

Feathered Flight

by [Michael J. Walsh](#) (Hustler 29)

4th Avn. Bn. 4th Inf. Div. Camp Enari Hensel AAF

Jan. 68 - Jan. 69

Occasionally, we did resupply work for the South Vietnamese Army, or ARVN. (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) We carried loads similar to what we delivered to American forces with the exception of bags of rice, tea, fish or shrimp and several live food items. Live food items consisted of small pigs and chickens that were stuffed into individual wire mesh tubes with round wooden ends secured with staples. The chickens were very light so we would carry several hundred at a time stacked floor to ceiling.

After a resupply of the ARVN's one day, we were returning to base camp and had climbed to about 10,000 feet or so to enjoy the cooler temperature when the crew chief came on the intercom and told me, "Sir, we have a left over chicken." What do you want me to do with it? After some consideration I told him, "Take one of the wooden ends off the cage and stand by to launch chicken."

Since I was flying left seat, I eased into a left turn and keyed the intercom and gave the command, Launch chicken!! Out it went and I continued the left, rapidly descending turn as I watched the little chicken tumble end for end for maybe a thousand feet when suddenly, it extended its wings and flapped furiously, shedding feathers but giving a courageous attempt at flying!

By now, I was laughing so hard I was having trouble controlling the aircraft so I keyed the intercom and said, "You got it!" Jimmy acknowledged that he had the aircraft and immediately reversed the turn to the right so he could keep track of the rapidly descending chicken. It's just tumbling straight down with feathers coming off, "look at that, it's trying to fly!" Huey almost out of control again. "You got it!"

Back into the left turn again as I watched the chicken still descending at whatever terminal velocity was for it, feathers shedding, wings flapping and tumbling end over end. After exchanging control a couple more times, we were now several hundred feet from the ground and it appeared that the chicken would meet its end soon.

When it was about 50 feet from the ground, it again extended its wings and in a fury of flapping and feather shedding, almost stopped its descent before landing. We were at a hover now and watched in amazement as the little bird came to a dusty stop, got to its feet and scurried off into the brush! It probably joined the NVA!

We toasted the little aviator that evening and considered trying to enter his amazing and hilarious flight into the Guinness record book but never did.

