

80th FIGHTER SQUADRON HEADHUNTERS ASSOCIATION



HEADHUNTER HEADLINES



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"AUDENTIS FORTUNA JUVAT"

1 August 2017

WWII HEADHUNTERS

This is the email from the website that initiated the search for the story of Lt Pridham's disappearance. If anyone has any information they want to share with Darin, I'm sure he'd be delighted to hear from you.

Hello,

*My name is Darin Pridham and I am looking for information on **William H. Pridham**, who served in the 80th during WWII, and went MIA on November 8th, 1944. Can you help me to learn anything about him. Also, I am interested in understanding more about what it was like for those in the 80th in New Guinea, on Morotai, and in the Philippines. I appreciate any help or contacts that you can provide me. Respectfully yours, Darin Pridham darinpridham96@yahoo.com*

The Loss of Lt William "Bill" Pridham

By Bob "Driver Mac" McNeese 80FS Association Historian and Gerry Asher Association Korean War Historian

At 1415 on 8 November 1944, **1st Lieutenant William Pridham** and his wingman, **2nd Lieutenant Lloyd Johnson**, departed the island of Biak in two P-38's headed to Morotai, a distance of approximately 450 miles. It was the last time that Lt Bill Pridham would ever be seen.

The Headhunters had been very busy the previous several months, as the 5th Air Force supported US Army and Naval forces moving north towards the Philippine Islands. The summer of 1944 saw the final missions flown against the Japanese in New Guinea, as American forces island-hopped towards their next objective. The 80th operated from numerous primitive island airstrips during this time, including Biak, Wakde, Owi, and Morotai. Combat missions were mostly bomber escort, ground attack, and strafing and dive bombing attacks against enemy shipping. Japanese aircraft sightings became few and far between.

It has recently been discovered what led to Pridham and Johnson's mission on that November day. An initially filed "incomplete" Missing Aircraft Report only states "Ferrying," without any details or explanation. Notably missing were the serial numbers of the two P-38J's being transferred. **2Lt Clarence "Wogy" Wolgemuth** was Pridham's tent mate at the time. He remembers returning to Morotai from R&R in Sydney on 7 November. He also recalls that nightly Japanese bombings of Mama airstrip were taking a toll in aircraft damaged or destroyed on the ground. The 344th Services Squadron, located back at Biak, was responsible for providing replacement aircraft to squadrons throughout the South Pacific. It is likely that Pridham and Johnson had been transported to Biak with orders to pick up two replacement aircraft for the 80th Squadron. This is substantiated by the fact that on 17 November, the 8th Fighter Group forwarded a

request to the 344th Services Squadron to finish the Missing Aircraft Report, which, since the aircraft was lost while under their command, would have been their responsibility.

Morotai and its airstrip, Mama, were secured in early September 1944. Although this put most of the Philippines in range of the P-38, missions involved hours of flight over the open ocean, with the chance of rescue from the sea a risky proposition.

According to Johnson's official statement written on 9 November, Lt Pridham briefed a heading of 286 degrees from Biak to Morotai. They departed with 1-3 miles visibility and flew above a solid undercast for most of the flight. Johnson noted that his compass showed that they flew a heading of 295 degrees vice the 286 as planned. Of course, his (or Pridham's) compass could have been in error. To complicate things further, Lt Johnson's P-38 had an inoperative transmitter, so he had no way to query his leader regarding the difference.

Also of interest is Lt Johnson's statement that they had no belly tanks, although the distance between islands was well within the P-38's internal fuel range of 1000 miles (4 1/2 to 5 hours). Colonel Charles Lindberg had visited Pacific fighter units during the spring of 1944, and his fuel savings techniques had taught P-38 pilots how to extend the range of the Lightning to as much as eight to ten hours with external tanks. Fuel should have been no issue on this flight.

There must have been some break in the undercast, as Johnson states they passed over the Asia Islands at approximately 1600. This would have been a bit past the halfway point, with about 220 miles to go. Fifteen minutes later, Lt Pridham spiraled down to see some "peculiar disruption in the ocean". Again more questions than answers. Was Johnson's receiver working, so that he could hear Pridham's transmission? Or did he see the "disruption" also?

