

1972

On March 30, 1972, North Vietnam launched a large, three-pronged invasion of South Vietnam, using tanks and mobile armored units. The biggest battle was at An Loc where, by the end of June, the enemy had lost all of its tanks and artillery. When the offensive came to a halt, however, North Vietnam had occupied much of South Vietnam below the DMZ and a strip of land along the South Vietnamese border with Laos and Cambodia.

Because of the North Vietnamese offensive, President Nixon on May 8 suspended peace talks and ordered Operation Linebacker, the renewed bombing of North Vietnam and the aerial mining of its harbors. When North Vietnam appeared ready to talk peace in October, yet another bombing halt was directed. North Vietnam then balked for two months over some of the cease-fire provisions, so President Nixon ordered on December 18, 1972 the heaviest bombing of the war against Hanoi and Haiphong. For 11 days, the USAF pounded every possible military and transportation target with B-52s and tactical fighters. This brought a North Vietnamese agreement on December 29 to return to the peace table.

In northern Laos, the Communists made additional gains during the year but failed to overwhelm government forces. In November, the Pathet Lao agreed to meet with Laotian Government representatives to discuss a cease-fire.

During the year, Cambodian forces were able to win localized victories but could not drive out the Communists. On the other hand, the Communists were unable to capture their primary target, the capital, Phnom Penh. During these ground operations, U.S. airpower, including B-52s, continued to hammer the enemy, but there was a limit to what air power could accomplish when the enemy showed little regard for the lives of its own troops.

20 Jan 72

First HH-53 draw down. 37th and 40th each send one HH-53 to RAF Woodbridge.

31 Jan 72

Det.1, 3rd ARRGp. LBR unit deactivated.

February 72

Electronic Location Finder (ELF) system evaluated in Panama. P27#3

Add in findings and recommendations

ECM & RHAW gear requested for 39th ARRS HC-130's at Cam Rhan Bay p29#3

11 February 72

Laos. LNRS (Limited Night Recovery System) alert PJ's Sergeant Chuck Morrow and AIC Mike Vogeles of the 40th ARRS at NKP RTAFB (recently relocated from Udorn RTAFB), participate in a harrowing "first." When an F-4C is shot down in a mountainous region of the Ho Chi Minh Trail network, its crew must be recovered immediately or face captivity and/or death. The LNRS Jolly Green is scrambled to the area. Alone, without CAS or fighter support, the lone bird flies deep

into enemy territory. It flies low to avoid MIGs and deadly SAMs, weaving its way cautiously through previously unflown mountain valleys and passes. When it arrives at one survivor's location, the pilot begins an automatic hovering approach. But the system malfunctions. What is supposed to be a computer-controlled descent becomes a nearly undetected, uncontrolled drop towards the jungle. Morrow and Vogeles call for an immediate "go around," saving the crew and bird from certain disaster. Another approach is made, but this time the enemy is waiting. Deadly firepower is directed by the unseen ground forces towards the sound of the hovering helicopters. Darkness is its ally, and one pickup is made amidst suppressive fire from the PJ's' mini-gun positions. Enemy fire and low fuel reserves make further lingering suicidal. The Jolly climbs out of the area and into radar-controlled AAA fire. The crew evades and air refuels, ever conscious of SAM warning indicators being received by the helicopter's RHAW package. Throughout the night additional attempts are made to recover the complete F-4C crew but to no avail. The rudimentary night-system, terrain, enemy opposition, and lack of defensive support systems terminate further efforts. Still, one survivor is brought home. The two pararescuemen are awarded Silver Stars for their pioneering action, courage, and efforts under extremely adverse combat conditions.

17 February 72

SAMs shoot down two US aircraft during the 29-hour "limited duration" bombing of NVN. All downed pilots captured or KIA

18 March 72

Nail 31 SAR - Nail 31 Alpha (Steve Boretzky) and Bravo (Dave Breskman) ejected from their OV-10 over Laos after being hit by antiaircraft fire. They were in an area known as the Catchers Mitt of the Steel Tiger. Both survivors landed from their parachute descent uninjured and immediately entered an evasion mode. The enemy completely surrounded the area they had landed in. During his first few hours on the ground Nail 31 Alpha was forced to shoot and kill an enemy soldier who had found him. Normally, we would have found this tale to be BS but he came home with an AK-47 to prove it. This is the only time in the war that I know of where an evading pilot with a pistol used it for its intended purpose. This pilot had "balls." We could not let him be captured. Several SAR attempts on the 18th were repulsed by an aggressive air defense. There was at least one "nine level" gunner in the area. During a last light pickup attempt the Jolly came under heavy fire from a North Vietnamese 37mm gunner. In what was no small miracle, this NVA gunner manages to miss this slow moving, low altitude, "size of a barn" target. In short, the Jolly was a sitting duck and this gunner who likely had already shot down at least one A-1 MISSED! The HH-53 immediately egressed the area. Both Alpha and Bravo were rescued during a first light SAR the next morning. After this rescue the Jolly's had to hit the HC-130 tanker to refuel. Two Jollys went into refueling formation behind the tanker. Soon four A-1's joined this formation and it became a 7 ship. This entire SARTAF flew a celebratory 500' low pass on the NKP airfield. p37#3 p66-68#3

