

Action Report: Memorial Day Writers' Project (MDWP)

Activity: A Tribute to our Veterans

Date: November 11, 2016

Location: Washington, DC

(Constitution Ave., and 20 St.) behind the sidewalk facing Constitution Ave.

Weather: Mid 60s (degrees), Cloudy with forecast of occasional thunderstorms.

Photos to be provided as soon as I find them

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The following Veterans Day, 2016

Thanks to WWII veteran **Manual Zenick**, for his heart-felt poems written about some of his experiences in 1945; **Tom Glenn**, author of four novels based on his 13 years in and out of Vietnam in clandestine signals intelligence; **Jonathan Myer**, singing Forward Air Controller, who flew the O-1E; **Bruce Curley**, blogger, poet and novelist; **Maritza Rivera** and **David Martin**, who surprised us with some Persian-, Hindu- and Buddhist-inspired poetry; **Jim Smith** for his recently written Vietnam era material; **Richard Epstein**, who shared some new work and told us about some of his escapades in Thailand and Vietnam; and **Curt Nelson**, who took photos for us throughout the day. And what better ending for the day than drinks and a great Vietnamese meal at **Nam Viet** in Arlington, VA. Thanks to all who stopped by to listen and share their time with us.

The following recap is provided by **Jonathan Myer**. I'm guessing that I didn't receive input from our other participants. In the meantime, I will continue to look for missing files.

Then-USAF Captain Jonathan Myer flew one tour in our Southeast Asia (SEA) War, from April 1966 through February 1967, so "2016" marks the 50th "anniversary year" of his time in the Republic of Vietnam, flying the Cessna O-1E. "Bird Dog" as a Forward Air Controller, or "FAC." As a Province or Sector FAC assigned first to Kontum Province in the Central Highlands (II Corps), he was one of several FACs flying reconnaissance missions and conducting air strikes in support of Vietnamese Army and militia units and U.S. Special Forces' A-Teams. Half-way through his tour, he was sent

north to Dong Ha Air Base in Quang Tri Province (I Corps) for 3-1/2 weeks flying over the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between South and North Vietnam, in Project Tally Ho.

Jonathan sang 14 of his own songs during the afternoon:

1. “**The Aging Pilot**,” contrasting my earlier years flying jet interceptors with an increasingly decrepit old age, as in “If it weren’t for ...” — and an overhead helo blotted out the last line. Xin loi!
2. “**Answering the 9-11 Call**,” marking the 15th year since the hijacking of four of our airliners to destroy two of New York’s skyscrapers and damage the Pentagon, for a loss of nearly 3,000 victims.
3. “**Answered: The 9-11 Call**,” marking the death of Osama bin Laden in May, 2011, after nearly ten years’ search, “Ten thousand dead, three Trillion spent, the cost to see [him] killed” ... As “*our* Freedom marches on!”
4. “**Teeny Weeny Bird Dog**,” the first song I wrote 30 years after my Vietnam tour, an *homage* to the little plane I flew in combat and features of our FAC operations.
5. “**The Bird Dog Cannonball**,” the second-to-last song I wrote, as a “book-end” to the first (above), this one traces the sheer longevity of this “little puddle-jumper” and its mix of weaknesses and impossibilities in flight.
6. “**Bird Dog Pilots’ Heaven**,” like its exemplar “Big Rock Candy Mountain,” features a series of impossible dreams for both man and machine — beyond the clichés.
7. “**Coyote Four-One**” tells the true story of an F-4 that flew into the ground during a night mission in the DMZ, and how I learned to “read Our Wall” and identify its crew 32 years later.
8. “**FAC and the Green Beret**” was written, recorded and distributed to Green Beret A-Teams by the time I left Vietnam. It was a mutual spoof, a few of its features from true events, and its words included in “Bucky” Burrus’s *Mike Force* (“see p. 125”), as his A-Team and their Air Force FACs would sing its opposing parts at the Nha Trang Officers’ Club —my “15 minutes of fame,” and I didn’t know about it until 1995. Resurrected by Prof. Lydia Fish, it started my next 20 years of song-writing.
9. “**How I Went IFR in Flying Buffalo Shit**” is a take-off of a real Bird Dog mission, when I landed at the Dak Pek Special Forces camp on July 30, 1966 — and my wheels hurled the “B.S.” into my propeller, which in turn blew the dollops back on to my windshield ... and, my windows being open, threw some onto my rear seat....
10. “**Hunting Trucks by Star Light**” documents an October 1966 night mission over the DMZ, where (if memory serves) “Salty” Harrison was tracking a truck through a light-enhancing Starlight Scope while I flew the Bird Dog and controlled fighters. Usually, single trucks would get away — but not this time!
11. “**Willie’ Wilbanks’ One-Man War**” tells how my FAC school classmate, almost at the end of his tour, lost his life while saving over a hundred Vietnamese Rangers and their U.S. Ranger advisors from a deadly ambush on February 24, 1967. He was awarded the USAF’s second (and first posthumous) Medal of Honor (MOH) of our Southeast Asia War.
12. “**Warrior Bards**” starts with “Yodelin’ Irv LeVine’s tribute to all of his fellow-balladeers of the Southeast Asia War, but then morphs into my increasingly bitter

review of how the combination of North Vietnamese patience, the growing anti-war resistance at home, and political blunders and constraints of our government.

13. "**Glory Flying Regulations (III: SEA-on)**" is my update of a classic WW-II vintage song, which contrasts the rigors and challenges of combat with the dullness of peacetime service, though its scope ranges from our four Services' experiences during the SEA War to Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and a one-plane air force!
14. "**Air Defense Reunion**" pays tribute to the 22 years that Tyndall Air Force Base in the Florida Panhandle was the Cold War's center for Air Defense. From "Century Series" interceptors of those days to F-15s by the turn of the century to F-22 "Raptors" of today, we recall our readiness to fight the war that never happened.