At this point Lt Johnson notes that he had a problem feeding fuel from his outboard (wing) tanks. No mention of actual fuel remaining, only that he was unable to follow Pridham down to stay with him and he never saw him again. He continued on to Morotai alone and landed safely.

What then happened to Bill Pridham? An interesting twist in this story is also contained in the 17 November 8th Fighter Group letter. SCR-270 Early Warning Radars had been available in New Guinea since the first one was deployed to Port Moresby in September 1942. The 8th Fighter Group's Fighter Control Sector, now located on Morotai, employed this system, and also had the capability to provide direction finding (DF) steers to aircraft. At 1730 on the day he was lost, they received a request from Pridham for a DF steer to Morotai, but for unknown reasons were unable to provide one. At 1848, an anti-aircraft "position" (radar) picked up a distress call from Pridham, and estimated his position at 25 miles northwest of Morotai. By this time he would have been quite low on fuel. The last radio contact with Lt Pridham was made at 1925 by a flight of 35th Fighter Squadron P-38's.

Search and rescue efforts were made on 9 November by members of the 80th. At 1320, **Captain Paul Murphey** led a 5-ship of P-38's south of Morotai, then north along the coast. They then zigzagged across the ocean north and west with no sighting of Bill Pridham. Also at 1320, **Captain Louis "Screwy Louie" Schriber** led a 2-ship flight south, west, and north-west of Morotai, finding no trace of Pridham or his aircraft. **Wogy Wolgemuth** describes being involved in one of these 3-hour search missions in his book "World War Two Memoirs of a Fighter Pilot." (Available at the Headhunter Store: <https://8ofsheadhunters.org/2011/12/17/world-war-two-memoirs-of-a-fighter-pilot/>) It's an excellent read!

The final Missing Aircraft Report on the loss of 1st Lt William Pridham in P-38J-15 serial number 43-28487 wasn't completed and signed until 16 February 1945, over three months after the loss. This was one of many operational losses of Headhunter pilots throughout the war that didn't involve combat. Wogy notes in his book that these operational losses were greater in number than combat losses, but not less hard to take. He remembers that 8 November 1944 was a sad day for the 80th Fighter Squadron."

We have the original loss reports and statements on the website under the article entitled "The Loss of Lt William "Bill" Pridham" : under the News tab and the History>>WW II>> WW II Memoirs tab: <https://8ofsheadhunters.org/2017/08/03/the-loss-of-lt-william-bill-pridham/> I've omitted all the various endorsements from the Command chain. Space prevented me from listing all the paperwork.

*A special thanks to your (now former) Association Historian **Bob "Driver Mac" McNeese** and your Korean War Historian, **Gerry Asher** for this great, but lamentable bit of Squadron history.*

Remember, as Kirby said so many times that "if it ain't written down, it never happened." If you have any memoirs or know of anybody who does about their time in the 80th, we will pay to have their stories/memoirs/photos professionally reproduced as long as we can have a copy. Just contact us for details.

KOREAN WAR HEADHUNTERS

Way back in the 2013-2014 time frame, **MSGT Keith Gestring** contacted me and passed along some of his memories from his service in Korea. Unfortunately, they got filed in my computer and have just now surfaced. Butch, please accept my apologies for taking so long. No excuse, Sir. This is also available on the website: Home > History > Korea > Korea Memoirs:
<https://8ofsheadhunters.org/2017/07/24/msgt-keith-butch-gestring-korean-war-memoir/>

James W. Ritter
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After reading the Headhunters Headlines, dated 1 Feb 2014, I thought I would give you a little bit of the history for the 8th Fighter Group, 35th, 36th, 80th Fighter Sq. The Korean War, the combat units started at Itazuke Air Base, Japan, this is where the combat units operated from. The commander, Colonel John Price had control of the missions that were to be performed in Korea. Within a couple of weeks the Advance Headquarters of Fifth Air Force move their hqs to Itazuke. The 8th Fighter Group, 35th, 36th, 80th Fighter Sq on the afternoon of June 1950 already were wheels up in Korea. The 49th Fighter Group and there 3 Fighter Sq arrive overnight at Itazuke. Later the 452ND Bomb Wg arrived, with B-26, then the 3rd Bomb Wg arrived, the base only had one runway, but a lot of parking space. They had the facilities for re-fueling the aircraft, the turn around time was minimum. Airplanes were coming in/out 24 hours a day. The base was well supported by the Japanese people of the noise problem. C-47, C-46, C-119, C-54 and others. Besides the combat mission, wounded soldiers were coming in 24 hours a day going to the 118 Station Hospital located in Fukuoka, Japan about 6 miles from the air base. Itazuke actually had two bases about 6 miles apart. The combat units, maintenance were located on the base where action took place.

