatever she is. I don't even know what she does, I guess she had a television show or something.

But anyway, she's kicking around between all the A-camps, all the B-teams. I guess she comes back every night. I don't know. I don't keep track of her. We've got a captain that takes care of her itinerary and makes arrangements for the chopper. Well, he doesn't, he just gets her itinerary from her and phones it into us in the TOC and we're the ones that have to make the arrangements for her chopper and everything. Boy, everybody's getting sick of it, too because she's so hard to keep up with.

Now, let me tell you something. Let's see, when was it? Thursday or Tuesday? Tuesday, yes. Or was it yesterday? No, yesterday. Wednesday, yes, yesterday, believe it or not, I got my ride in the jet (A-37). I really did, hon. I'm down safe and sound. I'm on good old earth. I'm in fine shape, excellent physical condition. Nothing happened to me. But boy, I just, I don't even no how to begin to tell you how it was. It was so fantastic. You just won't believe it. Oh man.

First of all, let me tell you about the movie camera. I put in the best set of batteries I had. I just crossed my fingers and I didn't take any pictures as we were taxiing out to take off. I started taking them as we were taking off. I took pictures flying around. We climbed up, well, I'll tell you about the flying details later but anyway, I took pictures of us flying through the clouds and stuff and I was strapped into my seat in such a way that I couldn't swivel my body at all. The only thing I could do was turn my head. I couldn't turn my shoulders and it was real tough to get my arm across, my left arm across to my right shoulder while I had my head turned to the right, looking out the window at the right wing and aim the movie camera. In fact, I couldn't do it.

So what I did, see, the wing man, we were in the lead plane, and the wing man was off our left wing, or right wing, and a little bit behind us. I was in the right seat, by the way. The pilot was in the left seat. Fantastic view out of that cockpit. There's glass all around. If you were sitting in a chair or on a couch, the cockpit would come down as far as the arm rest on the couch. That's how low it was on the side. In the front it was a little bit higher. It would be like maybe the Volkswagen dash. Of course it wasn't that close to you. Well, it was pretty close. You're kind of crowded in there. So I kept my knees apart while he played around with the stick and pedals and everything. But anyway, while I was taking pictures of our number two plane, I

just kind of estimated where he was out there, had the camera set on wide angle, and shot a bunch of pictures of him flying next to us. Then, as we started making our circle downward, you know, to get lined up for the bombing run and everything I was taking pictures. I think I got as far as the first diving run and the first climbing after the run. I think I got those on the movie film before the first roll pooped out. So while we were zipping around up there I quickly took out the first roll of film and put in the second one.

Let me tell you, trying to work that camera up there while you're flying around anywhere between 200 and 400 miles an hour with the G-forces and everything the way they are is really tough. I'll explain more about that later. But I did manage to get the second roll in. We were diving down for our run on the napalm. See, we had two tanks of napalm and two 500 pound bombs. One bomb and one tank of napalm on each wing. So, we made our first run. We dropped our 500 pound bombs, or one of them. The second run we dropped the other one. Then the third run we dropped the napalm. It was on the napalm run that I had the second roll of film.

We were diving down, diving down, and then I had to shut it off just before he dropped the stuff because when we pull out there are too many G-forces. I'll tell you about that in a minute. Then when we get up, after we pull out of the diving run and get to the top of our climb again, he flips the plane over and then I turned back to film the napalm, the smoke and everything, the fire burning down there, and the camera quit. So right then I thought, "Uh-oh. That's it. Dead batteries." Sure enough, that's what the trouble was. So I got one complete roll and about ten feet on the second roll. Doggone it, there were so many excellent pictures I missed on the way back, because on the way back we became the number two ship, and the number one ship was flying to our left front, and I could have gotten some nice shots.

