

80th FIGHTER SQUADRON HEADHUNTERS ASSOCIATION

HEADHUNTER HEADLINES



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"AUDENTIS FORTUNA JUVAT"

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WWII HEADHUNTERS

CAPT BURNELL ADAMS



Burnell "Burt" Adams was born on February 10, 1918, in Chester, Illinois. He enlisted in the Aviation Cadet Program of the U.S. Army Air Forces on September 4, 1941, and was commissioned a 2d Lt and awarded his pilot wings on June 23, 1942. Lt Adams next went to Orlando AAF, Florida, for night fighter pilot training before being assigned to the 6th Night Fighter Squadron of the 18th and then the 15th Fighter Group, flying the P-70 Nighthawk. He deployed with the group to New Guinea in March 1943 and was credited with destroying 1 enemy aircraft in aerial combat before transferring to the 80th Fighter Squadron of the 8th Fighter Group, flying the P-38 Lightning, in October 1943. Capt Adams was credited with destroying 6 more enemy aircraft in aerial combat before transferring to the 13th Air Force, also based in New Guinea, in June 1944. Col Adams returned to the U.S. in October 1944, and left active duty on October 18, 1946, remaining in the Air Force Reserve until his retirement on February 25, 1969. Burt Adams died on December 14, 1977.

VIET NAM HEADHUNTERS

"SPRING HIGH"

THE FIRST COUNTER-AIR SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE (SAM) MISSION IN HISTORY OF AERIAL COMBAT, JULY 27, 1965

80th Participants

Valiant:

- 1: Major Phillip Coll LTM
- 2: Captain John C. Atkinson
- 3: Captain Robert D. Reichart AM
- 4: Captain John W. Redmond LTM

Rambler:

- 1: Major Arthur S. Mearns
- 2: Captain Victor Vizcarra LTM
- 3: Captain James E. Hayes

- 4: Captain Giles W. Gainer LTM

Corvette:

- 1: Captain Ralph L. "Pappy" Detwiller
- 2: Captain Melvin C. "Budde" Boswell
- 3: Captain Del F. Smith LTM
- 4: Captain Gordon M. Walcott

Healy:

- 4: Major Louis G. Pazel LTM

This is an animated video of the first USAF attack in the history of aerial combat against Soviet made Surface-to-Air Missile sites (SAM) in North Vietnam on July 27, 1965. Code name "Operation Spring High," it was in retaliation for the first SA-2 SAM shoot down of a USAF F-4C Phantom II three days before.

Spring High involved more than a hundred Air Force, Marine, and Navy aircraft. A pair of EC-121 radar planes monitored VPAF activity, directing the combat air patrol. Ten electronic warfare craft jammed the enemy radars. A dozen Phantoms and eight more F-104 Starfighters flew air cover. There were fifteen KC-135 tankers for aerial refueling, and a search and rescue flight to recover downed aircrews.

Mistakes were made on that mission, as one participant said: "It was not the best of days."

At the start of the mission 48 Republic F-105D "Thunderchief" attack aircraft were deployed but two had to be aborted with mechanical problems. Of the 46 strike aircraft that reached and delivered their ordnance during this heroic and tragic mission, six aircraft were lost which resulted in three pilots being killed, two captured and one rescued. Of the six aircraft lost, four were downed over the targets, plus one more damaged so badly the aircraft lost control while making an emergency landing at Udorn, RTAFB and collided with its escort destroying both warplanes and killing the pilots. All the losses were attributed to flak, not SAMs. Damage assessment showed that one of the targeted SAM sites had been a dummy and another was unoccupied.

In the group of 46 aircraft that hit the targets was one Lt. Colonel, eight Majors, 36 Captains, and one 1st Lieutenant who flew the mission. Out of these pilots, one rose to the rank of General (Four Stars), another to Major General (Two Stars), and a third to Brigadier General (One Star). Fourteen other pilots retired at the rank of Full Colonel, twelve as Lt. Colonels, and two as Majors. Eleven other pilots elected to separate from the Air Force sometime after the "Spring High" mission to pursue other careers. Since this historic event, 13 participants in the mission are known to have Gone West, leaving 29 current survivors.