After WW11 the 475th Fighter Group, 431st, 432nd, 433rd Fighter Sq were located at Kimpo Air Base, South Korea, this is when I was assigned to the 475th Fighter Group. Later on they moved the 431st and 433rd to Japan but the Headquarters and 432nd remained at Kimpo Air base until August 1948. They moved to Itazuke and this is when the 475th Fighter Wing was organized. The 68th Fighter sq were already located at Itazuke. Around March 1949 the 475th Wing became the 8th Wing, and the 431st Fighter Sq became the 36th, the 432nd became the 80th Fighter Sq, the 433rd became the 35th Fighter Sq.

Now the Korean War has started, the 35th, 36th Fighter Sq were converted to F-51 and moved to Tsuiki Air Base, leaving the 80th with F-80 to operate with the 49th Fighter Gp that moved in from Misawa Air Base, Northern part of Japan. We were at Tsuiki AB a short time, then moved to Suwon AB, South Korea, again a very short period we moved to Kimpo AB, South Korea, a very short time, we then moved to the Pyongyang AB, North Korea, we were moving so fast, I believe we were there about ten days, then the Chinese entered the war. They chased the 8th Fighter Gp out, just over night we end up back in South Korea at Seoul City Airport. Nothing except a grass strip, we set up tents and operated out of it maybe 6/7 days, then the Chinese were on our heels, we pick up and went back to Itazuke Air Base in Japan. We re-organized, received the F-80 for the 35th and 36th, the 80th was already there, we became the three Squadrons Group again. Again in May 1951 we move to Kimpo AB, South Korea. The 4th Wing with their F-86 were already there, so we moved to Suwon AB, the 51st Fighter Group were there, they had one side of the runway and the 8th the other side. Tent city, we ate out of K-rations, drinking water out of a bag of water which you added salt to it. Later on in Dec 51, they finally built a mess hall a tin shack but it burned down. I left the 8th Fighter Group in January 1952. My tour of duty this time were from June 1947 to January 1952.

In another words we moved from Itazuke to Tsuiki, to Suwon, Kimpo, Pyongyang, to Seoul City, to Itazuke, to Kimpo and to Suwon, all in 8 months that is why our name was 'HOB0' FOR MOBILITY PURPOSES.

My assignment was Sgt Major of the 8th Fighter Group during this period as S/Sgt and T/Sgt, very familiar when the 8th at Itazuke became about and during the Korean War. I returned to Itazuke was Sgt Major of the 8th Maintenance and Supply Group in Feb 1955 to Feb 1958 I retired at a M/Sgt on Feb 29, 1968

Keith E. Gestrung

KEITH E. GESTRING

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Jones

There was a lot of officers killed in Action during the first six months of the Korean War, the 8th AF had over 30 killed in Action, including the three Sp Comdrs, Major Lundy, Major McNamee and Major Coady, but since the war, we had quite a few officers promoted to a high grade.

Lt Colonel Jones, J. Hughes - Pilot Comdr
Lt Colonel Raymond Fanning - Air Unready Comdr
Lt Colonel Lundy
Major Lundy House Name
Major Howard Harold Price - He was active the 8th AF Sp Comdr

I understand there were around 13 officers promoted to the House Rank, very high rates unless I think there were only about 35 officers in each Sp.

Lt Colonel Hughes spent time in South East Asia, in the 1st and 13th AF FOC and was in the 13th AF FOC & the 13th AF FOC & the 13th AF FOC.

I found to mention that Colonel William T. Jones was the Sp Comdr, I believe he returned to reserve status after we returned from Korea in 1950.

