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# RUSTIC Rustic News



[www.rustic.org](http://www.rustic.org)



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## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS:

Happy Springtime to all the Rustics and families. Because of the cancellation of our last scheduled reunion in Tucson, we were unable to conduct the normal membership nominations and elections of Rustic officers. Your current Rustic Board of Directors have all volunteered to remain in their current position until the next election. You will see later in this Newsletter we plan to hold our next reunion in April 2023 at Valdosta, GA. During that reunion we will hold our normal business meeting along with election of new officers. Laura and I look forward to seeing as many of you who can attend. It sounds like the hosting 74th Fighter Squadron is planning quite an event!



Johnny Drury over Cambodia, Dec 2, 1971. Bob Crothers Collection

On another subject...it seems these Rustic Newsletters are coming more frequently than in the past. Could that be that time seems to be moving faster and faster? Our next Newsletter is just months away. So I encourage each of the Rustics and their families to please send in your emails to Claude Newland and let us know how you are doing so that we can keep all updated with Newsletter information.

**2023 RUSTIC REUNION.** Our next Rustic reunion will be in Valdosta, GA. The tentative dates are April 27–30, 2023. **Tom Capps** and **Doug Aitken** are working the details. Moody AFB has a deployment the last half of April 2023 which could impact the reunion dates. The project office, **Capt Luke Gliniski**, will talk with the Operations Group Commander soon and will let us know if a date adjustment is needed.

The reunion will be hosted by the **74th Fighter Squadron** at Moody AFB. Their squadron lineage dates back to the Flying Tiger of WWII. Currently, they fly A-10s and use the Rustic callsign when flying designated FAC missions.

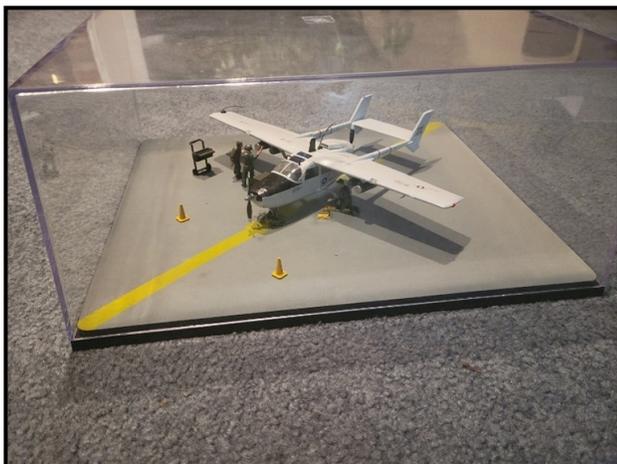
In January **Tom Capps** visited the 74<sup>th</sup> FS to present them with the OV-10 and O-2A aircraft dioramas given

to the Rustics by the president of the A-37 Association at our 2019 Las Vegas reunion. During his visit Tom sounded out the Flying Tigers on the possibility of holding a joint reunion with them. Their response was overwhelming. They are eager to provide lots of talent and manpower to make such a gathering very special.

Reunion details and Registration form will be published in our December 2022 newsletter and posted on our Rustic website in December. Start making plans now to attend!



**LTC Matt Shelly, 74<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron commander, presented several gifts to Tom Capps when he visited their squadron at Moody AFB.**



**OV-10 and O-2A dioramas created by Lon Holtz, president of the A-37 Association. He presented them to the Rustics at our 2019 Las Vegas reunion.**

**50th ANNIVERSARY APPROACHING - END-OF-SOUTHEAST-ASIA WAR.** Can you believe it? A historic milestone date is approaching. August 15, 2023, will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last day of the Southeast Asia conflict. On that historic day the Rustics flew their last combat sorties. That night a truly epic party was held at the Rustic hooch. The war was finally over for the Rustics, but it was a bitter-sweet day. Our allies were left to an uncertain future.