Okay, let me start from the very beginning now. I called up and made an appointment and went back down there and was taken down to the squadron headquarters and met the pilot, Major Anderson. The pilot of the number two ship was a full bird colonel who had only been in country for eight days. It was his fifth flight. That's why, well, after 20 flights or so I guess he starts becoming the number one ship and taking the under-pilots as number two but while he was still getting his feel of the fighter plane again he was relegated to the number two position. So we spent time checking the weather, calling the weather tower and getting our weather check. We had an intel briefing on where different things were taking place in III Corps, you know, what areas to stay away from, you know, because there was reported ground fire at aircraft and where the thundershowers were and what the winds were at various altitudes, where the clouds were and all that stuff.

Then the two pilots, well the major, my pilot, briefed the colonel. There were just the two of them in the briefing room and myself. I was there to listen in. He goes, he runs down everything from what time we go out and get in the planes and we start engines, and we meet on

the taxi strip and what channels on the radios we'll be using, where they fly in relation to each other at different altitudes and different flight patterns and what they, everything possible they could possibly do that they had planned and could possibly go wrong, they briefed on it. It took a full half an hour. It was a real interesting briefing. I learned a lot, what they do if their radio conks out or they get a bomb stuck on a wing or if they run out of fuel or, you know, anything like that. All kinds of different contingencies. So I sat through that.

Then afterwards we went to the life support room as it's called and they got a parachute. Well first I got my vest. I told you about that already. It contains all that life saving equipment, survival kits, knives, .38 caliber pistol, signal mirrors, flares, radios, all that kind of good stuff. Put that on, and then I got my parachute and put that on. The parachute differs from an Army parachute in that the Air Force parachute's got a harness on it like the one I've got, only it's got more gadgets and junk on it. The parachute, you only have one parachute, no reserve.

Packed in the parachute you have an automatic radio signaling device that's good for 60 miles and it completely wipes out all other channels, completely obliterates them, and sends out a homing type signal and that is turned on automatically if you should happen to eject. Also packed in with the parachute is an oxygen bottle. It gives you ten minutes of oxygen in case you have to bail out way up there some place. So while you're coming you can breathe oxygen until you get down low enough to breathe, you know, regular fresh air. It's got a little plumb bob you pull for your life vest in case you land in the drink. What else has it got? Oh, a little nylon rope attached in case you get stuck in a tree and you can drop yourself down 200 feet to the ground. That's about it. But all that stuff weighs up. It weighs quite a bit more than a normal Army parachute. So I got all that garbage on. They gave me another seat which contains food, water, and a life raft and a bunch of junk in it which is ejected out with you and is attached to your, in fact it fits right over your fanny and is attached onto the harness of your parachute. So I got all that on and I got my helmet and my mask. We went out there, got in the plane, got all cranked up.

It's really neat sitting in that plane. It's a nifty little cockpit. I was real comfortable, I had two little air vent things just like what's in a regular passenger jet liner. I aimed them both up at me because it was a real hot day. The sun coming through the canopy, just coming in on us as we were taxiing out there was just unbearable. We were absolutely soaked in sweat by the time we got out and on, ready to take off, sweating like a fiend. But once we got airborne the cold blasts of the air coming from two directions really felt good. Anyway, we taxied out there. I pulled down the sun visor deal on my helmet because it was so bright. I had to take the rubber little eye piece on my camera and when I aimed, all I could see is just a little spot in the middle because I couldn't get close enough to that little eye piece to get the whole camera coverage through the lens. So I could just see the middle where that little square is, the critical focus

square, which was good enough.

So I got my gas mask hooked up and my intercom hooked up and got the radio turned on, the right channel set, pulled my visor down, had my helmet on, everything, even before the canopy was shut. They leave the canopy up right up until the time you get to the end of the runway. Before we get to the end of the runway you go to a, I guess it's an arming area, where they have two guys come out, they check your plane over to make sure that all the little red tags are off of it. The red tags are there to make sure the pilot has checked that particular item before he got in the plane. After he checks it he jerks the little red tag off. We arm our ejection seats, got to take a little pin and tag out of that. We take the little pin and tag out of the hydraulic lift for the canopy, and they arm all the bombs. They take little tags off of them and arm them. They arm the minigun up front. Then they give you a thumb's up and we close the canopy, wait for our wing man to get all set, and then we taxi out to the runway. We line up side by side with him a little bit behind us, to the right and behind us. We're sitting there nice and quietly. They don't go out there and park and rev up the engine and cut loose, they just get out there, taxiing real slowly as they get lined up and then the tower says, "Okay, RAP81 clear to take off." Our call sign was RAP, Romeo Alpha Papa 81.

