

# The Final Mission



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

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 1974  
IS A TREASURED MEMORY."

Gordy Loiselle

## 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

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.

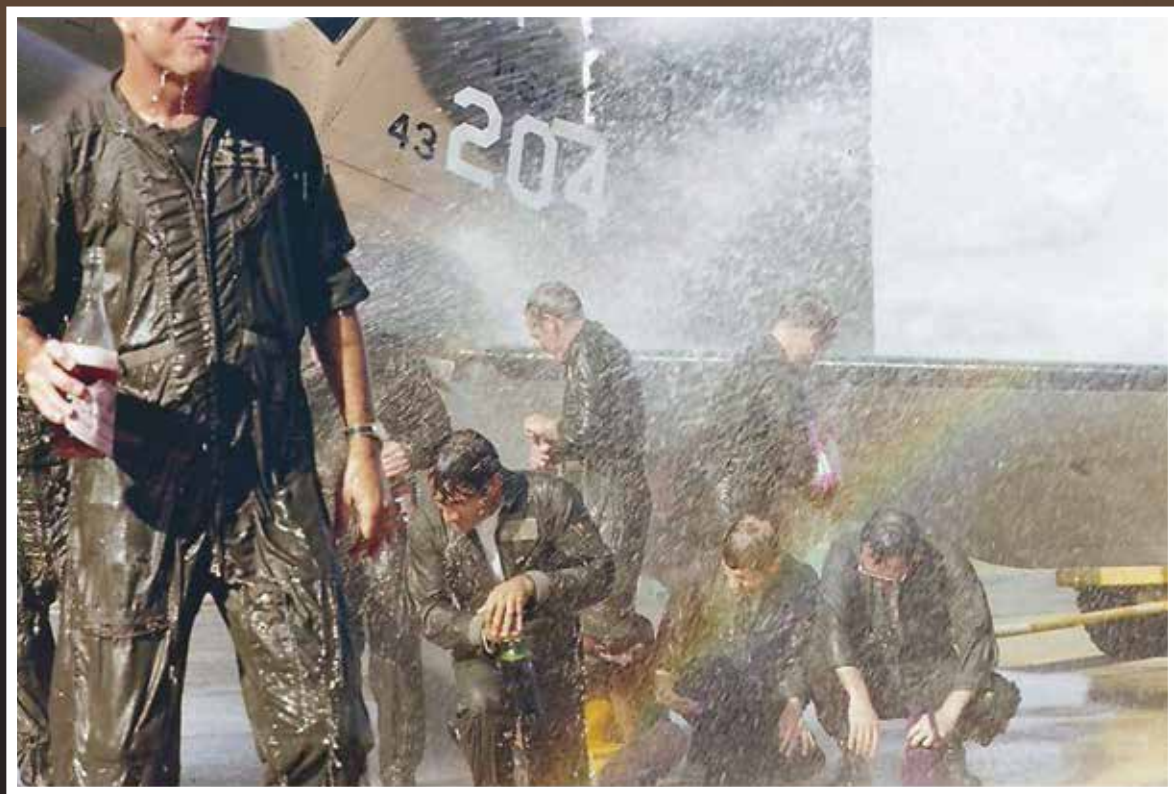
John Cordova, February 6, 2013

"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

RIGHT: Final day mission crew being hosed down



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

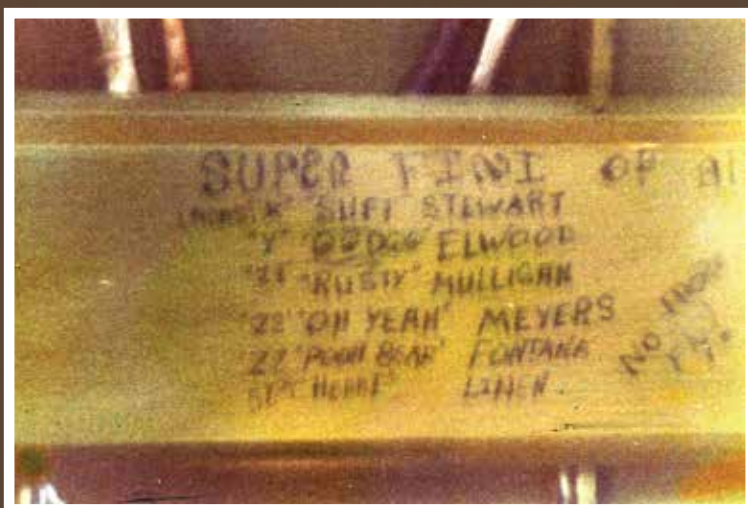
RIGHT: Maj Bishop receiving commanders' finis flight wetting-down



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



## 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.