*The last Rustic and Nail FAC crews pitch out for an overhead pattern and landing at Ubon RTAB on August 15, 1973. Once they landed close air support for our Cambodian allies ceased. This was truly the Rustics final FINI flight. After each OV-10 landed they de-armed and then turned and taxied toward the Rustic ramp. At that moment each pilot turned on his smoke generator, leaving greasy white smoke billowing behind his aircraft. Pulling into the chocks, and still smoking, each FAC feathered their props.*



***THE LAST RUSTICS. Back Row L-R: Rocky Brown, Bob Ryals, Ned Helm, Curt Hawker, "Shell" Storer. Dick Goddard, and Tim Shafer. Front Row L-R: Si Dahle, Sgt. Pratt, Rick Scaling, Bill Powers with Misse, Mike Kiraly, Tom Yarborough, Woody Baker, and "Rowdy" Hetherington, August 1973.***

**ROSTER UPDATES:**

**Tom Calvanelli** H 404-312-6566.

**Normand Falcon** 116 Weeping Willow Circle, Waite Park, MN 56387

**John Litton** [john.litton@usda.gov](mailto:john.litton@usda.gov) or [jlitton57@gmail.com](mailto:jlitton57@gmail.com)

**Jim Reese** (c) 404-915-5941

**NEXT-OF-KIN ROSTER:**

**Terry Lewis** (wife of Nickolas Lewis) 321-432-9387, [terrylewis55@gmail.com](mailto:terrylewis55@gmail.com), Address is the same.

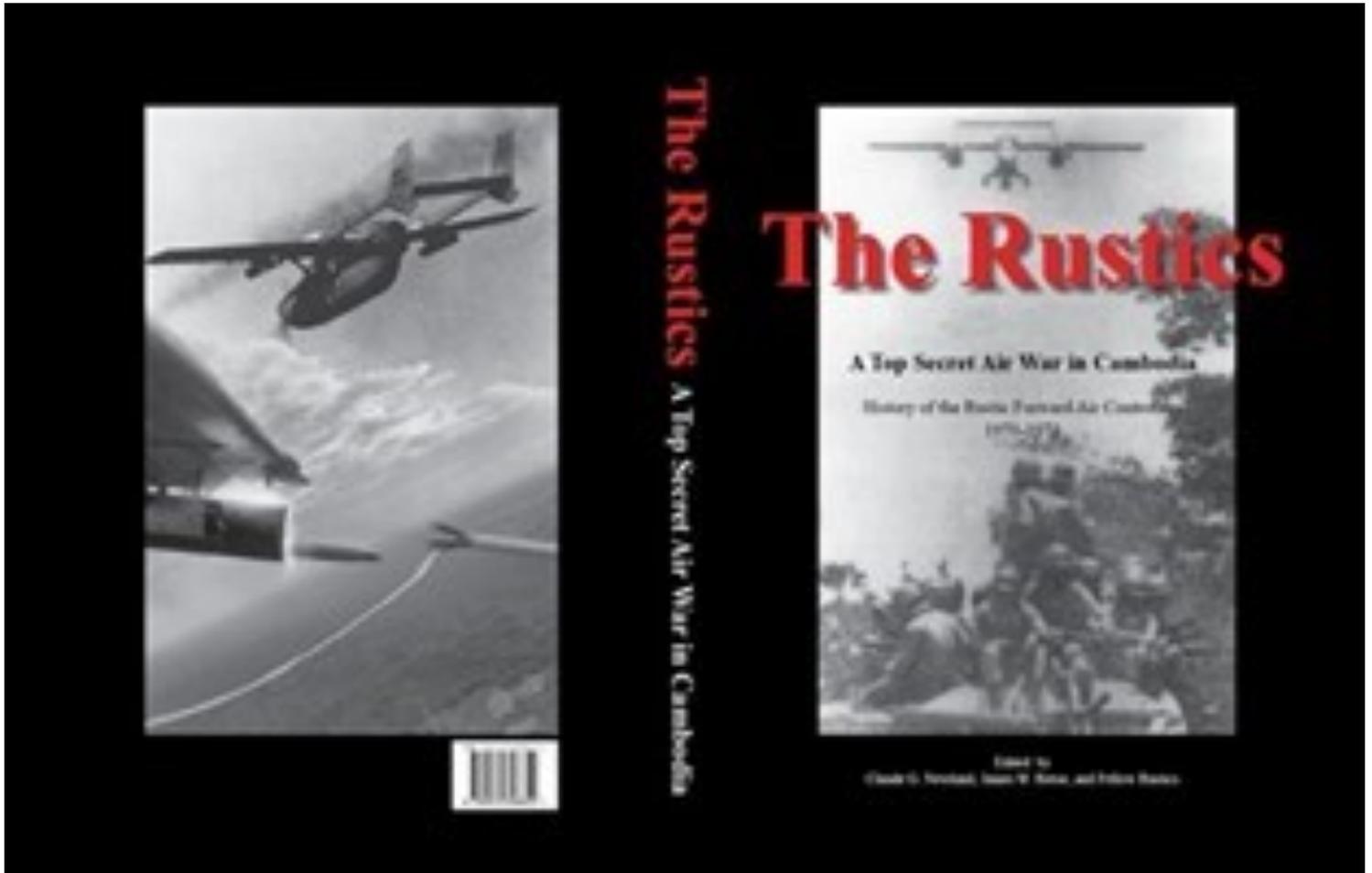
**WINGMAN SUPPORT: (Drury): Don Haller** suffered a stroke in February and is in a rehab facility in Colorado Springs. His daughter, **Nancy Haller Lasseter** (Cell 818-319-5458; email: [hopwithus@aol.com](mailto:hopwithus@aol.com)), says he welcomes visitors and telephone calls. It is difficult for him to make calls but enjoys hearing from his friends. His contact information is:

