

From: Jim Glendenning <xxxx@comcast.net>
Date: Wednesday, December 27, 2023 at 10:45 PM
To: Larry Christian <xxxx@exhibitstudios.com>

Subject: June 2, 1965

Hi Larry,

Thanks so much for the call. Here's my recollection of that day and the few days following. I'm no writer. If there's something not clear, don't hesitate to ask.

"On June 2nd the Air Wing attacked a target just south of Thanh Hoa. I don't remember what the target was. Possibly a bridge, a munitions storage area, or some other military target. There were A-4s and A-1s from Midway involved, and one of our EA-1Fs was along to provide active ECM for the strike.

An A-4 from VA-23 was hit and the pilot successfully ejected. He came down close to the water and was seen by other pilots to be trying to get to the water. As usual in a combat operation there was chaos and conflicting reports. It appears that the pilot had reached the water, but was being pursued by North Vietnamese troops. Our EA-1F was piloted by LTJG M. D. McMican. His crew consisted of LTJG Gerry Romano as Radar operator/ECM coordinator, and the two enlisted ECM operators, ATN-3 Tom Plants and ATR-3 Bill Amspacher.

Someone called for close air support to keep the North Vietnamese away from the A-4 pilot. M. D. was in position to do that. Even though we were not officially supposed to engage in attacking the enemy with our 20mms it is plain that M. D. saw no reason not to jump in and help a fellow aviator in need. He made a strafing pass down the beach. He may, in fact, have made more than one pass. At some point, however, the North Vietnamese, who had some heavy machine guns, blasted away at the SPAD, damaging it enough to make it uncontrollable. An eyewitness, LCDR Ed Greathouse from VA-25, was about a half mile away and said he saw the airplane pull up, roll half over, and crash on the beach in a ball of flame.

Someone else, I don't know who, thought he saw one of the SPAD crewmembers attempt to bail out. The EA-1F was so low there was no chance for success. The ultimate result was the loss of the crew of the EA-1F, and the A-4 pilot, LTJG David Christian.

A further loss was that of LT John McKamey of VA-23. His plane was downed but he successfully ejected; only to be captured and spend the next seven years in the Hanoi Hilton. It is not clear if McKamey was shot down as he attempted to cover LTJG Christian or if his shoot down was related to the attack on the main target.

What was clear as the strike aircraft returned to Midway was that three did not make it back. Word spread around the ship like wildfire. This was something new. Midway's losses had not been on this order of magnitude before. The score was: Three airplanes down, six aircrew down; and five of the six probably dead. It was a major blow.

I flew the next mission because I felt it necessary to lead by flying after we had suffered such a loss. The losses of war were hard to digest, but the attacks had go on. We kept on the attack.

In addition, my job was to make sure that our squadron-mates' gear was inventoried, and official letters were sent to the next of kin. The first decision to be made was: Were they missing in action (MIA) or were they killed in action (KIA)?

The Commanding Officer of Midway, CAPT James O'Brien, called me to his cabin to discuss this decision. He was a veteran of Korea. It had been his experience that sending MIA notices to next of kin was a cruel thing to do when a crash appeared not to be survivable. Yes, miracles do happen and sometimes people survive against all odds. However, it had been his experience that many people had been told their loved ones were MIA, which caused them to hold onto hope for years and years when that time could have been better spent in the grieving process. It was his opinion, and I agreed, that it was better to use the phrase,

“presumed killed in action, bodies not recovered.” That didn’t hold out false hope to the survivors.

As I sat in my cubbyhole room aboard ship trying to compose letters to the families of my squadron mates; I felt deep sorrow, anger, and guilt. I hoped to express to their families how much M.D., Gerry, Bill, and Tom meant to our detachment. The words did not come easy. Maybe one of the hardest jobs I've ever done. Somehow, I got all the letters written and VA-25's best typist typed them up. They were on their way. However, I knew in my heart that nothing could alleviate the pain of such losses.

Another cruel thing was that we, the squadron mates, had to go on flying, go on doing our job, and without time to grieve; without time to come to terms with the enormity of it all. Each day we would fly north because that was where the enemy was. And our grief was stuffed in the back of our minds.

A twist on this story is that the crew for the primary airplane for this mission was pilot, LTJG Jim Parkes, and his RIO, LTJG Bill Welch. (I don't know the enlisted crewmen's names.) They had a problem with their electrical equipment so the standby airplane with M. D. and his crew was launched. Fate?

Some of my old mates from VAW-13 thought M. D. was a bit too gung-ho and maybe too reckless. I have to agree that M. D. was young and enthusiastic. However, when I ask myself if I would have done the same thing had I been in his shoes, I have to answer that I most likely would have. Let no man judge another unless he has walked in his shoes or flown in his cockpit.

Three days after the loss, the Midway stood down for four hours to hold a memorial

service for our lost brothers. I stood out in front of VAW-13 “Det. Midway” as we paid our last respects. It was an impressive sendoff. At sea funerals have a gravitas that normal funerals don't seem to have. I'm not ashamed to admit that tears rolled down my cheeks. I will never forget that day or M.D. and his crew.

Many years later the remains of M.D., Gerry, Tom, and Bill were finally returned to their families for burial, putting an end to their families' questions and providing fitting heroes' burials."

Jim Glendenning

From: Jim Glendenning <xxxx@comcast.net>

Date: Wednesday, December 27, 2023 at 6:23 PM

To: Larry Christian <xxxx@exhibitstudios.com> Subject: Forwarded e-mail.

Subject: Received an e-mail from Lanny Cox referring to some contact you had with him.

I'm assuming it has something to do with the downing of our EA-1F in North Vietnam. I was the O-in-C of the Detachment aboard the Midway.

I have written an autobiography and wrote about the mission and our loss. It's a good thing I wrote it fifteen years ago. I'm 90 now and my memo pry is not so good. Anyway, I thought would reach out to you.

Sincerely,

Jim Glendenning

xxxxxxx

xxxxxxx

xxx-xxx-xxxx
