

UTT in '62 & '63

By Charlie Ostick

In the early fall of 1962 I received orders to report to the Bell Helicopter factory in Dallas/Ft. Worth, Texas in November. At the time I already had over 100 flight hours in the Bell's HU-1A. I was sent there enroute to the Utility Tactical Transport (UTT) Helicopter Company. The UTT at-that-time was stationed in Okinawa. I never made it to Okinawa though, as you will see later, I wound up at Ton Son Nhut Airport near Saigon.

I was sent to the Bell factory to get checked out in the HU-1B and to learn how to use the XM-6 Quadruple Machine Gun Weapons System called the Emerson Kit. The XM-6 was a flexible, hydraulic/electric, quad-mounted, M-60 machine gun kit mounted on the HU-1B (see photo of the guns on page 4). The HU-1B had a stronger frame and more powerful turbine engine than the HU-1A. Several other pilots were there too. During our stay at the Bell factory we were given a tour of the assembly line and several sessions of ground school on the HU-1B and the Emerson Kit. After the checkout, we flew the HU-1B's up to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma where we test fired the guns and completed our training. I'd been to Ft. Sill for Artillery training while in ROTC so I was able to help with firing range coordination.

We then returned to Texas to load the HU-1B's in USAF C-124's for a looong trip to Vietnam. As I recall, we got two choppers into each C-124. We loaded our personal gear in the tail section where we traveled as well. We stopped in Hawaii overnight on our way. The C-124 I was on blew a jug and had to land at Wake Island. What a place to spend three days waiting for repairs! We were told not to go near the "commercial" end of the island. For exercise and entertainment we took long walks all over the island. I got to see many relics of the WW II battle for Wake Island like downed fighter planes, Japanese ammo bunkers, and beach defenses. After the engine repairs we then stopped over at Clark Airfield as we flew on to Ton Son Nhut with no stop in Okinawa. We brought the first HU-1B's with Emerson Kits to the UTT on Sunday, 2 December 1962. As it turned out, we were TDY (temporary duty) in Vietnam from Okinawa for the whole tour which was nice pay wise (\$4.00 a day back then). So, we were not really there. We were in Okinawa, weren't we?

Major Ivan L. Slavich had just taken command of the UTT from Major Robert Runkle when I arrived in December of '62. The partial roster of UTT flight crews on page 8 came from UTT unit orders and my personal notes from '62-'63.

When I arrived the screened in huts had just been built (photo on page 6). They looked like tents but had sheet metal roofs. We had GI cots on the inside lined up – usually for the officers there were eight cots per building with mosquito nets over them. We had built an officer's club in the area in one of the huts and we also used it as the officer's mess. Across the street was the mess hall and the enlisted quarters. They looked just like the officer's quarters. A friend of mine and I had discovered that there were no showers at all so we installed some 55 gallon drums in a rack that we had built out of 4 x 4s and scrap lumber. We put two 55 gallon drums up there and then we rigged up some plumbing so that you could shut the showers on and off. It turned out that these were a favored item because during the day the drums would be full of water (we had our maids and coolies fill the drums) so they would get warm during the day and you could have a semi-warm shower in the evening. Also, near the showers was a latrine pit and an outside toilet (like an old toilet you would see in the back of a farm house). When it rained heavily the latrine pit would fill up and overflow and what a stink. Unfortunately, it was near enough to my hut that I could smell it most of the time.

We also had rats in our area. The rats were totally plentiful everywhere. The mosquito nets on our cots ran on a frame across our cots and you would get in there at night and then pull the net down. Well, one night a rat had gotten up in the rafters above my cot. While I was sleeping the rat fell out of the rafter

onto my mosquito net. It made such a racket that I woke up and was staring at a rat about a foot from my face. It was just thrashing on the mosquito net. I don't know how I did this but I just swatted him from inside the net, he went right off and scrambled across the floor and out the door. What a nightmare!

