THE HISTORY OF

U.S. NAVAL AIRBORNE ELECTRONICS RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON-ONE

EVENTS OF 14 16, and 17th OF JUNE 1959

BY

ROBERT L. HARRELSON, AT1 USN (RET)

I JOINED FLEET AIR RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON ONE (VQ-1) IN JULY 1957 AT NAS IWAKUNI, JAPAN. I WAS PICKED UP FOR FLIGHT CREW TRAINING IN THE P4M-1Q AIRCRAFT. STARTED FLYING THE FOLLOWING MONTH; WAS DESIGNATED "COMBAT AIR CREWMAN" ON 29 MARCH 1958. THE CERTIFICATE AND CAC WINGS WERE PRESENTED AT INSPECTION. FLIGHTS CONTINUED AND I WAS ASSIGNED TO FLIGHT CREW NUMBER SIX ON P4M-1Q, BUNO 124366. WE FLEW REGULARLY ASSIGNED FLIGHTS.

On 14 JUNE 1959 CREW SIX IN BUNO 12209 TOOK OFF FROM NAS IWAKUNI ON A ROUTINE FLIGHT (1Q5) TO USAF MISAWA WITH THE FOLLOWING CREW:

ECAC LCDR D. R. MAYER "DON"

CO-PILOT LCDR. V. J. ANANIA "VINCE THE PRINCE"

NAV. LTJG J. D. MALONE

NAV. ENS D. R. SULLIVAN "SILKY SULLIVAN"

PLANE CAPT. AD2 G. D. SAMPSON "SAM"

2ND P. C. AE2 D. E. CORDER "DON"

RADIOMAN AT1 R. L. HARRELSON "BOB"

RADAR AQ1 F. W. MCCLINTICK "MAC"

ORDINANCE AO1 R. E. NELSON "NELLIE"

ECM CREW

EVAL. LTJG O. E. FARLEY "OWEN"

OPR. AT1 E. (N) BARKER "GENE"

OPR. AT3 J. (N) IULIAND

OPR. AT3 J. A. BROUGHTON "JIM"

OPR. AT3 C. O. ERICKSON "CAR"

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ON 14 JUNE 1959, CREW SIX IN BUNO 12209 TOOK OFF FROM NAS IWAKUNI, JAPAN ON A ROUTINE FLIGHT TO USAF BASE MISAWA ON HONSHU, JAPAN. WE ARRIVED IN MISAWA WITHOUT INCIDENT. ON THE MORNING OF 16 JUNE 1959 WE REPORTED TO OUR AIRCRAFT TO COMPLETE THE 2ND LEG OF OUR FLIGHT. D. E. CORDER HAD MADE AE2 ON THIS DATE. WE LAUGHED AND KIDDED HIM ABOUT HAVING IT SEWED ON THE DUNGAREE SHIRT HE WAS WEARING THAT MORNING. WE SUITED UP AND TOOK OFF ON OUR FLIGHT (1Q5) AND FLEW DOWN THE COAST OFF VLADIVOSTOK, RUSSIA - SOUTH. WE CONTINUED ON AROUND THE COAST STAYING WELL OUT, A LEGAL DISTANCE FROM SHORE, ADHERING TO ALL INTERNATIONAL LAWS.

AT APPROXIMATELY 1315 HOURS ON 16 JUNE 1959 AT LAT. 39-07 NORTH AND 129-8 EAST (OFF WONSAN, NORTH KOREA) THE INCIDENT OCCURRED.