**Don Haller**

c/o Healthcare Resort of Colorado Springs  
2818 Grand Vista Circle  
Colorado Springs, CO 80904  
Cell: 719-238-2464

**Lendy and Sue Edwards** are both undergoing treatment for cancer. Sue has received chemo treatments that she tolerated very well. Surgery is scheduled for 31 May to be followed with more Chemo treatments. Lendy will be having radiation treatments for an inoperable skin cancer in June.

**RUSTIC BOOK PRICE INCREASE.** Due to rising print costs the price of our 488-page hardbound book, “The Rustics -- A Top Secret Air War in Cambodia” will be \$39.99, plus shipping. This is a \$5.00 increase from our original price set in 2011. The price of a digital copy of the book remains the same - \$8.99. To order, go to [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com) and search title “The Rustics.” Once ordered, the printed book should arrive at your doorstep in about 10 days.



**FORT WORTH AVIATION MUSEUM RESTORING A FLYABLE O-1 BIRDDOG.** A Southeast Asia-era O-1 Birddog is being restored at Meacham Field in Ft Worth, TX. The original tail number will be on one side of the aircraft’s tail. The tail number of the O-1 flown by Hilliard Wilbanks, O-15078, (FAC Medal of Honor awardee) will be on the other side as well as the livery artwork and red top tail marking of the Red Marker FACs in honor of the Red Marker’s commander, **Gene McCutchan**.

**Jim Hodgson** at the Ft Worth Aviation Museum provided the following background on the aircraft:

Our Cessna L-19 or O-1 Birddog (Serial No. 51-16963, c/n 22840, Model 305A) was assigned to a National Guard unit. Following 4,706 hours of military flying, it left military service. Transferred to US Forestry Department in North Carolina as N9623Q (Aircraft #7) in May 1973. It flew to the Fort Worth Aviation Museum in 2011 and remains the only aircraft that has flown to the museum under its own power.