So, as soon as he said that, he cranked it on, pulled the throttle forward. Boy, does that thing accelerate in a hurry! Man, oh man oh man. Let's see, each of those bombs weighs about, let's see those 500 pound bombs weigh actually 583 pounds or something. The napalm I guess weighs 500 pounds each. We had 1800 pounds of fuel. So that was a pretty good load for that little ol' plane. But man, we got off the runway in no time at all. In fact, even before half the runway was used up, we were a hundred feet in the air. Man, that thing climbed so fast that altimeter was just flipping around like I don't know what. Boy, that needle was just jumping around there, hundreds of feet clicking off, just like that. We kept climbing and climbing. Beautiful view, what a fantastic view climbing up through the clouds. We circled the airway, or the runway, after we got up quite high. We climbed to 11,000 feet. It was really neat. He didn't do anything spectacular or anything, he just kept the nose high in the air. But the thing climbed so effortlessly. I couldn't believe it. We're flying about 230 knots or so while we were climbing. It didn't push me back in the seat too much, but I could feel a pressure.

I was breathing a normal amount of oxygen, a normal supply. I don't know how much oxygen is mixed in with the regular air but the gas mask and everything was comfortable and I had my visor down and the sun wasn't reflecting into my eyes at all.

It's real easy to steer that thing. He just casually kept his hand on the stick, you know. While he was flying he was writing things on a pad of paper and flipping switches and talking on the radio to the guy next to him. Then they looked each other over. The wing man first casually dropped behind us and below us and then swung underneath us and then swung back. And we

did the same thing. We let him pull ahead and we dropped behind him and below him and swung all the way underneath him and then all the way back again, just to check out his belly. Shoot, he must have been 30 or 40 feet above us. Boy, it was so close it made me kind of shaky he was so close. But gee, you could see little tiny rivets and everything. And when we fly, man, the wing tips are only 15 or 20 feet apart. It's fantastic. It's just precision flying, I mean they're real close together. I had complete trust in the pilot though so I didn't worry about hitting or colliding in mid air but boy it was so neat flying so close.

Then we flew north from Bien Hoa about 20 miles to where the target was. It was called the Testicles because the Song Be River winds around and then it takes two big cuts and it swoops down, makes a big loop, and back up, then down, makes another loop, and back up again. It looks just like what it's called. So that's where we made our rendezvous with the FAC. He was the Sidewinder, his call sign was Sidewinder. Right after we got off the runway and cleared the airport we started calling "Sidewinder control," you know, and just said, "Yeah, we're heading on 360 degrees for 20 miles," and call "Sidewinder such and such."

So we did, and we were circling around at 11,000 feet hitting big fluffy bunches of clouds and some open areas and stuff. We were still zipping along about 230 knots. I don't know, that's about 260 miles an hour or something like that, so effortlessly. Just smooth as glass. Just real neat. Just a steady hum, a slight whine. There wasn't too much noise at all. You could hear the regular jet sound, you know the "shhh" that kind of noise. It wasn't loud at all. Well, we got up there above the target and we circled. We kept circling while he fed us all the data about the target and where the friendly troops were and what to look for and what the different winds were to different altitudes and the direction of the wind and how far the troops were from the target and what the target was. It happened to be an enemy base camp right along the river there. The friendlies were 900 meters away to the south and he told us that the bottom of the cloud cover was 3000 feet. You see, we could look down and just every once in awhile catch part of the ground because it was quite cloudy.