THE INCIDENT

SUDDENLY THE TAIL GUNNER D.E. CORDER, AE2, CALLED THE PILOT ON OUR I.C.S. AND ADVISED WE HAVE TWO UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT ON OUR TAIL AT SIX O'CLOCK. HE WAS ADVISED NOT TO TRAIN HIS GUNS, AND TO KEEP THE PILOT ADVISED. KEEP WATCHING THEM. MOMENTS LATER I WAS IN THE PROCESS OF SENDING OUR ROUTINE POSITION REPORT BY C.W., WHEN I FELT THE AIRCRAFT SHAKE AND I SMELLED SMOKE. I CAME BACK ON THE I.C.S. AND REALIZED WE HAD BEEN FIRED ON AND HIT. OUR TAIL, TWIN 20MM, GUNS WERE SHOT OUT ON THE FIRST FIRING. OUR FORWARD GUNS, ALSO 20MM WERE NOT OPERATING DUE TO A MISSING DRIVE MOTOR. AT THIS TIME I BECAME VERY BUSY CLEARING THE CIRCUIT AND SENDING MY NECESSARY C.W. TRAFFIC, IN ADDITION TO A NEW POSITION REPORT. CORDER WAS HEARD TO SAY ON THE I.C.S., "MYGUNS ARE NOW INOPERATIVE, THEY ARE ON SAFE IN THE STOW POSITION, I AM HIT AND BLEEDING, ALSO I AM ON FIRE AND I REQUEST PERMISSION TO LEAVE MY POSITION." THE COCKPIT ANSWERED "CORDER GET OUT OF THERE AND PUT OUT THE FIRE." LCDR ANANIA WAS IN THE LEFT SEAT AT THE AIRCRAFT CONTROLS AT THE TIME OF THE FIRING AND REMAINED THROUGHOUT THE INCIDENT AND LANDING. ENS. D.R. SULLIVAN WAS IN THE COPILOTS SEAT, BUT WAS VERY SOON RELIEVED BY LCDR MAYER. LCDR ANANIA TOLD McCLINTICK (OUR RADAR MAN) SEATED ON THE LEFT SIDE, THAT HE WANTED HIM TO ADVISE HIM BY THE CLOCK CODE WHERE THE AIRCRAFT APPROACHING, WHEN THEY ROLLED OVER, AND THE INSTANT HE FIRST SAW TRACER FIRE FROM THEIR GUNS. McCLINTICK LOOKED THROUGH HIS PORT WINDOW AND ADVISED LCDR ANANIA VIA I.C.S. THIS INFORMATION. I VIEWED MUCH OF EACH RUNS BURST GOING OVER THE RIGHT WING FROM MY WINDOW.

OUR PLANE CAPTAIN, SAMPSON KEPT THE FRONT END CREW AMUSED WITH FUNNY ANTICS DURING THE SIX OR SO RUNS BY THE ATTACKING M.I.G. FIGHTERS. AT ONE POINT OUR ELECTRIC COFFEE POT, WHICH SAT BETWEEN MY RADIO POSITION AND THE RADAR POSITION, WAS HIT AND QUITE LITERALLY BLEW UP. WITH HIS HANDS ON HIS HIPS SAM EXCLAIMED, "WELL, CDR FREY IS SURE GOING TO BE PISSED AT THIS S--T!" (LCDR FREY WAS OUR PREVIOUS PILOT, WHO WAS TRANSFERRED BACK TO THE STATES.). LCDR FREY HAD GIVEN US THE COFFEE POT PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE. AT OTHER TIMES SAM COULD BE HEARD ON THE I.C.S AFTER A STRAFING RUN BY ONE OF THE M.I.G.S TO SAY, "YAA -YAA, YOU MISSED ME YAA - YAA," UNTIL THE PILOT TOLD HIM, "GET OFF THE I.C.S. SAM." HE REALLY LOOKED DEATH IN THE FACE AND LAUGHED AT IT!

I KEPT BUSY SENDING POSITION REPORTS EVERY FEW MINUTES FROM NAV AND PROVIDING DAMAGE REPORTS. I REQUESTED BLOOD FOR CORDER TO MEET OUR LANDING. MEANWHILE WE WERE AT AN ALTITUDE OF ONLY A FEW HUNDRED FEET, MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE M.I.G.S TO MAKE FIRING RUNS ON US. AFTER ABOUT SIX RUNS THE M.I.G. FIGHTERS BROKE OFF AND RETURNED TO THEIR BASE. WE BELIEVED THEY WERE NEAR OUT OF FUEL OR AMMUNITION, OR BOTH.

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THEN CAME THE TASK OF GETTING OUR PLANE BACK SAFELY. LCDR ANANIA HAD PERFORMED MIRACULOUSLY IN KEEPING US OUT OF THE PATH OF MOST OF THE M.I.G.S STRAFING BULLETS. NOW HE WOULD PERFORM AGAIN WITH EQUAL SKILL. WITH THE TWO PORT ENGINES OUT (RECIPROCATING AND JET ENGINES), THEY WERE SHOT OUT IN THE ACTION, PLUS DAMAGE TO THE RUDDER AND FLAPS. WE TRIED TO GAIN SOME ALTITUDE, BUT, OUR GOOD PORT RECIP. ENGINE BEGAN TO COUGH AND SPUTTER. THREE TIMES IT TRIED TO DIE AND I SENT A DITCHING REPORT. EACH TIME THE ENGINE WOULD CATCH AND START RUNNING NORMAL, SAM WOULD EXCLAIM, "THATS MY ENGINE!"