The aircraft was restored in 2021 by Cowtown Aero-crafters and commemorates two histories:

First, on 24 February 1967, US Air Force pilot Hilliard A. Wilbanks (1933-1967) flew for the 21<sup>st</sup> TASS protecting American and South Vietnamese troops on the ground by strafing the Vietcong troops using his M16 rifle. He shot his M16 from the side window of the birddog. He was shot down by ground fire after the third pass and died on his way to the hospital. He became a Medal of Honor recipient for his sacrifice.

Second, Red Marker FACs supported the Vietnamese Airborne Division and the Red Hats of US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) Advisory Team 162 from 1962-1973. The aircraft is a tribute to the Air Liaison Officers, Forward Air Controllers, Radio Operators, Crew Chiefs, and Maintenance personnel. Less than 175 men served with the detachment. Five Red Markers lost their lives performing the mission.



*O-1 Bird Dog being restored by the Ft Worth Aviation Museum. It's about ready for roll-out.*



*Red Marker FAC livery and tail markings on the O-1 aircraft being restored.*

## Short Bursts:

1. **Silver Star Awarded.** Aussie FAC **Mac Cottrell**, arrived in Vietnam for FAC duties in April 1968.

He flew the O-1 in support of the US 1st Infantry Division at Lai Khe in III Corps. Mac has attended several ALL-FAC reunions in the United States, and he organized the memorable Aussie/US FAC reunion in Canberra in 2008 which several Rustics and their wives attended. At that time, he was belatedly presented a DFC for a dicey troops-in-contact mission flown on 10 June 1968, just 12 miles north of Bien Hoa Air Base. His DFC decoration was recently upgraded to Silver Star which was presented to Mac at the US Embassy in Canberra on Dec 15, 2021.



2. **19th Tass OV-10 Flight Manual.** If you would like a copy of the 40 page 19th TASS OV-10 Flight Manual contact **Ron Van Kirk** at [ronvankirk@aol.com](mailto:ronvankirk@aol.com) He will email you a copy.

3. **Did You Know Other O-2s Flew Over Cambodia? (FACNET).** **Paul McCool**, Covey 565, flew O-2 missions over northern Cambodia out of Pleiku from Sep. 1970-Sep. 1971. **Tom Petitmermet**, an O-2 Pretzel O2 FAC flew missions from Quan Loi into Cambodia on a daily basis in support of MACVSOG missions from Mar to Nov '71. He transitioned to a Mike 66 callsign when he started flying MACVSOG missions into Cambodia from Bhan Me Thout until December '71.

Some of the first 1970 Sundog missions into Cambodia were flown by two Red Marker O-1 Birddog FACs--**Chad Swedberg** and **James Hix**. They were looking for anyone with experience over Cambodia and these two guys volunteered. They had been in the Fishhook earlier. **Swedberg** and **Hix** only flew a few missions as Sundogs before going to the classified Steve Canyon FAC program in Laos.

4. **Only AC-119 Gunship Shot Down in SEA.** Stinger 41 was the only AC-119 gunship to be shot down in the Vietnam war. May 2, 2022, was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Stinger 41's last flight. It was a daylight mission out of Bien Hoa Air Base, Vietnam. The mission was in support of troops in the provincial capital of An Loc. There were ten crew members aboard. Seven bailed out and were rescued and the other three perished in the crash.

5. **FAC/Fort Worth Aviation Museum Donations?** If you have anything you'd like to donate to the FAC/Fort Worth Aviation Museum, contact **Ben Guttery** at 817-614-5614 or [bguttery@ftwaviation.com](mailto:bguttery@ftwaviation.com). They'd love anything--patches, flight suits, party suits, pictures--anything. A tax donation letter will be provided.

## MIKE WILSON, RUSTIC 08, TAKES HONOR FLIGHT.

I had the privilege of being included on an Honor Flight recently to Washington DC. This was the first Honor Flight from the Tucson area since the covid. We flew on a charter plane and each vet had a "guardian." The guardians for the most part were young vets now attending the University of Arizona. My guardian was a vet AP with tours in the Middle East. There was no cost to the vets or to the guardians.