21 March 72

ECM & RHAW gear requested for 37th and 40th ARRS HH-53s p29#3

26 March 72

SAR conference at NKP. "All the rescue forces in the world cannot help a survivor on the ground if he does not understand SAR procedures and cannot assist in his rescue."
P37#3

27 March 72

HH-53 accident or shoot down (there is debate about reason for crash), 40th ARRS, 5 KIA

SERGEANT RAYMOND A. CROW and AIRMAN FIRST CLASS RAYMOND A WAGNER.
Sergeant Crow and Airman Wagner are PJs crewing an HH-53 over Tonle Sap Lake. They have just completed a combat SAR orbit and are returning to base. More recently, they have just completed an aerial refueling. Suddenly, without warning, a catastrophic mechanical failure races through the complex rotor system destroying it and instantly killing all personnel aboard. Because the incident occurs over a heavily contested and dangerous area of the war zone, none of the crew remains are recovered, and to this day the tragedy remains a mystery. *Source = 50 years See Jolly 26 folder for details.*

30 March 72

Spectre 22 SAR. First use of AC-130s in SAR. PJs on this included Morrow, McGrath and Goodlett.

p69-71#3 p76#3 folder

30 March 72

The NVA begin a major invasion across the DMZ and across the central region of SVN. This invasion was timed to occur with the beginning of the monsoon season. The monsoon rains and low clouds would limit air attacks on NVA forces. The tactical situation in SEA had changed overnight. This was a multi-divisional, combined Army, conventional thrust. For the first time in this war the NVA integrated armor into its invasion. Air defense units accompanied the armor. These air defense units moved SA-2 SAMs into SVN and 23mm, 37mm, and 57mm antiaircraft guns. Many of these rapid-fire antiaircraft cannons were radar controlled. For the first time in this war the NVA introduced a man-portable, heat seeking, shoulder fired SAM It was called the SA-7 Strella. This integrated air defense would take a major toll on U.S. aircraft.

31 March 72

39th ARRS at Cam Ranh Bay deactivated. Aircraft moved to Det. 4, 3rd ARRGP at Korat RTAFB.

1 April 72

3 ARRGP consists of two squadrons; 37th ARRS at DaNang and 40th ARRS at Nakhon Phanom. As of 1 April 72, the organization of the units of the 3rd ARRGP was as follows:

Insert data from p3#3 ARRS AOB p115#7

2 April 72

Bat 21 shot down. Bat 21B SAR lasted from 2 April through 13 April.

P38-40#4 p117-118#7

2 April 72

Blueghost 28, AH-1 Cobra gunship receives major battle damage while attempting to recover Bat 21B. Blueghost made it out of the vicinity of Bat 21 and landed his heavily damaged helicopter on the beach, south of Quang Tri. Rescued by Jolly 67. I was on Jolly 67. The crew of 28 was Captain Rosebeary (pilot) and his gunner was Warrant Officer Gorski. After their recovery JG 67 dropped them off at their base at Hue Phu Bai.

P.36 Whitcomb

6 April 72

TECHNICAL SERGEANT ALLEN J. AVERY and SERGEANT WILLIAM R. PEARSON. On 2 April 1972, three days after the North Vietnamese began a massive surge into the South, Bat 21 and Bat 22, a pair of EB-66; electronic warfare planes are escorting a flight of B-52 bombers on a mission. Surface-to-air missiles are launched at Bat 21, hitting it broadside. Lieutenant Colonel Icel E. Hambleton is blown out of the aircraft, initiating one of the longest and most complicated recovery missions of the war. It is long and complicated because of Hambleton's location: smack in the middle of "bad guy" country on the DMZ. It is heavily fortified with every weapon in the North Vietnamese arsenal and manned by seasoned combat soldiers. On 6 April, it is decided that a recovery attempt will be made by Jolly Greens from the 37th ARRS at DaNang AB, RVN. The HH-53 comes in low and fast. The forward air control aircraft pilot tries to warn the Jolly crew of a large weapons concentration, but is too late. The Jolly is hit and catches fire. It rolls to one side and crashes, killing all on board including Sergeants Avery and Pearson. Many crewmembers and aircraft are lost before Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton is finally recovered on 13 April.

Source = 50 years

Mid-April 72

Four HH-3E's from Clark AB, RP sent TDY to Det. 14 3 ARRGp at Tan Son Nhut. Other H-3s came from several locations, Osan, Kadena, and Panama. The final unit designation was Det 14, 41 ARRWg after 3 ARRG shut down. Reinforcements required because of NVA April invasion. These HH-3's remained in theater until 15 Sept 1972.

27 April 72

Pararescueman Charles D. McGrath with the 40th ARRS was lowered from an HH-53, Jolly Green 73. He went down the hoist to rescue a badly wounded F-4 pilot in North Vietnam. He dragged the pilot through thick jungle to a site suitable for recovery. The helicopter was hit by ground fire and lost its hoist, leaving the two men stranded. When the high bird pulled into a hover, McGrath got the wounded pilot ready and rode up the hoist with him amid gunfire. Once inside the helicopter, Chuck provided emergency medical care to the F-4 pilot and another PJ whose leg had been shattered by gunfire.

1 May 72

Quang Tri Citadel Evacuation. P.120-121#7

Quang Tri Citadel Raiders. Insert patch.