FINALLY WE SIGHTED THE COAST OF JAPAN. THE PILOT ASKED THE CREW IF WE WANTED TO CHANCE THE HILLS AND GO ON TO NAS IWAKUNI, OR SET IT DOWN AT THE AIRFIELD AT MIHO, JAPAN. AT ONCE WITHOUT HESITATION WE ALL SAID LETS SET IT DOWN AT MIHO. WATER LANDINGS IS ONE THING. LANDING IN THE JAPANESE HILLS WAS SOMETHING ELSE.

UPON LANDING AT MIHO, WE EITHER BLEW THE RIGHT TIRE OR IT HAD BEEN SHOT OUT DURING THE ACTION. IN ANY EVENT WE CAREENED OFF THE RUNWAY AND FINALLY CAME TO A STOP ONLY A FEW FEET FROM A SIX FOOT DEEP DRAINAGE DITCH WHICH COULD HAVE GROUND LOOPED US VERY EASILY. LCDR ANINA HAD AGAIN PERFORMED AN OUTSTANDING FEAT. WE DEBARKED THE AIRCRAFT AND RAN TO A SAFE DISTANCE. LCDR ANANIA REALIZED THAT HE HAD LEFT THE PORT JET RUNNING. SAMPSON SAID, "THATS OK SIR, I'll GO BACK AND SHUT IT DOWN." WE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS GOING TO BLOW UP. LCDR ANANIA SAID, "NO, I LEFT IT ON, AND I'LL GO BACK AND SECURE IT," AND HE DID AT ONCE.

SOON THEREAFTER OUR FLIGHT SURGEON AND CORPSMAN ARRIVED IN A UF-1, BUNO 137912, FROM FASRON-120 AT IWAKUNI, JAPAN. CORDER WAS GIVEN PLASMA AND HIS MANY WOUNDS TREATED BY THE DOCTOR AND CORPSMAN.

SIDE NOTE ON OUR PLANE CAPTAIN SAMPSON.

WHILE CORDER WAS BEING READIED FOR THE .8 FLIGHT BACK TO IWAKUNI, THE FLIGHT SURGEON VISITED WITH THE REST OF THE CREW WHO WERE STANDING IN A CIRCLE, THE FLIGHT SURGEON PROVIDED US WITH A PITCHER OF COOL ICE WATER AND SOME PAPER CUPS. SAMPSON WAS POURED A CUP OF THE ICE WATER, HE LOOKED IT OVER AS CLOSE AS A MACHINIST, SMELLED IT, THEN THREW IT ON THE GROUND AND THEN STOMPED IT, THEN JUMPED ON IT WITH BOTH FEET, ALL THE TIME EXCLAIMING, "IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE BRANDY, I'VE SEEN IT IN THE MOVIES!" WE ALL HAD A GOOD LAUGH, AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, AFTER COMING THROUGH OUR ORDEAL, IT REALLY TOOK OFF THR EDGE OF OUR ACTION.