So then he said, "Okay, I'm ready to mark the target. Why don't you come down about 3000 and skim around the bottom of the clouds until you get your bearings." He'll mark, he would have the ground troops mark their location with smoke. So we started going down and we were nosing down, going about 300 miles an hour, slowly, well not slowly, but dropping pretty fast. We got from 11,000 feet down to 3,000 feet in a matter of a minute, a minute and a half, two minutes I guess. I really don't know. I was busy taking pictures, watching the wing man, looking for the FAC. After we broke through the cloud layer we were flying at 3,000 feet, just zipping along above the ground. We spotted the FAC and he was circling the target. Apparently there wasn't any enemy activity in the target. It was just an enemy base camp with bunkers and trenches and hooches and stuff. Then he told the friendly troops to mark their position with

smoke. So they popped smoke and we identified it as yellow smoke, which is what it was.

So the FAC said "Okey doke. I'm going to roll in and mark the target." What he does, he shoots a 2.75 inch rocket from his observation plane and hits the target and it sends up a big cloud of white smoke. And he says, "Okay. Right where that rocket lands is where I want you to drop the first bomb." So he shot in his rocket and it was a little bit off. So he said, "Okay, the target is not quite where the smoke is so go ahead and make a dry run from east to west and look the thing over." So, we were climbing around, we were circling at 3,000. He had the left wing low, in other words you're making a left turn around the smoke.

Okey doke. Back on the second side. After making a few circles, left hand circles, we got into our pattern and started to make a dive. It was a fifteen degree dive. We go in about 300 knots and just before we hit the target, he pushes the throttle on full and that throttle response is instantaneous. I mean, absolutely instantaneous. The slightest nudge and you can feel that plane jump forward. So, we made the dry run. We dove down to 1500 feet I believe, yes, 1500 feet on the first run. It was a dry run, no bombs dropped. We got over the target, well, just before the target, he pushed the throttles all the way forward and that plane just jumped forward, just pushed me back in the seat terrifically.

But the worst was yet to come. Then he, all in one quick motion, he leveled out and pulled up. Right at the bottom of the dip there when he started pulling up is when all the g's hit. Yeah, I was taking movies on the dive in. I held the camera up until we got about to three g's, then I just couldn't hold it to my head any more and put it down on my lap. We pulled four and a quarter g's. At one point there, well, it lasted for about five seconds, it climbed as high as four and a quarter g's and it stayed that way for five seconds. And boy is that ever some feeling. That means that at that time I weighed four and one half times my normal weight. It just feels like a gigantic hand resting on you, pushing you down into the seat. It really pushes too. Boy, four and a half g's. Then the plane at that time was flying a little over 400 knots. Yes, I guess, yeah, it is measured in knots. But it was right on 400, so it was about 400 and some miles an hour. And we were climbing at that speed.

Then we got to the top of our climb, he flips the wing over and this is the most fantastic thing of the whole flight. What he does, he gets to the top of the climb, back up to 3,000 feet and he flips the wing over to the left. I mean, he flips the plane to the left and puts it in a real sharp turn so we remain at about three g's while he turns the plane. We go up and he banks the plane over so far that we are flying at about a 45 degree upside down angle, 45 degrees upside down. So if you would take your hand and hold it horizontal out in front of you up at about 15 degrees, point your fingers away from you and then flip it over so that your palm is to the right, the top of your hand is to the left, your thumb is straight up in the air and then go about another 45 degrees. That's how far over we were after we got to the top of the climb, or the pull out, or whatever they

call the thing. But was that ever neat!

I could look to my left, look above the pilot's head, looking, well, let's see, say if you sit up straight, look to your left, and then look up at a 45 degree angle, that's where the ground was. If I looked straight out, let's see if I just sat perfectly straight in the seat and turned directly to my left I could almost see the horizon that was on my right. If you understand what I'm talking about. We weren't 180, we weren't completely upside down. We were halfway between perfectly on our side and perfectly upside down, but that's how far he flipped that thing over. I believe I got some movies in that position although it was pretty tough shooting, real tough shooting because I just couldn't get my, couldn't hold the camera up to my eye. Well, not my eyes but my shield there, sunglass shield, whatever you call it, visor.

But after I lived through the first one I thought, well, shoot, now I know what to expect, no sweat. Then the wing man came in. He made a dry run, but he was in a completely different pattern so I couldn't spot his plane and then when I finally did spot it he was just pulling out. He was a little bit too far away to get a picture so I didn't shoot any, I don't believe. I can't remember exactly what I took. It was so exciting the whole time. I kept watching the altimeter, the speed, and how many g's we were pulling at any one time.