We flew early on a Saturday to Baltimore to a Hyatt Hotel. All bus rides to and from airport and to and from DC and at the monuments had motorcycle escorts by the "Harley Honor Guard Riders." Most of this flight were Vietnam Vets. There were a few Korean Vets and a few WWII vets, one of those being a 99-year young woman vet. We visited Lincoln memorial, The Wall, Korean War monument, WWII monument, Arlington, Changing of the Guard, etc. We were fed and entertained like kings. There was a banquet one night with a Gold Star Mother as speaker. Arriving back in Tucson late Monday night we were met by a large welcoming committee.



*Mike Wilson and his Honor Flight Guardian.*

The organizers of the Honor Flights here in Southern Arizona run these flights like a well-oiled machine. For me it was a wonderful trip. I felt honored and respected. I have put in an application to volunteer with this group and Sherry has put them on our Christmas donations list.



*Honor Flight from Tucson, Arizona, at Washington DC.*

**REPORT FROM KOMPONG CHAM SUNRISE MINISTRIES, Susan Smith.** We just wrapped up a big holiday season. I saw several news articles mentioning that it was Passover, Easter, and Ramadan seasons all at once. But in Cambodia it was also Khmer New Year, the biggest Cambodian holiday of the year, on April 14-16, and everyone takes minimum 3 days up to 2 weeks off.

Oddly enough, Khmer New Year and Good Friday both involve the death of a god. This year, according to Cambodian tradition, on April 14th at 10am, a different tevada (celestial dancer/angel) came down to guard her father's severed head for the coming year, taking her turn in the rotation of seven sisters. (Full retelling of the story of New Year in a link in the email.)

Sunrise takes advantage of this holiday to do activities with our clients when their kids are on school vacation. In past years we've done a 3-day



trip with clients that involves tourism, relaxing, games, program evaluation, and exposure to the scriptures. The past two years, all that was cancelled due to covid. This year, our omicron wave was over just in time (February-March) and we scheduled a one-day trip to a forest & river. In the morning we had a couple speakers (including me, Susan) share from scripture in the forest, and forest, and in the afternoon, we ate by the river, swam, and had some traditional dancing.

**Mark Smith** then shared about God's creation all around us—how the creation gives testimony to the greatness of the One who created it (Psalms 96, 97, Romans 1), and how the creation also groans under the weight of sin, waiting for the return of the One that will liberate us and all things from the burden of sin (Romans 8). Trash was my example of creation groaning and clients spontaneously collected trash before we got back on the bus. Many of our clients live every day with illness that is the direct result of someone's sin, so I shared that our God knows and cries over this reality, but it won't last forever.

## O-2 HISTORY

In 1966 the United States Air Force commissioned Cessna to build a military variant of their Skymaster aircraft to replace the O-1 Bird Dog for FAC duty in Vietnam.

Both the civilian and military Skymasters were low-cost twin-engine piston-powered aircraft, with one engine in the nose of the aircraft and a second in the rear of the fuselage. The push-pull configuration provided centerline thrust, allowing simpler operation than the low-wing mounting of most twin-engine light aircraft, and allowed a high wing to be used, providing clear observation below and behind the aircraft.

The O-2A required more than 50 changes to the airframe, rigging, electrical system, power-plant, etc. Modifications made for the military configuration included fore-and-aft seating for a pilot and observer, instead of the six seats of the civilian version; installation of view panels in the doors (for improved ground observation); installation of flame-retardant foam in the wing-mounted fuel tanks (slightly increasing weight, and reducing maximum fuel capacity by 3%); installation of military, rather than civilian, communication and navigation equipment and antennas; removal of propeller spinners; increased gross weight (5,400 lb vs. 4,400 lbs in civilian version), with component strengthening as required to support the increase; and removal of interior upholstery.