He is the pilot that was taken in Jul 2011, at Komsu AB, Korea where the 8th AF is stationed at. This appears in the Air Force Association publication.

ched attached

KRETT

JUVAT HEADHUNTERS

Cleaning out my files for Driver, I ran across these sent to me by Jaybird when he sent me all his files:

F-16 Crash: **Capt. S. Curtis "Bullet" Robinson** of the 80th TFS was killed in an F-16 crash on July 6, 1982. According to F-16.net, the aircraft was 80-0490 of 80 TFS, F-16A Block 10C, that went down near Chongju. Paul Huff, MSgt, USAF, wrote in 2003, "Capt Curtis "Bullet" Robinson was flying F-16A S/N 80-0490 where he crashed into a mountain side in inclement weather. I was on the recovery team. I still have moments over this ordeal. As you particularly know we all had a unique bond with each other while assigned to the 8th. I was in the 8th EMS Fuel Sys Shop."



Capt. Curtis Robinson

AMERICAN FIGHTER PILOT

Juvat Headhunter Author Unknown
(seventh stanza)

“From Rickenbacker to Bullet
We'll meet them all again
When all the wars are over
Where there's no one left to defend
'Cause the fighter pilots will be there
Until the bitter end
To defend the skies as only we can do.”

Capt. Theodore Harduvel, Jr. was killed on Nov 16 in the crash of his F-16C near Taejon during a low-level training mission. At Kunsan he served as Chief of Weapons and Tactics. A memorial service was held at Kunsan on Nov 23. He was a member of the 80th TFS. According to F-16.net, 81-0692 of 80 TFS, F-16A Block 15D, went down near Taejon, South Korea on 14 Nov 1982. The pilot, Capt. Theodore Harduvel, was killed. The ensuing litigation against General Dynamics over the mishap, by Harduvel's widow, inspired the film "Afterburn." For information about the film go here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterburn_\(film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afterburn_(film)) or here: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0103626/>
The film won a Golden Globes award as well as several others and is available for purchase on Amazon, as well as at several other vendors.



Capt. Harduvel (Click on image to enlarge)

According to F-16.net, on 15 Dec 1982 aircraft 81-0724 of the 8 TFW, F-16A Block 15E, was involved in a mishap (without further details). The aircraft was written-off.

A belated "Farewell, Tailwinds and CAVU" to two valiant Headhunters.

WHAT IS GOOD?

The Juvat Headhunters, as most of you know, quite often end a letter or email with the quote: "What is good?" sometimes abbreviated "W.I.G.?" Sometimes they use "Crush 'em!" as well .

The answer comes from the movie "Conan the Barbarian" when Conan is asked: ["Conan What Is Best In Life?"](#) Conan says: "Crush your enemies. See them driven before you. And to hear the lamentations of their women!" That is an abbreviation of this Genghis Khan quote:

"The greatest pleasure is to vanquish your enemies and chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth and see those dear to them bathed in tears, to ride their horses and clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters."

And now, you know the rest of the story!

HEADHUNTERS DOWN

On 7/16/2017 5:48 PM, minton8oftr@charter.net wrote:
 Sorry to tell you that (Col) **Walt Soboslay** died early last year. We served together in "A" Flt of the 80th in Korea in 1952. **Jerry Minton.** *Sad news. Jerry. CAVU and tailwinds, Walt!*

FROM THE WEBSITE AND AROUND THE WORLD

On 5/1/2017 8:20 AM, **Dustin Brown** wrote:
 Hello, Tex.

Nothing like passing on disappointing news on multiple occasions. I wasn't able to swing the XC jets due to our deployment movement that starts this week. And I've been shackled with alert duty this weekend. Double whammy.

So you guys will not be graced with my presence down in Ft Worth this weekend, though I have every intention of seeing you at the next one. I'm damn sorry to miss it. You guys enjoy, and a special thanks to you for all the effort you put in running the organization.
Regards, **Dustin "Yogi" Brown**, Colorado Air National Guard

FWIW, on Friday, Yogi bought a plane ticket, flew in Saturday for the reunion and flew back on Sunday in time to pick up the remainder of his alert duty. That kind of commitment, ladies and gentlemen, is what makes being a Headhunter/Juvat so special. Yogi, did yeoman duty leading the Ft Worth contingent of the JBC- even going so far as borrowing our hired guitarist's guitar and playing the songs as they were meant to be played- with enthusiasm and volume AND he made a very generous post-reunion donation to the Association! Thanks, Yogi!