WE LOADED CORDER AND THE REST OF US ON THE UF-1 AND RETURNED TO IWAKUNI. THE PILOTS WERE FROM FASRON 120 AND WERE; LCDR CYPHERS AND CDR GREENWOOD. AFTER ARRIVING BACK AT IWAKUNI, WE WENT INTO DEBRIEFING AT ONCE. THIS WENT ON UNTILL ABOUT 11:30PM. THEN, WITH FULL FLIGHT GEAR, NEXT TO A P4M-1Q IN THE HANGAR WE HAD CREW PHOTOS TAKEN, MINUS CORDER WHO HAD BEEN EVACUATED TO THE NAVAL HOSPITAL IN YOKOSUKA. THE PHOTO TAKING WENT ON UNTIL AFTER MID-NIGHT. THE LOWER RATED MEN COULD NOT GO INTO TOWN THEN. THE OLDER MEMBERS WERE ASKED NOT TO GO INTO TOWN ALSO. I HAD A CASE OF BEER ON ICE AT MY HOME ON THE BASE SO I INVITED EVERYONE TO MY HOUSE TO LET DOWN AND COOL OFF WITH A COOL ONE. I CALLED CHIEF LUSE, ATC, AND ASK HIM TO BRING OVER ANOTHER CASE IF HE HAD IT. IN A FEW MINUTES HE APPEARED WITH ANOTHER COLD CASE, WHICH WENT FAST. MY WIFE WAS BEING TREATED IN THE NAVAL HOSPITAL IN YOKOSUKA, SO I WAS HOME ALONE. WE WERE ADVISED TO BE AT THE HANGAR EARLY FOR A FLIGHT UP TO YOKOSUKA FOR A MORNING NEWS CONFERENCE. BUT, FIRST WENT TO RADM FREDERICK S. WITHINGTONS OFFICE. (COMMANDER U.S. NAVAL FORCES IN JAPAN). WE LINED UP IN HIS OFFICE. WHEN HE ENTERED HE STATED TO US, "GENTLEMEN, IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE IN YOUR NAVY-WELL DONE. THIS WAS IMPRESSIVE TO ME. HE SHOOK HANDS WITH EACH OF US, AND AFTER A FEW INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS CONFERENCE, WE WALKED OVER TO THE GYM WHERE THE PRESS WAS ASSEMBLED. WE WERE SEATED ON A PLATFORM DECK AND MOST OF THE QUESTIONS WERE FIELDED BY OUR OFFICERS. AFTER AN HOUR OR MORE THERE CAME AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT LCDR MAYER HAD BEEN AWARDED THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS, AND THAT NELSON, AQ1 HAD BEEN AWARDED THE NAVY MARINE CORPS MEDAL, AND CORDER, AE2 WAS AWARDED THE PURPLE HEART. ALL OTHERS IN OUR CREW WOULD BE AWARDED THE AIR MEDAL INCLUDING CORDER AND NELSON. WE ALL APPRECIATED THIS VERY MUCH. BUT, THE FACT THAT LCDR ANANIA DID NOT RECEIVE THE DFC DID NOT SET WELL WITH US AT ALL! WE JUST FIGURED THAT BOTH PILOTS SHOULD RECEIVE IT. DURING THE NEWS CONFERENCE BREAK I QUICKLY GOT A VOTE OF THE CREW AS TO THEIR FEELINGS AND OPINION CONCERNING THIS FACT. WE ALL AGREED TO A MAN THAT WHEN THE PRESS CONFERENCE WENT BACK INTO SESSION, WE WOULD TELL THE PRESS WHAT IT WAS THAT LCDR ANANIA HAD DONE TO HELP GET US OUT OF A BAD AND DANGEROUS SITUATION. WE DID NOT IN ANYWAY WISH LCDR MAYER NOT TO HAVE THE DFC AWARD. WE JUST WANTED LCDR ANANIA TO HAVE IT ALSO. I GOT HOLD OF THE CHIEF JOURNALIST, KIP COOPER (COMM.NAV.FOR. FOR JAPAN) AND ADVISED HIM TO CONTACT THE POWERS TO BE AND REQUEST THE ADDITIONAL DFC OR WHEN THE NEWS CONFERENCE WENT BACK INTO SESSION THE CREW WAS GOING TO TELL THE WORLD JUST WHAT HE DID DURING THE ACTION. IN JUST FORTY-FIVE MINUTES WE WERE ADVISED THAT THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS WAS AWARDED TO LCDR ANANIA BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (PRESIDENT EISENHOWER)). WE ALL WENT BACK TO THE PRESS CONFERENCE AND NOTHING ELSE WAS SAID BY THE CREW. WE WERE ALL VERY PLEASED WITH THE DECISION. "VINCE THE PRINCE" GOT THE DFC AND WELL DESERVED! THANK YOU SIR.

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CORDER REMAINED IN THE YOKOSUKA NAVAL HOSPITAL, ALL BUT MYSELF WERE FLOWN BACK TO IWAKUNI. SINCE MY WIFE (VIVIAN) WAS BEING RELEASED THIS DAY, I WAS ALLOWED TO FLY BACK TO IWAKUNI WITH HER ON THE MEDICAL EVACUATION PLANE. THE FOLLOWING WEEK ON THE PARADE GROUNDS AT NAS IWAKUNI, THE OFFICERS AND CREW WERE DECORATED WITH THE MEDALS STATED.

BRITISH STATESMAN, SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL SAID:

"NOTHING IN LIFE IS TO BE SHOT AT WITHOUT RESULT." A NOTE OF INTEREST. AFTER THE FORWARD TURRET DRIVE MOTOR BEING ON ORDER THROUGH NAVAL SUPPLY FOR ALMOST NINETEEN MONTHS; A FEWS DAYS AFTER THIS ACTION, A COMPLETE FORWARD TURRET WAS FLOWN DIRECTLY FROM NORFOLK, VA AND SAT ON OUR HANGAR DECK,

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PERSONAL NOTE:

FROM JULY 1957 TO JANUARY 1961, I FLEW 102 TRACK HOPS IN VQ-1. IT WAS THE MOST OUTSTANDING TOUR OF DUTY IN MY NAVAL CAREER OF TWENTY YEARS.

SIGNED: ROBERT L. HARRELSON

U.S. NAVY (RET)

13 DECEMBER 1994

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