The first O-2 flew in January 1967, and the plane went into production shortly thereafter. Performance (especially at cruising altitudes) was degraded due to the added antennas and significant weight increase but was considered sufficient for the anticipated low-level operation.

The USAF took delivery of the O-2 Skymaster in March 1967. The O-2A also entered the U.S. Army's inventory during 1967, from USAF stock. By 1970, a total of 532 USAF O-2s had been built, in two variants. The O-2A was introduced as a replacement aircraft for the O-1 Bird Dog. The O-2B was equipped with loudspeakers and a leaflet dispenser to be used in the psychological operations (PSYOPS) role.



*O-2A FAC aircraft on display at Hurlburt Field's Air Park, FL*

**III DASC OPERATIONS.** **Leon Cardiff** was a busy radio operator (RO) during his tour in Vietnam. Here is his account of how he supported the 19th TASS and the Rustics.

I got to Bien Hoa Air Base on May 22, 1970, then went to Can Tho in IV Corps for six weeks. Operations were really wound down then and IV DASC was closed, yet O-2 FAC's were still working out of Binh Thuy.

I came back to the Bien Hoa Air Base and was assigned to III DASC and the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS (Tactical Air Support Squadron) where I was used as a utility RO. This included some time up on Nui Ba Den Mountain as a radio relay for Rustics and Sundog FACs in Cambodia. I was also called upon to be the radio operator with a VNAF pilot. We drove through downtown Saigon to Go Dau Ha in an MRC 108 jeep (with HF, VHF, UHF and FM radios) and a trailer with two generators for an operation supporting the Vietnamese for about 10 days, then back to III DASC.

Operations at III DASC could be very hectic. During the day we had two HF networks operating. One net took air strike requests and other info from the radio operators working with FACs supporting Vietnamese ARVN units. The other HF net worked USAF FACs AT Bien Hoa supporting the U.S. 1st Cavalry or FACs out of Cu Chi AB supporting the 25th Infantry Division. We also took/received BDA reports, changes to mission FRAGs, reports on end-of-day aircraft status, pilot flight time, parts requests, and other administrative traffic.

VHF and UHF radios were used to monitor aircraft requests, nighttime requests from Sleepytime FACs or Shadow gunships, and 19<sup>th</sup> TASS maintenance and operational issues at Hunt Control. FM radios were used to take and monitor requests from Rustic Alpha, Rustic Control, or to pass info from Air Liaison Officers to the TASS.

III DASC (callsign: Pawnee Target) was a direct conduit for Rustic & Sundog FAC strike requests which were relayed to Blue Chip at 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force at Ton Son Nhut AB. Air strike and gunship requests for targets in III Corps came to the DASC. Targets were verified with the Vietnamese ARVN and DASC officer or enlisted controller, then approved and sent to Blue Chip for their final approval.

In January 1971 I went down to a navy outpost at Tan Chau in the Delta, just a few clicks from the Cambodian border. I worked for Major Thornton, an AF pilot. We used an MRC-108 radio truck to communicate with the Mekong River convoys that were assembling and preparing to depart for Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Maj Thornton coordinated with the navy and Blue Chip at TSN for convoy air support to and from PP. I supported this operation for 60 days before going back to III DASC. This was the ONLY time in Vietnam I received a hard copy of printed orders.

After I got back from this mission, I filled in for a week at Rustic Control (on the flight line) for one of the regular Rustic ROs who went on R&R. Other III DASC duties followed. During this time period, I continued to live in the downtown Bien Hoa compound that housed III DASC personnel.

I extended my tour of duty for six months because first term RO's were being retrained as clerks or security policemen for the remainder of their enlistments. My DEROS from Vietnam was not until Dec 1971.

This was one of the best assignments for a young enlisted 20-year-old. I am sure the same is true for many young 1st Lt FAC's. I was not 21 when I rotated stateside to F.E. Warren AFB and the cold winters of Cheyenne Wyoming (as an RO, but that is a different story).

