

## The Final Mission



Crew of final mission to land at Udon: BRAC (Lt Col) Nelder (301st Tactical Helicopter Warfare Squadron, Co) Bowerman (With Special Operations Wing), UL Maj Bishop (8994th Security Squadron/CCL CBH Science (8994th Security Squadron operational) FRONT (Lt: UL John Cordova, Steeler Dubarson, PW Wyndol, Gordon Laidlaw, all from 8260th Security Squadron operations

"I was greatly impressed by the high  
standard of the French officers.  
Sergeant Lecomte, the adjutant  
on the last night (Commandant de  
Vieux) took over, Tardieu, of 27th RD  
is a thorough horse."

Gay Lovell

### Finis Flight Crew Comments

"...the crews did all the work on the flight—I just represented those who flew on other missions on other days and those who provided the support that made it all possible. The Squadron had some very dedicated folks in maintenance, communications, security police, personnel and administration. They didn't get to fly on the last mission, but they were there in spirit."

Major Roger Bishop, June 15, 2013

- **USPS:** A handwritten testimony from David L. Ladd

We took off that day during the invasion of being the last flight to touch down in Ulsan. About an hour or two after we took off, our mission equipment went out. We hit the pilot knee and he said, "Well, we are not going to burn back now." The front-end and the back-end crews were determined that we were going to be the last mission. Swooshing at Ulsan. So we pushed forward in the sky and realized that we had lost our way. We were flying over the sea. We saw some ships in their own way home. When we got back to base, the pilot made a few pass over the runway at Ulsan and then he attempted a barrel roll. I don't know how well he landed from the ground. During the barrel roll, Steiner and I popped three and we held them out the two rear air balloons. The enlarged hot air balloons were blown away from the runway. They were blown away from the runway. It was steady. Steiner hit and it was called to the side of their barracks until Steiner took it.

John Cardona, February 8, 2013

**"During the barrel roll, Skeeter and I popped flares and we held them out the two rear side hatches."**



▲ ABOVE: Find mink-on-crow (see down). STANDING: pit with bottle. L/R: Wabeg, Koo-noon; FRONT: L/R: Gorden.

➤ **ABOVE/BOTTL** Final day window: crew posing in front of crew truck. **ABOVE** Left: L/W Scott, Johnson. **RIGHT** Left: L/W Boudier, Gaudin, Ramsay, Simmons

► **PHOTO:** Maj. Bishop leading commandos' 1st team walking down



**ABOVE:** Siamese Didonson, pupa & red flares from the escape hatch of the last SC-57 submarine in SEA on May 19, 1970.

**WISCONSIN** Final day milking resumes before hours of snow.



## Finis Flight Traditions

It's assumed that the first "right tradition" of a "westing-down" by a fire truck or from jungle water cannons came from the U.S. Army Air Force days of the World War II era. The first flight was first designed to mark the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The tradition spread to other units and commanders departing to new commands or retirement. This tradition was first noted in Vietnam when the aircrews commemorated the completion of 100 missions. While the 100th safe land-landing was a reason to celebrate, it also became a separate flight altogether, marking the final mission of individual aircrew members prior to departure from the war zone. That is what it meant to 89thABW Security Squadron flyers...their last mission before putting on the Freedom Bird and heading home.



• **LEPPE:** Final day mission crew graffiti on aircraft #304 & aircraft #530

▲ LOWER LEFT Security Police setting off flares during second Security Situation Identification exercise

▼ **WELCOM** Major Bishop (Met. affairs) and unit pastors/ removes 6888th Central Postal Directory signs from Operations Center home as part of deactivation ceremony





"I WAS GREAT  
A MEMBER  
SECURITY  
ON THAT 1A  
FLIGHT) FROM  
IS A TREASURE

Crew of final mission to land at Ubon: **BACK L-R:** Lt Col Norby (361st Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron), Col Bowersox (56th Special Operations Wing), U/I, Maj Bishop (6994th Security Squadron/CC), Cliff Koonce (6994th Security Squadron operations) **FRONT L-R:** U/I, John Cordova, Skeeter Dickerson, Paul Weyandt, Gordon Loiselle, all from 6994th Security Squadron operations



# Finis Flight Crew Comments

5 JUNE 13

"I WAS GREATLY HONORED TO HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF THE FAMED 6994TH SECURITY SQUADRON. MY PARTICIPATION ON THAT LAST MISSION (COMMEMORATION FLIGHT) FROM UBON, THAILAND ON 15 MAY 1971 IS A TREASURED MEMORY."