We also had some pets in our area. A friend of mine, Bill Cressall, had bought a monkey downtown. The monkey was fairly well behaved most of the time. But... when he was out of the tent Bill would put him on the post in the front of the hut. He kept the monkey tied with a collar and the monkey learned bad things because people would walk by and tease him or swat at him. So, the monkey learned how to spit on people and grab their hair or hat as they walked by. You would be walking by and the monkey would swing out, grab your hair or hat and he wouldn't let go. If you confronted him he would then spit at you. He was a fine pet wasn't he? We named him Sylvester, Sylvester the Monkey (photo on page 7). Anyway, he was a very good distraction.

Down at the flight line we had the HU-1A's which were the original version of the Huey (photo on page 4). We had mounted an old-style air cooled .30 caliber machine gun on each side of the HU-1A's near the skids on the frame. Also, near the skids in the back of the 30 caliber MG's we had a group of 2.75 inch rockets. Initially, we had gotten rocket tubes from the Air Force and attached them to the helicopter. The HU-1A's were underpowered to start with and we had just overloaded them by adding these machine guns and rockets and ammo and then the crew of four. In addition, all the pilots had personal weapons (like .45 cal. Thompson submachine guns, German 9mm MG's, survival gear, .38 cal. pistols, etc.) and CE's and door gunners had MG's. We could hardly ever hover to take off. We had to do a running start to get this Huey off the ground. To start out you would pull some power, then you would skid along the ground, you would bounce a little bit and then skid some more. Eventually you could skid it and bounce it until you got through transitional lift and you could get in the air and climb very slowly. Thank goodness we were at a large airport so we could have plenty of runway. In addition to our normal crews, we often had "strap hangers" along on missions. A couple interesting ones were; a young Dan Rather from CBS and BG "Cider Joe" Stillwell (son of WWII hero BG "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell). It was hard to remember that you were the Aircraft Commander when you had a BG as a door gunner, isn't it?

The other Huey that was in the UTT was the HU-1B (photo on page 4). These were the same HU-1B's that I had flown over with from Texas. Since I had the factory check out and training on the Emerson Kit, I got to be an instructor pilot for awhile. The Emerson Kits were installed so that as you moved the sight in the co-pilots position in the HU-1B the guns would flex with the sight. As you moved the sight, the guns would move side to side or up and down. On each side the UTT then installed, behind the Emerson Kits, a cluster of 2.75 inch rockets. Initially, these were wing clusters that we had gotten from the Air Force. It is interesting as to how you controlled the rockets. The machine gun had their sight from the Emerson Kit but the rockets did not have a sight. On most of the helicopters the pilot fired the rockets since he was in control of the helicopter and the co-pilot was involved with the Emerson Kit sight. What mainly happened is we would have been to the range at least once in each chopper. We would know exactly where to mark on the windshield, with a grease pencil, as a sight for a couple of different distances. I would have a grease pencil marks on the windshield of the Huey to tell me when to fire my rockets which were on a switch on the pilot's cyclic. The rockets were free flight. That means if there was any cross wind the rockets tended to veer into the wind after leaving the Huey. You had to plan your rocket's flight as well as your Huey's flight. Tough job!

None of our Hueys had any armor plate. We had discovered that you could slip a piece of armor plating under the seats of the pilot and co-pilot. It would help with bullets that came straight up from the bottom of the helicopter. The other device we discovered was that flak vests were helpful for pilots and crew members as they would sometimes absorb bits of bullets and stuff that might have produced flak. Also, we had an item called "chicken breast plates". The chicken breast plates were the first use of

kevlar armor plating and they could stop a .30 caliber bullet. They were concave so you put them on your chest and then you wrapped your flak vest around it and it could stop a bullet.

Because the UTT was the only gunship unit in-country, we flew combat missions from the DMZ in the north all the way to the southern tip of Vietnam. We were supporting USMC H-34's out of Tra My one day (photo on page 6). We came upon a LZ with an abandoned old French tank sitting at one end. There was no VC activity or ground fire near the LZ when the H-34's arrived so we chose not to prep the LZ. If you have seen a H-34 you know that the troops sit on each side facing each other. Apparently a VC was in the old French tank. Just as the lead H-34 touched down one round was fired from the tank's main gun. It went right through the engine, between the ARVN troops, and out the tail. Must have been an armor-piercing round! We could see a VC leap out of the tank and flee into the jungle. Too late... he'd already done his damage! We did, however, fire into the area where he had fled. Strange mission. On the return flight, I had a pleasant sighting. Sitting in the sun on a large stone outcropping was a mother tiger with her three cubs. What a nice end to an untidy day. Of course the tigers scattered when they heard and saw our choppers.