The Citadel, Quang Tri, RVN. Invading North Vietnamese forces at the ancient Citadel in the strategic northern town of Quang Tri besieges one hundred thirty-two U.S. Marines. Four HH-53s of the 37thARRS at DaNang are tasked to extract the Americans. Preliminary tactics call for three of the Jollies to land in the fortress and on-load the Marines while the fourth loiters outside, ready to dash in if needed. Enemy AAA and SAM-2 sites encircle the area however, causing the helicopters to approach at treetop level despite the rush of automatic weapons fire which is usually avoided by flying above three thousand feet.

The three Jollies enter the demolished outskirts of Quang Tri, in single file as A-1E's blast a corridor to the walls of the fortress. Just when the first helicopter lands, enemy small arms fire increases with such intensity that, in the confusion, only thirty-seven men manage to climb aboard before the pilot pulls away. On the second Jolly, Staff Sergeant Robert LaPointe locates enemy positions and silences them with an onboard mini-gun. When his bird lands, he rushes out of the aircraft to organize the remaining survivors. A Marine officer who insists he is the individual in charge, as opposed to an enlisted man immediately confronts him. LaPointe attempts to reason with the man but is ignored. Confusion increases. LaPointe contacts Sandy Lead and briefs him on the situation. Sandy Lead has a one-way conversation with the officer who wisely reconsiders, then follows LaPointe's orders. With order restored, the second chopper lands and loads forty-five men, then quickly departs. The third Jolly enters and loads the remaining fifty men, plus Sergeant LaPointe, and just as quickly flies to safety. Minutes later, the North Vietnamese storm the structure and raise their flag. Sergeant LaPointe is awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his cool actions. Other pararescuemen included in the operation are Dave Young, Michael Aillet, Charles McQuoid, Daniel Manion, Cole Panning, Richard Steed, and William Thompson. *50 yrs*

HH-53'a Evacuate 132 from Quang Tri

Tan Son Nhut, RVN – Five Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants performed the largest evacuation of the Southeast Asian conflict when they airlifted 132 American and Vietnamese out of Quang Tri. Three of the HH-53s, of the 37th ARRS at DaNang airfield, were responsible for carrying out the evacuees. A fourth helicopter landed to make sure all persons were evacuated, and a fifth stood by in case it was needed.

The 132 evacuees were taken to DaNang. U.S. Air Force and Navy air strikes paved the way for the helicopters, which still had to weave through a corridor of ground fire from North Vietnamese tanks and antiaircraft guns on their way into and out of the provincial capital. Miraculously, no one was injured aboard the helicopters during the rescue operation. While supporting the effort, an Air Force O-2 forward air control aircraft and an A-1 Skyraider rescue support fighter were shot down. The FAC pilot bailed out and was rescued by friendly ground forces. The A-1 pilot ditched his aircraft in the ocean and was picked up by Army helicopters.

The first Super Jolly Green Giant to land received sniper fire from enemy soldiers. SSgt Robert LaPointe, a pararescueman, silenced them with bursts from his minigun from the rear of the helicopter. After the helicopter landed, Sgt LaPointe jumped out and organized the people on the ground so the operation would go more smoothly. He remained on the ground until he boarded the second helicopter to land. The first helicopter picked up 37 evacuees, the second 45, and the third 50.

The fourth helicopter landed to make sure that all the persons had been picked up. When it was on the ground it received AK47 automatic weapons and sniper fire from the North Vietnamese in the landing area. Sgt William J Thompson, a PJ, knocked out the AK47 with bursts from his

minigun. The sniper fire was suppressed by Sgt Daniel G Manion, another PJ. All the HH-53's returned safely to DaNang.

Also on the first HH-53 to land were Major Jackson R Scott Jr., aircraft commander, Captain David F. Mullenix, co-pilot, Sgt Ronald W Blackwell, flight engineer, SSgt Robert L LaPointe and Sgt David W Young, pararescuemen. The second helicopter crew was Captain Rodney S Griffith, aircraft commander; Major Anthony A Gates, co-pilot; SSgt David Garcia, flight engineer; SSgt Cole E Panning and Sgt Charles B McQuoid, pararescuemen. The third Jolly was crewed by Captain John R Wiener, aircraft commander; Captain Garry A Dake, co-pilot; SSgt William A Simm, flight engineer; Sgt Michael A Aillet and Sgt Richard L Steed, PJs. The fourth helicopter was crewed by Captain Donald A Sutton, aircraft commander; Major Gerry J Gilbert, co-pilot; SSgt Jimmy D Mince, flight engineer, Sgt William J Thompson and Sgt Daniel G Manion, PJ's.

American advisors evacuated from Quang Tri before it fell to enemy forces are greeted by personnel at DaNang Airfield. Altogether, 132 American and Vietnamese were taken to safety by three HH-53 Super Jolly Green Giants of the 37th ARRS. *Stars and Stripes*

10 May 72

Det. 8 (P) established at Takhli to support the increased air activity resulting from the North Vietnamese Army invasion. This unit deployed from CONUS and retained its' organizational designator of Det. 8, 43 ARRS. Det. 8 was later redesignated Det. 10, 40th ARRS and became a permanent LBR unit.