*Gordy Loiselle*

"...the crews did all the work on the flight - I just represented those who flew on other missions on other days and those who provided the support that made it all possible. The Squadron had some very dedicated folks in maintenance, communications, security police, personnel and administration. They didn't get to fly on the last mission, but they were there in spirit."

**Major Roger Bishop, June 15, 2013**

◀ **LEFT:** A handwritten testimony from Gordy Loiselle

We took off last that day with the intention of being the last flight to touch down in Ubon. About an hour or two after we took off, our mission equipment went out. We let the pilot know and he said, "Well, we are not going to turn back now." The front-end and the back-end crews were determined that we were going to be the last mission flown/landing at Ubon. So we punched holes in the sky and monitored the radios and didn't start back to base until we heard that all the other aircraft were on their way home. When we got back to base, the pilot made a low pass over the runway at Ubon and then he attempted a barrel roll (I don't know how we/it looked from the ground). During the barrel roll, Skeeter and I popped flares and we held them out the two rear side hatches. The enlarged hat that Skeeter wore above the cockpit came from the PJs' barracks at NKP. They called it the Speedy Gonzales hat and it was nailed to the side of their barracks until Skeeter took it.

**John Cordova, February 6, 2013**

**"During the barrel roll, Skeeter and I popped flares and we held them out the two rear side hatches."**





**ABOVE:** Skeeter Dickerson pops a red flare from the escape hatch of the last EC-47 mission in SEA on May 15, 1974





**ABOVE:** Skeeter Dickerson pops a red flare from the escape hatch of the last EC-47 mission in SEA on May 15, 1974

**RIGHT:** Final day mission crew being hosed down



# Finis Flight Traditions

It's assumed that the finis flight tradition of a "wetting-down" by a fire truck or from large water containers came from the U.S. Army Air Force days of the World War II era. The finis flight was first designed to mark milestones in the careers of an entire aircrew, respected individuals of rank or repute, and commanders departing to new commands or retirement. The tradition was first noted in Vietnam when the aircrews commemorated the completion of 100 missions. While the 100th safe last-landing was a reason to celebrate, it also became a separate flight altogether, marking the final mission of individual aircrew members prior to departure from the war zone. That is what it meant to 6994th Security Squadron flyers...their last mission before getting on the Freedom Bird and heading home.

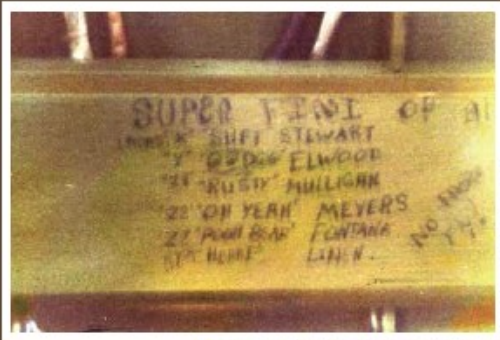




- ▶ **ABOVE:** Final mission crew hose-down. **STANDING:** pilot with bottle, U/I, Bishop, Koonce; **FRONT:** L/R Cordova, Dickerson, Weyandt, Loiselle
- ▶ **ABOVE RIGHT:** Final day mission crew posing in front of crew truck: **KNEELING:** L/R Scott, Johnson. **STANDING:** L/R Sannicolas, Gonzales, Ramsey, Simmons
- ▶ **RIGHT:** Maj Bishop receiving commanders' fini flight wetting-down







◀ **LEFT:** Final day mission crew graffiti on aircraft #304 & aircraft #570

▶ **LOWER LEFT:** Security Police setting off flares during 6994th Security Squadron deactivation ceremony

▼ **BELOW:** Major Bishop (blue uniform) and unit personnel remove 6994th Security Squadron signs from Operations Center fence as part of deactivation ceremony