On 4/25/2017 11:19 AM, **Gregory Balzhiser** wrote:
Tex!

Great to hear from you. I'm the wing patch out at Bagram, Afghanistan. Busy but fun. Home station is the Triple Nickel at Aviano. I'll update the address. We are looking to get back stateside in mid 2018...then I can finally make a reunion! WiG!? **Smack**

From: "Case, Frederic T." <FT.Case@jhuapl.edu>
Subject: Re: MIA

Date: May 8, 2017 at 7:31:47 AM PDT

To: Steven Teske <sngteske@sbcglobal.net>

Thanks for the update Tesk'er ... sorry we missed it. I couldn't think of a better guy to take the lead of the pack. Congratulations to The Driver . As we plan to be retired in 2020, Jan & I will make the next reunion. Cheers. **FT**

From: Steven Teske <sngteske@sbcglobal.net>

Date: Monday, May 8, 2017 at 10:25 AM

To: FT Case <FT.Case@jhuapl.edu>, Bosco Bostick <larkbosco@cox.net>

Subject: MIA

FT, Bosco,

You were missed at the reunion this weekend. Understand you can't get to everything and other priorities always will be an issue. FYI Tex now joins the "emeritus" ranks as a former leader of our august organization. He handed off the reins to Driver Mac at the banquet Saturday. Earlier at the business meeting we decided the next reunion will be in 2020 at a location TBD.

All the best - JUVAT! **Steve**

Actually, I didn't really miss FT or Bosco- FT drinks up all the whisky and Bosco guzzles all the beer before Steve and I can...Tex

On 5/28/2017 9:18 PM, **LAWRENCE H PETTIT**

I hope your Memorial Day is filled with the memories of those fellow service members both gone and alive and to those who are continuing the effort to make our world a better place. God bless us all'
Larry, **Doc**, or Snead

On 6/15/2017 2:48 PM, **Jon Tinsley** meatf16@hotmail.com wrote:

Yes, I am still around. Retired two years ago, flying for Delta now. Oldest just graduated High School, so we are packing up here in Panama City and moving to Utah.

Meat

On 7/14/2017 4:52 PM, **Whit Collins** wrote:

I'm doing great and thank you for asking. I'm currently flying as the Opposing Solo (#6) for the Thunderbirds. We're currently at RIAT in the U.K. which should be experienced by any lover of military aviation. **Jaws Curtis** is a Juvat alumni who was a solo two seasons ago so it's cool to have Juvat representation on the team again. As a matter of fact two of the new guys we hired were dirty dirty Pantons, but the incoming DO I believe was a Juvat. Let me know if you have any other questions for the newsletter. -**Skate**

“but the incoming DO I believe was a Juvat.” Point of order, Skate. “You will always be a Juvat Headhunter no matter where you go.” <G>

On 7/15/2017 11:05 PM, **Matt Crowell** wrote:

Tex,
Yep, AWC (*Air War College at Maxwell AFB, home of the “Blue Bedroom Auditorium” among other catatonia-inducing activities*). Pretty sure I can't promise to stay awake... Looking forward to some good family time though. Crush 'Em! **Trap** (*Trap is JL#110 if you didn't already know....*)

On 7/18/2017 2:37 PM, Ellery Voge wrote:

New comment on your post "Between the Wars (BTW)"

Author: Ellery Voge (IP: 75.162.69.216, 75-162-69-216.slkc.qwest.net)

Email: elleryvoge@outlook.com

URL:

Comment:

Trudy (*daughter of **MSGT Bishop***), I'd just like tell you that I just found your message to the 80th, dated 11 May,17. I have fond memories of MSgt Bishop. He was the finest example of a military NCO I know of. His demeanor and character and overall work had the respect of everyone in the squadron. In 1953 I was a 21 yr old, brand new fighter pilot. I found myself assigned to the 80th when it was at K2, Korea, followed by a move to Kadena. I needed the adult guidance MSGT Bishop provided. I treasure the memory of my time in the 80th. Some years back I had some contact with **Dale Christensen** who shared my opinion of MSGT Bishop. God bless you and your family. After some thought, I remember the 80th flag also wondered what became of it.....