10 May 72

F-4 Oyster 01 shot down northwest of Hanoi. P40-42#4 Only the backseater, Oyster 01B Captain Roger Locher, ejected. Capt. Locher Evaded for several days to a less heavily defended area for pick-up near Yen Bai airfield. 7th AF/CC decision making process. P152-153Whitcomb

May 72

ELF and RHAW systems begin being installed on HH-53s

12 May 72

First ELF HH-53 checkout completed. P16#4

20 May 72

40th ARRS SAR on Bowleg 02A. Jolly crew was Captain Schibler A/C, Lt Hutchinson C/P, SSgt Bryant FE, Sgt Perry & Amn Mason PJs

1 June 72

First SAR using ELF. P16#4 p123#7

2 June 72

40th ARRS SAR. Oyster 02, an F-4 crewed by xxx xxx and Captain Roger C. Locher, 02B, down for 21 or 23 days before he comes up on radio. Capt Locher Evaded away from troops looking for him. He Ended up in the mountains near Yen Bai MIG field on the Red River. The HH-53 pickup crew included Captain Stovall A/C, Captain Gillespie C/P, Sgt Walsh FE, Sgt Cakebread and Sgt McQuoid PJ's, Sgt Welborn photographer. High Bird included Captain Shipman A/C, Captain Zielinski C/P, Sgt Liles FE, Sgt Goodlett & Sgt Williamson PJs, Sgt Smith photographer. The four PJ's are indoctrinated as honorary members of the Red River Valley Pilots association and received Silver Stars.

On May 10, 1972 the F-4 carrying Capt. Roger C. Locher of the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Udon Royal Air Force Base, Thailand, was shot down by a heat-seeking missile launched from a MiG-21; Capt. Locher was on his 407th combat mission. He parachuted to safety near Yen Bai Airfield (northwest of Hanoi) but could not contact friendly aircraft with his survival radio. For the next 22 days he hid, living on fruits, nuts, and berries, until he was finally able to make radio contact with friendly aircraft.

A rescue attempt was launched on June 1 by HH-53 helicopters, A-1 attack airplanes, and an HC-130 command airplane, with F-4 and F-105 fighters providing air protection, but they were driven off by enemy MIG's. They were back the next day, deep inside North Vietnam, and an HH-53, using a newly-developed electronic location finder (ELF), pinpointed the downed airman through a canopy of jungle growth, lowered a jungle penetrator and lifted Capt. Locher to safety.

18 June 72

OL-A the RCC at Son Tra, call sign "Queen" was deactivated as part of the withdrawal policy. OL-A had been responsible for SAR operations in the DaNang Sector. P6#4

OL-B the RCC at Udorn RTAFB moved to NKP. P9#4

21 June 72

Nickel 102 B SAR. Ashau Valley. Rescued by HH-53 from DaNang. Jolly crew was Captain Orrell A/C, Captain Courtice C/P, Sgt Liles FE, Sgt Salome & Sgt Webber (not Werber?) PJs

Sandy 7 (Larry Highfill) SAR. Ashau Valley. Had been working Nickel 102. Rescued by HH-53 from DaNang. Jolly crew was Captain Orrell A/C, Captain Courtice C/P, Sgt Liles FE, Sgt Salome & Sgt Webber PJs.

25 June 72

40th ARRS launch eight aircraft on SAR attempt in NVN. Six took battle damage. SSgt Cash WIA. Harry received initial medical treatment, including a blood transfusion at Lima Site 16. His HH-53 was left there as unflyable with two PJ's. Harry was taken to Udorn for definitive care. By the 29th he was able to receive visitors that included Chuck McGrath

26 June 72

SERGEANT CHARLES D. McGRATH. For two days, 26 and 27 June 1972, the 40th ARRS at NKP has been working to rescue two downed F-4 crews, Valiant 03 and 04, from deep inside North Vietnam. Many attempts are made, and as many times, enemy resistance drives them away. Then Valiant 03A is recovered. At a holding point, Jolly 73 joins Jolly 57 for an attempt on Valiant 04A who had received a broken leg, knee, elbow, and jaw, upon ejection and landing. Aboard Jolly 73, the Low Bird, is Sergeant Chuck McGrath, who prepares his equipment to recover the pilot.

Enemy opposition to Jolly 73's intrusion is furious. A hailstorm of bullets rip through the aircraft and accompany McGrath to the ground. Somehow he is unscathed. In the deep undergrowth, McGrath finally locates the injured man. Not only is the man seriously injured, he's also in a very poor location for extraction. Tall trees will force Jolly 57 to establish a high hover, which will make it vulnerable to deadly ground fire. Meanwhile, enemy forces race through the area frantically searching for the two men. McGrath scoops up the immobile pilot and carries him some 120 feet through dense undergrowth to a safe place for a pickup.