Mistakes were made and it can be said that the tactics & weapons loads were not well suited for dealing with heavily defended SAM missile sites, and the fact that these targets were approved and micro-managed from Washington, DC contributed to the enemy being well prepared and made aware in advance that the attack was coming. Later translations of NVN documents showed that both sites had been emptied of missile hardware and fortified as "Flak Traps." At the time none of this was known by our pilots who "Girded their Loins" and rode forth to do their Nation's bidding.

In later years those who would fly combat over North Vietnam would be shocked that this mission was directed in the *Frag Order* to deliver suicidal types of ordnance in fingertip formation from an altitude of 50 feet! It should be remembered, however, that this is exactly how we had been trained and practiced for years at speeds of 360 knots! Remember all those low-level nape-of-the-earth navigation routes we flew while in training? Or how about multiple 50 foot passes at the skip-bomb target on peacetime practice ranges while puking off one simulated napalm

bomb at a time? Low-level penetration might have been a valid concept on the first day after the Big Balloon went up, but not day after day against an alerted and forewarned enemy.

Postwar documentation has confirmed our suspicions that our very own government was notifying the enemy about our intended strikes. At least the flight leaders on this particular mission took the initiative and pushed up the air speeds.

Today, 50 years after the tragic event and through the effort of Col. Victor Vizcara, USAF Retired who flew on the mission and videographer John MacKay who specializes in aviation animation, we can vicariously go back to that fateful day and hang on the wing through flak-filled skies once more.

Watch the video here: <https://vimeo.com/134242421>

HEADHUNTERS DOWN

Received confirmation that **Billy V. Dixon** passed away on 19 March 2014.

Joe O'Grady's last newsletter came back undeliverable. I was able to make contact with his next door neighbor who told me that Joe flew West about two years ago. It appears that **Faye** is in an unknown nursing home. Sorry for the sad news and sorry for the lack of specific information. If anybody has any better info, please let me know and I'll get it out to the membership.

FROM THE WEBSITE AND AROUND THE WORLD

Tex, Thanks for the note. A few updates to my data if you care to change what you have on file. Now that we're back in the States I'm definitely looking forward to the next reunion. **Major Dustin W. Brown** 120th Fighter Squadron (Colorado ANG) Still not an ace, but working on that. Thanks! **Yogi**

Tex, thanks for sending the note and LTM card...got it. Keep on crushing it...appreciate what you do for the org. **Toro (Hauck- JL#106)**

Received an email from **Nancy Dolan** recently. Her husband, **John "Soak" Dolan** is now "**LT General Dolan**". Congratulations, Sir!

FROM THE ORDERLY ROOM

You didn't get all the newsletter you paid for in this edition. Sorry 'bout that, but you will in the February edition. *Zee check is in zee mail!*

Speaking of dues: This is the third notice that 2015 Annual Dues are due. If you owe 'em, please pay 'em. <https://8ofsheadhunters.org/store/> The whole process won't take over 3 minutes. Your annual dues will be deducted automatically every year until you cancel. We use Stripe, not Paypal. It is very secure and user-friendly. Your personal data is not collected and stored. In fact, even your name is not used. Rather you're assigned a random Customer ID and that's used instead.

If you're an LTM and haven't done so already, please register: https://8ofsheadhunters.org/upme_register/. Your LTM status should have already been input by your crack (STS) Webmaster Lude and you will have access to the Master Roster. If it's not in there, just drop me an email: HH01@8ofsheadhunters.org and I'll fix it in a day or so.

Remember the 75th Anniversary Reunion in May 2017. In Ft Worth, Texas. Be there or be square!

Rita and I wish you all a healthy and happy holiday season.

What is good?
Tex and Rita2

**80th Fighter Squadron
THE HEADHUNTERS
PO Box 162
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

***“TWIN TAILED LIGHTNING
ROAM’D PACIFIC SKIES
OF NIPPON SENDING THEM TO***



***WAS OUR WARPLANE, AS WE
..SEARCHING OUT, THE SONS
THEIR DEMISE.”***