I have an mp3 file that recorded a night shift at III DASC in early 1971. I am in the process of editing and condensing 4 plus hours of the recording. Rustic 40 is on the recording with a departure from Bien Hoa, as well as other requests, including that of a gunship. I will coordinate posting and send a copy to Rustic 19 when complete. **MSgt Retired, Leon Cardiff**

## **LETTERS TO THE RUSTICS:**

**From Cathy Falcon, Dec 2021**

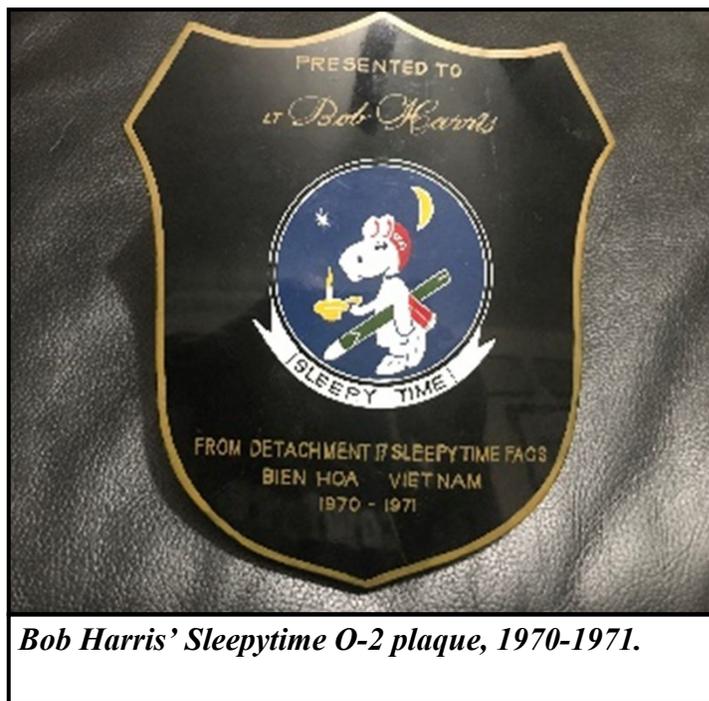
**Norm** (Rustic Q) has been battling Parkinson's for more than 20 years. He has always maintained his sense of humor even though he has difficulty speaking (his favorite thing). Deep brain stimulation in 2009 helped him. We found it necessary to move where 4 of our children live in this freezing state (Minnesota). The 5th is in Michigan. Norm is living at the St Cloud VA now which is less than 5 miles down the road. Both being veterans we miss that camaraderie, and this VA is the best. Great people and good care. He keeps busy as he wants to be there. He has been on Hospice since April-giving us opportunity to visit him anytime...Thank God for facetime....Good luck to you all and we wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy safe New Year...Thank you for all the updates etc.. **Cathy**

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**From Bob Harris, Dec 2021** (“Red Eye’s response when asked if the Rustic O-2’s were painted black.)

When I arrived in Aug 70, the night operation around Saigon was used to break in new folks in preparation for crossing the border. The planes were not painted black and there was no expanded mission. My contribution - flew maybe 15 Saigon Cap missions. Makes me want to take a nap. Only exciting time was controlling “Razorback” (Army helos) over VC Island. At least I fired some rockets.

When I started flying in Cambodia, I never did the cap again and I’m not sure the unit kept doing it. When I left in Aug 71, the planes were still grey. The only O-2s that may have been black were the O-2B “bull shit bombers.”



*Bob Harris' Sleepytime O-2 plaque, 1970-1971.*

#### CALENDAR:

1. **All FAC Reunion**, Oct 17-21, 2022, Colorado Springs, CO. See FAC Association website.
2. **AC-119 Gunship Reunion.**, Sep 28 Oct 2, 2022, Branson, Missouri
3. **Rustic Reunion**, Valdosta, GA, Apr 27–30, 2023, Moody AFB