Then we climbed back up. We were at 3,000 zipping around again, leaning wherever on about a 45 degree angle making a left turn around the base camp. The FAC rolled in and put another rocket in. This time he hit it smack dab right in the middle of the camp. So he said, "Okay, roll in and hit that smoke." So we rolled in again going down about 300 knots. We got to the release point and he hit the button on the stick and away went the 500 pounder on my wing. All I could see was the thing cut loose from the wing and then he kicked the throttles on full and we made another climb again, again at 400 knots, four and a half g's, four and a quarter g's, something like that. Just a hair over four g's. Climbed back up, flipped it way over again. Boy was that ever neat. I just can't get over that, the way he flipped that thing over. The thing responds so fast, so immediately to the slightest nudge of the stick. He just takes that stick and whips it over to his left knee, and the plane just flips up on its wing. Then he flies like that until we're level at 3,000. See, we're still climbing when he flips over. Then he almost turns his belly to the clouds as we level out, and then he flies at an almost perfect 90 degree angle to the ground. The left wing is perpendicular to the ground and the right wing is sticking straight up in the air. That's how we were flying around in a real tight circle watching the wing man.

So we watched him go in. I saw his bomb explode. I couldn't get a shot because it was such a weird angle. I was looking up over my left shoulder. I was craning my neck as far as I could go and I could just barely see it. I had no way of getting the camera up there whatsoever. But anyway, after he went in then we made our second run, dropped the second bomb. It made our, actually it was the third run. The second bombing run. We dropped our other bomb, and the

last run we made, we dropped both tanks of napalm, only this time we dove down to 500 feet and made a real long climb that time. We remained at four g's for quite awhile then. Boy oh boy is that something. As soon as we got up to 3,000 feet just below the cloud base we flipped over in time to see very little flame left from our napalm but beaucoup smoke, just billows of black smoke, black and gray smoke. We could see some fires on the ground, some huts burning or something, bunkers, I don't know what they were.

Then the wing man came in. I saw him drop his napalm. I couldn't get a movie of it because the movie camera had pooped out by that time, but boy was that ever sharp. He tried to get in a perfect position so I could take movies of the napalm and he did. He got the plane right there so I had a beautiful shot but the doggone camera wouldn't work, stupid thing. So I told him, you know, hat roi camera. We did watch it go up, both tanks plowed into that base camp, just a tremendous explosion of flame. Just a real rich yellowish-orange flame with black clouds coming up from it. It was really neat.

So we both climbed up to 3,000 feet, kept circling around while the FAC went down and looked the place over. He gave us an 80 percent destroyed, of course no enemy killed or anything. He gave us an estimation of 12 or 13 bunkers, 200 feet of trenchline, about 3 hooches destroyed. No secondary explosions but the troops were waiting to go into that area as soon as it cooled off. I never did hear the final result but after the bombing run was all over we climbed up above the clouds again, up around 10,000 feet. We were flying along at about 230 knots and again we checked each other over. One plane would swing down below the other one, swing from his right wing to his left wing and up and the wing man would do the same thing. Then our wing man became the flight leader and we dropped back to the second position. I really could have gotten some nice pictures of him if the camera had been working.

We just flew around for quite awhile up there. Let's see, we were in the air for about an hour and oh, 15 or 20 minutes. It only took us about ten minutes to get to the target, about 15 minutes to do the actual bombing, and the rest of the time we were just flying around. But they don't land with any more than, I don't know, 1200 pounds of fuel on. See, they have inboard tanks in the wings, then they have an exterior tank midway between the fuselage and the wing tip and then they have a wing tip, a wing pylon I guess it is, out on the end of the wing which is another large tank. So, he burned up all the fuel in his wing tanks and he had just started on the tip tanks when we started on our way back and he had excess fuel so he had to dump some of the fuel. So he flipped a couple of switches and fuel started draining out of the wing tanks, out of the wing tip tanks. It just looked like a vapor trail off of each wing. Both of us were doing that. We did that for about 10 minutes until both tanks were empty and then a little blinking light came on in the cockpit saying "wing tanks empty."