You can see all comments on this post here:

<https://8ofsheadhunters.org/2011/12/25/between-the-wars-btw/#comments>

On 7/25/2017 10:33 AM, Neal Carbaugh wrote:

Tex,
I'm decided to drop out of the Headhunters, but it has nothing to do with anything you, Nogas or Lude did or didn't do. In fact, we are lucky to have you guys doing what you do for the Juvats!

Take care, **Neal Carbaugh**

Thanks for all your support over the years, Neal. Good luck. Tex/Driver/Nogas/Lude

G Suits and Aneurysms *I got this info from the AA Grey Eagle's website. If you've ever used a g-suit, you might want to take a look. It appears that since most models don't provide support to the veins behind the knee that the veins in that area may be damaged and spring a catastrophic leak.*

The sky is not falling, but it is something to be aware of especially among us aged/ageing types. It's also available online here: <https://8ofsheadhunters.org/2017/07/24/g-suits-and-aneurysms/>

REUNION PHOTOS

REUNION PICTURES: Will be posted online shortly: <https://8ofsheadhunters.org/2017/08/03/2017-reunion-pictures/>

FROM THE ORDERLY ROOM

REUNION BUSINESS MEETING NOTES: Are posted at the website: <https://8ofsheadhunters.org/category/news/>

CHANGE TO NEWSLETTER PROCEDURES: We simply are not getting enough Annual Dues payments anymore. While the Association treasury is still in good shape, dues are not keeping up with the day to day expenses. As a courtesy to our non-computer users, we've been mailing out about 107 newsletter copies x 4 times per year = 428 = about \$1000. Sooo, starting with the February 2018 newsletter they will only be available online: <https://8ofsheadhunters.org/category/newsletter/> Sorry to break the paper edition tradition, but the financial facts are the financial facts. Bribe that granddaughter of yours to download it for you! LOL!

CHANGE OF COMMAND: At the 75th Reunion, I (reluctantly) passed command of the Association to Bob "Driver Mac" McNeese. Driver has been a major participant in the Association for a number of years. He's hosted two reunions at Colorado Springs. As your Historian, he organized and catalogued boxes and boxes of Squadron photographs, letters, patches, pillows, flags and other memorabilia. Who can forget Driver's story of how Kirby came by Peanut Nevil's leather flying jacket? He then found a home for all those historical pieces (and stole them back after the institution reneged on their promise to display them proudly!). I've asked him (and Gerry Asher) many times for help in researching some facet of our history. Not once have I been disappointed with their efforts. In short, Driver is a self-starter for whom "Juvat Standard" has real meaning. The transition is going smoothly and we anticipate the changeover will be complete on January 2018. For now please send all correspondence to Tex as per usual.

I've had a great time setting up the new website, automated dues payments and just generally herding this gaggle of cats that is the Headhunters. Thanks for all your patience with me, Nogas and Lude as we went through our learning process while transitioning the Association into the 21st century. But, with two houses 1600 miles apart and trying to run and maintain two farms in Yankeeland I'm just about out of steam.

I ask you to give Driver all the support you can. I ask you to submit your memoirs and 80th stories. I ask you to arrive at reunions. I ask you to financially support your Association. I ask you to volunteer your services, should Driver need help.

It's the Headhunter Way.

So, bear with us as we make the transition from Texas HQ to Colorado Springs HQ and Driver gets his OJT.

Audentis Fortuna Juvat!

Tex n Rita2

**80th Fighter Squadron
THE HEADHUNTERS
PO Box 162
St Marys, PA 15857**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



***“TWIN TAILED LIGHTNING WAS OUR WARPLANE, AS WE ROAM’D PACIFIC SKIES...
SEARCHING OUT, THE SONS OF NIPPON, SENDING THEM TO THEIR DEMISE.”***