Overhead, Jolly 73 has taken more ground fire and loses the use of its hoist. It is able to climb out, and Jolly 57 immediately dives in to pick up McGrath and his survivor. But Jolly 57 is also receiving punishment. Just as Jolly 57's PJ, Technical Sergeant Dennis Reich, is hauling McGrath into the helicopter, Reich is hit by ground fire. The onboard combat photographer, and the flight engineer drag the men inside, and Jolly 57 pulls out to join up with Jolly 73 which now has a severe fuel leak and needs an immediate air refueling. An HC-130P "King" answers the call, and a rendezvous is effected

Meanwhile, Sergeant McGrath begins treating Sergeant Reich, who is bleeding profusely from the bullet wound in his leg. Jolly 57's other PJ, now free from manning his mini-gun, joins in the care of Reich. McGrath bounds over to his survivor, worse for the wear, but relieved to once again be airborne and on his way to what he hopes will be a secured American base. On examination of the survivor's injuries, McGrath notices a new one: a bullet hole up through the bottom of the pilot's boot. He had been shot while ascending the hoist. Both patients are delivered safely to a medical facility-yes, on a secured American base. Sergeant McGrath goes on to receive a commission in the Air Force and finishes his career as an officer, but a pararescueman forever.

27 June 72

40th ARRS SAR on Valiant 03A. Captain Orrell A/C, Lt Connelly C/P, Sgt Sanders FE, Sgt Walker and Sgt Musmilion PJs.

40th ARRS SAR on Valiant 04A. Captain Stovall A/C, Lt Hutchinson C/P, Sgt Simmons FE, TSgt Reich and Sgt Nunes PJs, TSgt Shuman photographer

8 July 72

Det. 4, Korat, redesignated 56th ARRS. The 56th consisted of HC-130s and HH-43s. P10#4

10 July 72 Sgt Vogele departs PCS

11 July 72

31 ARRS, Clark AB Republic Philippine's deploys TDY with HH-3Es to Tan Son Nhut AB. The original Jolly Green Giants return to the war. Note: The first H-3 back was '67-14783' which had

been the last H-3 to depart Danang for Kadena in early '71. I remember when the word came into Kadena to gear up for deployment. All the guys who already had one SEA tour were really unhappy. They were now going back to a war they thought they were immune from because they were on H-3s and they were going back in H-3s, a woefully underpowered and lightly armed aircraft. You can't blame them when you consider that the replacement Jollys were more powerful in every way. Everyone did a great job but there was still the lingering undercurrent, especially by the guys in from Panama. Talk about culture shock! MSgt Harry Birtel becomes the deployed PJ NCOIC. The original purpose of the deployment is to cover a possible evacuation of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. (I could be wrong but didn't we also go there to backfill for the H-53s that had either been lost or transferred out of theater?) After they arrive at Tan Son Nhut, they begin SAR coverage of the southern portion of SVN. Other TDY PJ's included Martin (Max) Magee (Now THERE was a fun roommate!), Karl C. Morgan, Richard Land, Richard G. Terry, Glenn Farley, Daniel Hodler, Donald Lang, Timothy "Zeke" Zarnowski, Tim Trepanier, Jim Karabinus, John Tobey. At the end of Dan Hodler's TDY, he sold his .45 pistol to Glenn Farley. Glenn accidentally fired his new pistol through the floor of an HH-3 while it was parked on the ramp Glen Farley was from Kadena. He had many other equally outrageous exploits while he was there. There was no official small arms training in country. New PJs received training where they could get it. Glenn had never used a semi-automatic pistol before. He removed the magazine, thought it was empty, and pulled the trigger. Fortunately no one was injured, except for Glenn's ego. He caught hell from safety, operations and especially his fellow PJ's who thought he had embarrassed all of us. In retrospect, we all took it much too seriously. Inadvertent discharges were more common than we admitted. The root cause was inadequate training prior to arriving in a war zone.

Note: Comments from PJ Bill Preble who was part of this HH-3 unit

30 July 72

40th ARRS attempted LNRS pickup. System malfunctioned, forced to shear hoist cable and PJ and survivor were left on the ground. High bird came in for pickup using lights.

August 72

37th ARRS loses HH-53 to 122mm-rocket attack on DaNang AB.

20 August 72

37th, 40th, 56th, Det. 14, and 3rd ARRGp came under the command and technical control of the 41st ARRWg. At Hickham AFB, Hawaii. OPCON remains with 3rd ARRGp

Det. 3 Ubon, Det. 5 Udorn and Det. 12 U-Tapao of the 3rd ARRGp were redesignated Detachments 3, 5, and 12 of the 40th ARRS. Det. 14 was placed under the 40th ARRS at the end of August 1972. P5#4 p121#7

25 August 72

37th ARRS rescues F-4 crew shot down by MIG. F-4 crew ejected over the Northern Gulf of Tonkin. Survivors were Captain Jeff Feinstein (left) and Lt. Col Carl Baily (right). LaPointe went into the water to recover Feinstein.

3 September 72

An Army UH-1 is downed near Dalat, SVN with 11 survivors. Ralph Morino, Don Goodlett, and Dennis Williamson on board HH-53 that picks up the survivors.

15 Sept 72

Four HH-3s TDY from Clark to Det 14 3 ARRGp Tan Son Nhut return to Clark AB. All the H-3s eventually returned to their home units, including Panama. My own feeling when we left was a certain disbelief that all the years of effort had come to such an inconsequential end. We basically just turned off the lights, closed the door and went home. There was one good mission by the H-3s over to An-Loc picking up an AC-130 or 119 crew that had bailed out. Interestingly, I met the loadmaster from that aircraft a few years later when he was flying HC-130s out of 'Woody'. There was another mission to the Dalat area where an H-3 was damaged and had to stay at Dalat for rotor blade changes. I wasn't on any of these missions so you'll have to chase down the info. One mission I WAS on was a launch out toward An Loc to recover RVN troops in contact. We fired up and then shut down again when command post told us Intel wasn't sure which side of the river we should land on. I think you guys from Danang came in with a little more firepower and did the job. That's when you and the rest of the guys spent the night with us at Tan Son Nhut (what we remember of that night). That was when I realized the H-3s were there as an alternative if the '53s weren't available.