Anytime they slowed down below, I think it was about 120 knots, 125 knots, a little light

would start blinking on and off on the dash. It wasn't a little light, it was a big red light, telling you that your air speed was too slow, or the throttle was back too far. Also it sends a beep right through your radio set, so it'd go "beep beep beep beep" in your ear, letting you know that you're becoming too sluggish in the air. He did that a couple times just to show me what it was like.

He didn't let me take the stick. He said I could put my hand on it while he flew it, which I did. It was really neat. I bet I could have flown it myself, 'cause it's just the two pedals and a stick and it just seemed so easy, so natural, you know, just the thing to do. If you lean the plane over to the left, kick left rudder a little bit. I imagine it takes a little practice, but still. It seems so easy. So we buzzed around, buzzed around, and flew over Bien Hoa and Long Bien and Second Field Force Headquarters and watched planes come and go out of the runway. We started getting in to the traffic pattern and he called down, asked for clearance and all that kind of stuff. Then we dropped from 11,000 way down to, oh, about 1,000 feet. Yeah, about 1,000 feet. And then we made a real low, screeching fast pass right over the runway, side by side. Just screamed down the runway. As we got to the end of the runway, the wing man flipped his plane up. I was watching him the whole time. Right at the end of the runway he just kicked it real hard, over, and peeled off and the plane was flying level and the next instant it was flipped all the way up on its side so the wings were perpendicular to the ground again. Just in an instant the plane was like that. He made a real tight turn and headed back down to the other end of the runway. We gave him thirty seconds and then we followed the same thing. Again we pulled about three and a half g's in that maneuver.

So we flipped down and flew, I don't know, maybe a couple of miles. I think it was three miles past the end of the runway, made another screeching sharp turn and then we were lined up with the runway. The other plane went in first. We followed in second. Boy, I wish the camera had been working for the landing and the pattern, the flight pattern, and everything when he peeled off because it was really something. I had some beautiful pictures, would have had. But I was thoroughly enjoying the ride. I'm almost happy the camera didn't work because then I didn't have to fart around with pictures. I could just enjoy the ride. Which I did. To the utmost! I just couldn't get over it.

I still can't explain it like it really was. I hope the movies turn out because then I'll say "well, right during this time we were pulling four g's flying at 400 miles an hour and I was being pushed in my seat, couldn't hold the camera steady" and all that kind of stuff. If the movies turn out anything at all close to what it actually looked like, it will be fantastic. Just beautiful. Boy, it was really exciting. It was an experience that somebody like me will just remember for the rest of my life. I wish Chuck and all my brothers could have an experience like that. Was that ever something. Gee, I just can't explain it. It's really a beautiful sensation.

So we finally landed. It doesn't take parachutes or anything to stop it because the runway is so long. We just used our brakes. If you do happen to skid off the end of the runway they've got this cable going across with a, I guess it's a nylon rope going across it, catches the plane and stops it. Like on an aircraft carrier they got these nylon nets the planes can run into so you don't go off the edge. Anyway, they had one of those there. We stopped long short of that, taxied into the disarming area and they unloaded the minigun. We never did use it. The only time they use it is for enemy troops in the open. We didn't see any so they unloaded the gun, put it on safe, put the little red tag, safety and everything. They did a couple of other things, flipped open some hatches and put some safety devices and stuff in. And, that was it.

While they're doing stuff like that, we have to keep our hands up in the air. You open the cockpit at that time so we stuck our hands straight up in the air to make sure they aren't near any switches or anything on the plane, so that nothing would happen accidentally. So after we got the thumb's up again we started taxiing in. We taxied down the whole length of the runway. While we were taxiing we shut down one engine, just running off of one engine. I just casually looked around as we passed cars and trucks, guys on bicycles, guys standing around, they all looked in. I guess they don't usually see two guys in a A-37 jet. It's usually just the pilot.