For other Charlie Ostick UTT stories see; "All In A Day's Work", "Huey" and "A STORY OF AP BAC".





HU-1A with rockets and M-38, .30 cal. MG all installed by the UTT



Charlie with HU-1B tail #21876 (which I flew on many missions) with quad M-60 MG's and UTT installed rockets



UTT flight line with HU-1A's & HU-1B's at Tan Son Nhut Airport



UTT pilots in January '63 at Ton Son Nhut Airport, no roster available, US Army photo



UTT company street at Tan Son Nhut



USMC H-34 at Tra My in May of '63



Sylvester the monkey



UTT HU-1B on a mission

UTT Partial Roster of Flight Crews
(obtained from ' 62-'63 UTT unit orders my personal notes)

| Name | Rank | Name | Rank |
|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Ashe, William R. | SP-4 | Sigmund, Denneth A. | SP-4 |
| Averett, Kent G. | 1 st Lt | Smith, Paul R. | 1 st Lt |
| Barton, G. J. | CWO-1 | Sprague, Billy E. | Capt |
| Bean, Calvin R. | Capt | Stewart, Edward L. | PFC-E3 |
| Bowers, Veronza | SFC-E6 | Stone, James E. | Capt |
| Boyle, Dennis M. | Capt | Swainston, Douglas J. | SP-5 |
| Brassfield, Bobbie A. | Capt | Todd, Alan R. | Capt |
| Britton, John A. | Capt | Tragesser, John N. | 1 st Lt |
| Candler, Harry W. | 1 st Lt | Vaughan, Herbert E. | 1 st Lt |
| Christensen, Ronald F. | 1 st Lt | Walker, Jack A. | Capt |
| Clarke, Harold G. | SP-5 | Ward, William E. | Capt |
| Cressall, William F. | 1 st Lt | Watlack, Richard G. | CWO-2 |
| Damron, Herbert C. | Capt | Whitcher, Glenn W. | 1 st Lt |
| Delp, Richard O. | PFC-E3 | Wilkes, Donald D. | Capt |
| Dickerson, John C. | SP-4 | Windham, Ronald L. | 1 st Lt |
| Downs, Henry B. | SP-4 | Womack, Clemuel H. | CWO-2 |
| Ebrom, Joe J. | CWO-2 | Wood, Earnest M. | Capt |
| Hamil, Richard C. | 1 st Lt | | |
| Heck, Cletus | CWO-2 | | |
| Henderson, Jerry L. | SP-5 | | |
| Hundley, Stephen W. | SP-6 | | |
| Jones, John V. | SGT-E5 | | |
| Kamaka, Rodney K. | PFC-E3 | | |
| Kelson, Almer D. | SP-4 | | |
| Kirkpatrick, Joseph I. | CWO-2 | | |
| Lollar, Luther S. | Capt | | |
| Louis, John J. | Capt | | |
| Mayville, Michael V. | CWO-2 | | |
| McCain, Hugh M. | SP-5 | | |
| McCarty, Lyle C. | 1 st Lt | | |
| McGurk, Joseph E. | SP-5 | | |
| Mercer, Warren H. | Capt | | |
| Metoyer, Bryford G. | 1 st Lt | | |
| Meyer, Earl R. | SP-6 | | |
| Mills, Alonzo R. | CWO-2 | | |
| Minter, George A. | SP-5 | | |
| Moore, Roy W. | Capt | | |
| Ostick, Charles T. | 1 st Lt | | |
| Palmer, Norman G. | Sgt-E5 | | |
| Parker, George G. | SP-5 | | |
| Phillipo, Jerry C. | SP-4 | | |
| Queeney, Richard K. | 1 st Lt | | |
| Rahn, William E. | Capt | | |
| Reed, Joseph V. | SP-6 | | |
| Reuter, Robert M. | Maj-CO | | |
| Slavich, Ivan L. | Maj-CO | | |