Note: Comments from PJ Bill Preble who was part of this HH-3 unit

October 1972

North Vietnam. Two crewmembers of an F-4 Phantom are shot down deep in North Vietnam. Fortunately, they eject over rugged terrain and land safely away from populated areas. Unfortunately, the enemy has observed their descent, and even before the two survivors land, recovery teams are sent to intercept them. Joining up, the two men quickly size up their situation and decide to climb to higher ground to put distance between themselves and the pursuing bad guys and aid the Jollys in recovery.

The Jolly Greens, in fact, are approaching at maximum airspeed. Pararescuemen Dan Nungesser and Charles Kinser are on the Low Bird. It now becomes a race between them and the closing ground forces. The latter are so close to the survivors, the two men can hear the shrill signal whistles and yelping dogs. Both men race up the steep slopes driven with new energy when they hear the approaching thundering of the 40th ARRS HH-53Cs. Low Bird drives in under the protective umbrella of the Sandys. Nungesser and Kinser exact tolls on the enemy forces with their mini-guns. The extraction is swift and flawless, denying the enemy the opportunity to add two more POWs to its cells in Hanoi.

28 October 1972

Decision made that A-7s will replace A-1s as RESCORT Sandy's. The United States policy of Vietnamization called for the transfer of all A-1s to the Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) before the end of 1972. P21#4

2 November 72

7th AF fraged 12 A-7 aircraft daily for SAR training missions. P22#4

7 November 72

A-1s fly last RESCORT mission. P125#7

16 November 72

Bobbin 05, F-105G shot down in NVN

A-7s fly first Sandy combat mission. P125#7

17 November 72

A-7s fly as SANDY on Bobbin 05 SAR. p42-47#4

18 November 72

Linebacker II commences. In the most concentrated bombing of the war, US aircraft drop 40,000 tons of bombs over Hanoi and Haiphong. 15 B-52s and 12 other aircraft are shot down, along with 43 aircrew KIA and 41 POW. The bombing ends when the DRV agrees to sign a truce that ended hostilities and allowed the USA to pull out of SVN. The truce was called the Paris Peace Accords.

Bobbin 05 Alpha and Bravo recovered.

25 November

SAR conference at 7th/13th AF HQ at Udorn to discuss A-7 problems during 16-18 Nov Bobbin 05 SAR.

30 November 1972

Officially we were called the 37th ARRS, but to any downed pilot who heard the heavy chop of the six bladed rotors from the HH-53C helicopter (or the five-bladed beat of the H-3 blades), it was the sound of the Jolly Green Giants. After six years at DaNang and rescuing 887 downed fliers or troops in contact, a flight of six HH-53s departed "Rocket City" for the last time. Only two weeks earlier the scramble klaxon had sounded, but instead of the expected loudspeaker cry of "*Scramble the Jolly's*" a voice unexpectedly announced that all squadron members should gather in the main hanger for an important announcement from our commander. Twenty minutes later almost 200 aircrew, maintenance, and support personnel milled around openly wondering what this was all about. No one in the squadron could ever recall the scramble klaxon being used for any purpose except launching our aircraft on a combat rescue. LtCol. Stephen L. Sutton soon walked out of Jolly Operations, smiling from ear to ear. He wasted no time, and in a loud voice proclaimed simply "We're all going home, it's over." The squadron erupted into spontaneous turmoil and cheers. We were all screaming, jumping up and down, patting each other on the back. It took some time to quiet this squadron down. After repeated orders to quiet down Col. Sutton was able to speak once again. His next announcement was going to surprise us almost as

much as his first. "You will all be out of here in less than three weeks." Again chaos erupted. This meant that we would not be spending Christmas in Vietnam. It was almost too good to be true. Could we really shut down our entire rescue squadron, pack up our gear, and process each of us for reassignment in 21 days? The answer was an unequivocal yes. Throughout DaNang Air Base, this process was repeating itself at all of the American units. I suspect that it was repeating itself at all U.S. combat units throughout the country of Vietnam.

The powers to be in Washington had negotiated a peace treaty with the North Vietnamese. They now wanted us to pack up and get out of town as fast as we could, if not faster. We had essentially declared victory and were now going to extricate ourselves from the quagmire Vietnam had become. The men of the 37th ARRS were more than glad to enthusiastically execute this order. To expedite our departure all unit facilities, equipment, weapons, and munitions were to be turned over to the VNAF. The only exception to this policy would be our aircraft and individually issued professional gear. The aircraft would be transferred to the 40th ARRS at NKP Thailand. Each individual's professional gear would be boxed, inspected by customs, and shipped to our next base of assignment. The same process would repeat itself with our personally owned possessions.

The next three weeks would consist of long days of furious activity. During the day we packed personal and professional gear for shipment back to the states. (what did you do at night?) Performance reports and awards and decorations packages had to be completed on everyone. There was serious concern among U.S. commanders to ensure that we did not ship any weapons or munitions out of the country for war souvenirs. They also wanted to ensure that no one shipped any illegal drugs out in their gear. This led to extensive inspections of all boxes being shipped out of country. Col. Sutton knew that we PJs probably had some weapons and explosives that were not listed on unit supply records. To provide a means to turn them in legally he instituted an amnesty policy. He placed a wooden box, about 4x4 feet size, in the PJ section with an amnesty sign on it.

PJ weapons in Vietnam had long been an issue that rescue unit commanders struggled with. We had entered the war with .38 caliber pistols and an M-16 rifle. These were the only official weapons authorized by the Air Force for use by its PJs. As the war dragged on the character of the pararescue mission also changed. Dozens of pararescuemen attended Recondo school at Nha Trang and became trained in the full spectrum of infantry weapons and explosives. These pararescuemen in turn trained other PJs who arrived in-country but could not get to Recondo school. Pararescuemen routinely found themselves on the ground, in enemy territory for longer periods than the Air Force anticipated. The North Vietnamese also placed a bounty on PJs, to motivate their troops to capture or kill pararescuemen who were attempting to rescue a downed pilot. This led to pararescue teams in-country deciding which weapons were needed to survive in this hostile environment. The only problem with this arrangement was that the weapons carried by PJs at the end of the war were not authorized in USAF supply tables of allowance. In the last few months of the war, Col. Sutton was under pressure from his superiors to ensure his PJs carried only a pistol and a rifle. He in turn put pressure on TSgt Harwell Quillian, the PJ NCOIC to ensure that only authorized weapons were carried. When Sergeant Quillian told us to turn in our illegal weapons a couple of months earlier, the PJs assigned were smart enough not to try and argue the illogic of unilateral disarmament in the middle of a war. We turned in a couple dozen weapons and a few crates of explosives and told him to tell Col. Sutton that he had all the "illegal" weapons. This made everyone happy. It was an open secret among the rescue aircrews that we flew with that we were still armed to the teeth. But now that we were all going home, we did not require these weapons. It was now the proper time to take the amnesty policy to heart. We did have one minor problem, Col. Sutton's box was a "little too small." In one of the most infamous PJ photos of the war, the 37th PJ team displayed *one* of each type weapon that we owned. These included: .50 cal. heavy machinegun, 7.62 M-60 machinegun, M-79 grenade launcher, XM-148 grenade launcher, M-72 LAW rocket, M-3 silenced grease gun, 9mm "Swedish K", AK-47, AKM, M1911 .45 pistol, Browning 9mm pistol, claymore mine, various types of hand grenades and 40mm explosives and a few weapons that had been so heavily modified that they rightly had no

name. Col. Sutton was not amused when he was asked to take a look at his amnesty box. It was buried in high explosive fragmentation grenades. He phoned for the DaNang EOD team to pick up the PJ weapons. They required a flat bed truck to haul it all away. One of them commented that we had enough to outfit an infantry company for a week of heavy battle.



From left to right: Unknown PJ, Steve Jones, Larry Kimball, Bruce Johnson, Ron Charlsworth, Dennis Baker, John Carlson, Clay Hammock, Bob LaPointe, Dudley Green, Buzz Beauchamp, and Bill Bradley. Not in photo was Harwell Quillian. He was in Col. Sutton's office getting his ass chewed.

The weapons amnesty issue was the only minor sour note in the shutdown of the 37th. But it only took one passing moment in the blur of other happy activity that was occurring. Everyone received PCS assignments and processed out through the DaNang personnel office. Most would be going straight back to the United States and would be assigned to CONUS air rescue units. About one third of the aircrews and PJs would be reassigned to the 40th ARRS at NKP, Thailand. Virtually all those going to Thailand were volunteers. Another issue that needed to be resolved was what to do with "Stretch". Stretch was an 11-foot long Indian Rock Python that had been the PJ mascot for years. The snake cage was rather large and located outside but adjacent to the Pararescue Section. No one with any sense at all went into this cage without having one of the PJ snake handlers with them. No one ever realized that the cages extra large size was a result of it serving the dual purpose of a munitions storage area for all the "illegal high explosives" that the 37th PJs owned. Thank God that a 122mm rocket never hit this cage, the secondary explosions would have been rather spectacular. It was decided that "Stretch" would PCS with the men going to NKP. It would be flown there on one of the Jollys when they departed. Stretch's new cage at

NKP would be located next to the 40th ARRS's mascot, "Buffy". Buffy was a black Malayan Sun bear.

At sunset we ceased work and celebrated the end of the war. Raucous parties were occurring all over DaNang. Most of the 37th gravitated to the PJ barracks bar or the Jolly Green Inn, the maintenance bar. The night before the "Jollys" departed for NKP the squadron had its last official party. Appropriately it would be at the Jolly Green Inn. All realized that it would be their last social gathering before the squadron was deactivated. Everyone was glad to soon be leaving Vietnam. However it was a mixed emotion. We would also be saying goodbye to many of our brothers in arms, men whom we had gone to battle with, laughed with, cried with. Most realized that it was likely that they would never meet again. As the free drinks flowed it was impossible to not recall the exploits they shared, the men they had saved, and the teammates they had lost in combat. These rescue missions had been some of the most hazardous type of flying activity in this unpopular war. The Rescuemen were clear about their mission. "Rescue shot down American pilots from capture or death by the NVA", unpopular war be damned. We were not politicians, we were American warriors. Tonight the warriors celebrated one last time. Pilots, maintenance men, PJs, clerks, supply men and other squadron members toasted each other. The drinks flowed freely, the music was loud, the mood was buoyant. Late in the night someone started singing a song we had all heard sung before. Soon everyone was singing. The song was "The ballad of the Jolly Green Giants." It had been written many years earlier by Bull Durham. It went like this:

Insert after obtaining permission to use.

All parties end. The next morning found us all on the flightline ramp. The crews were in the "Jollys", rotors turning. Those of us remaining at DaNang, awaiting the arrival of the "Freedom Bird", waved to the departing crews, they waved back. The mood was serious, the men quiet. We were witnessing the end of an era. After takeoff, the "Jollys" formed up in tight formation and then over flew Jolly Green Operations. It was a final salute to their teammates who gathered on the flight line to witness the last Jolly Green Giants over flying DaNang Air Base. There was more than one moist eyeball in the men left on the now very quiet flightline. In an interview with the DaNang newspaper, the Gunfighter Gazette, Col Sutton stated the following "I cannot begin to describe the dedication these guys have for their job. It is 24 hours a day, seven days a week, always alert and ready to pick someone up so 'Charlie' does not get him. When we bring a downed pilot back to DaNang the guys in my squadron act like he is a long lost brother. They really have empathy for the jet jocks and all men in trouble. They are the greatest bunch of guys I have ever known."

In a few days the last Rescuemen assigned to the Jolly Green Giants departed for home. But they would not be the last rescuemen leaving DaNang. That honor would belong to the Pedros. The HH-43 LBR unit was redesignated Det. 7 40th ARRS and remained at DaNang until the peace treaty was signed on 30 January 73. The Pedro's were the first into the war. It was fitting that they would be the last rescuemen out of Vietnam.

Comments by Bill Preble: There was also a unit that remained in place at TSN until the very last. There were even some casualties there in a later rocket attack.

P10#4

5 HH-53's were transferred to the 40th ARRS at NKP p127#7

November 72

A-7's assume RESCORT duties as Sandys.

10 December 72

Kansas 01B SAR. 40th ARRS launch Jollys. A/C 793 Captain Campbell A/C, Captain Boyd, Sgt Walsh FE, Sgt Morgan and Sgt Williamson PJs. Aircraft takes battle damage. Captain Boyd hit in leg. Sgt Morgan hit in arm. Forced to pull out. Then Jimmy Walsh, the flight engineer, flies the damaged HH-53.

High bird goes in. A/C 358 Rish A/C, Bourtesse C/P, Smith FE, Young PJ, Gonzales PJ. Their aircraft also takes battle damage. Number 2 engine shut down, utility hydraulics lost. Jolly comes to hover over downed pilot but he makes no attempt to get on penetrator. Jolly forced off by ground fire. Survivor not recovered. A-7s acted as Sandys. *Was this first A-7 SAR?*

Mid-Dec 72

40th ARRS loses HH-53 (combat loss?) p127#7

20 Dec 72

B-52 (Brass 02) crew bails out over Thailand due to battle damage received over Hanoi.

21 December 72

Spectre 17 (AC-130) SAR. First LNRS recovery. 40th ARRS HH-53 manned by Captain Shipman AC, 1Lt Rabaja CP, Sgt Bryant FE, Sgt Stephens and TSgt Walker PJs. They recovered Spectre 17J Williams and 17I Stevens. *SAR log*

P15#4 p48-49#4

First use of AC-130 in SAR p135#7 P93#7

22 December 72

Jackal 33 SAR, F-111, downed in NVN *SAR log*

27 December 72

40th ARRS Jolly 73 AC 788 received heavy ground fire trying to rescue Jackel 33B, near Hanoi. It had to land near the Fishes Mouth with low fuel and an inoperative probe. After the crew – Captain Shapiro, Captain Pereira, Sgt Rouhier, TSgt Carlson and A1C Jones PJs, and Sgt Cockerill photographer were transferred to Jolly 63. Jolly 63 crewed by Lt Long, Lt Ackerson, Sgt Foy, Sgt Hammock, Sgt Mueller, and Sgt Strong proceeded to Ch86 to off load Captain Pereira who had a broken arm. Jolly 54, the #4 backup bird landed near Jolly 73 to recover classified equipment but was driven off by hostile fire. Sandys received the order to destroy Jolly 73 to prevent it from falling into enemy hands. Captain Rereira, Jolly 73 CP being evacuated to Clark AB. *SAR log*

B-52 (Ash 02) crew bails out due to battle damage over Thailand. Crew rescued by Jollys and Pedros except for one crewmember who caught a Thai commercial bus back to NKP

29 Dec 72

37th ARRS deactivated at DaNang. The Pedro unit at DaNang is the last ARRS unit at DaNang and becomes a detachment of the 40th ARRS

Comments by Bill Preble: Tom Stone has an interesting final story about going back into DaNang a few years later with another PJ and crew to fly an H-3 back to Osan. The aircraft had been assigned to the JCRCC as part of that initial POW/MIA effort. They were there just one night but that little bit would sure make for an interesting conclusion.