



My War Service in WWII, Korea, Vietnam *Focus on Korea, 1951*

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Eventually we all ended up at Tachikawa Air Base. After all, it was the base from which we went to Korea. There were still "frag order" missions to fly and the ground forces still needed supplies of all kinds. So the flying didn't stop just because we had been driven out of Kimpo. In other

words we were down but far from out. We were two aircraft and one crew short--but that's all--and there was still plenty of "git up and go" left in the unit. The Reserve Wing from Chicago had been recalled as a unit and were on their way over to Brady Field, located on a peninsula just a little south and west of Ashiya. The C-119s were stationed at that Air Base and most air cargo was first brought in to Ashiya and redistributed in Korea from there. Our First Provisional Group was divided up and added to the Chicago Wing.

We were broken up into the three existing squadrons to completely fill out their TOE (Table of Organization and Equipment) because most Reserve Wings had plenty of openings that were never filled. There was some friction between the two groups as most of their crews had never been near a combat situation but that was soon dispelled. The men that had left families somewhere in the Far East, Kadena Air Force Base on Okinawa or Clark Field in the Philippines, stayed with the squadron at Tachi because the family living conditions there were a whole lot better than elsewhere. Some families with a short rotation date were sent back to the ZI (Zone of

Interior, or the US) while others were in family housing on Tachi. Two more squadrons were at Brady Field which had been a Japanese field during WWII, therefore no buildings for the troops were involved. We lived in tents that had been erected over a 2x4 frame and floored with rough-cut lumber at least high enough to keep the critters out and heated with the familiar oil-burning heater.

The runway was long enough but was the old familiar PSP surface. The narrow part of the peninsula that Brady was on was made of sand and further out on the wider part of the peninsula, the 25th Infantry Division made its home at Camp Hakata. I might add that the 25th had born the brunt of the initial attack on Korea, had taken many casualties so a lot of the dependents had headed Stateside. According to most military historians, the 25th was only there for housekeeping purposes and undermanned and none of its personnel were trained or equipped as a Division should be.

In my estimation, the roller coaster up-down thing had reared its ugly head in the wrong place at the wrong time and the Korean conflict was far from the planners minds. It shouldn't have happened but it did!

Many missions were flown to Ashiya, then to Korea and back, mostly hauling ammo, spare parts and clothing to the ground troops. The Chinese didn't get as far south as the North Koreans did the first time and were driven back beyond the 38th parallel, eventually.

That opened up more airfields for our use and it shortened the flying time to the "bomb line" considerably. Then there was the mission from Ashiya supposedly to Tachi hauling a bunch of passengers and, of course, at night. I was filling in for a sick copilot as the right seat felt as good to me as the left. We had climbed to our assigned altitude and were

cruising along the airway towards Tachi when a passenger came forward to the pilot's compartment and told us that the right engine was streaming fire from the exhaust stacks quite badly and that he didn't think it should be doing that. A quick check of the engine instruments showed nothing amiss so I got out of the seat and headed back to see for myself. Sure enough the passenger was right. I hurriedly got back into the cojocks seat and we shut that engine down pronto. There was no sense in ruining a fixable engine and if we needed it, we could restart it. That left one good engine to get us to Komaki Air Base, another thirty minutes or so ahead of us.

The weather was good and a textbook approach and landing was made without further adieu. We spent an unscheduled night along with all the passengers at Komaki as though it was done every day. That was the only engine failure that I experienced in well over 2000 hours of flying in that type of aircraft.

We did get to drop paratroopers on our own island of Kyushu in Japan. It is said that the commanders of the airplanes and the paratroopers made a bet that the airplane CO would not jump with the rest. He did, but broke his leg upon landing and that put him out of commission for a while.

My faithful copilot (the one that wanted to fly single-engined airplanes) had applied for and gotten a slot in a new squadron that was being formed in Korea. It was equipped with AT-6s and their job was to be the spotters for ground support strike aircraft that were coming in from the south. The AT-6 was the same airplane I had flown at the first part of Advanced flying training and after it had been fitted with smoke rockets was a good pick for the job. At least, he was flying single-engined aircraft. I would see him again some fifteen years later at CCK (Ching Chang Kwan airbase) on the

island of Formosa, quite by accident. The Air Force had begun to be a great big fraternity because goodbyes became hellos at some later date. There was hardly an Air Force base in the world that didn't have on its roster someone that you had known in yesteryears as illustrated by the friendship mentioned above.



Fifth Air Force Headquarters had set up a C-119 school at Komaki Air Base near Osaka, Japan. I don't know how their selection process was set up but another pilot and myself came out of their magic ball to attend this school. The C-119 was a newer version of the C-82 which Troop Carrier Units had depended on. In the first place, it had been designed by people who would be using the craft, both Air Force and Army, and their requirements were well met. There were two R-4360 Pratt-Whitney engines turning a four-bladed fourteen-foot propeller that was fully reversible for use in short field landings, tricycle gear with a steerable nose wheel, twin booms, like a C-82, removable "clam shell" doors for heavy equipment drops, a cargo compartment center-line monorail used at the same time troops were dropped with accompanying "bomb bay doors" and a bunch of other amenities that would suit any troop carrier pilot.

It is no wonder that it picked up the nickname "Flying Boxcar" before it ever got out the factory door. It would haul just about anything you could put inside and drop most of it if so desired. It handled a lot differently than the C-46 and it should, it was a much newer aircraft and had proven its worth right here in this war. I never expected to fly another type of aircraft in any school that close to a war zone but the C-119 had proven itself so successfully in all respects that the head shed people were taking notice. The school lasted only two weeks and was more of a familiarization school than anything else but we did get some 25 hours

in the left seat. Little did I know of the future of that airplane and how it would affect me.

In the first part of April two pilots were picked from all squadrons that were to do things with the C-46 that had never been done before. The job was to fly that big airplane as a spray aircraft to control the mosquito population in and around all Allied installations in South Korea. I happened to be selected as one of them and the other was from the Chicago Wing. We were to



have the pick of the aircraft and crew including the crew chief because the flying was to be close to the ground and in tight places. The crew chief had to be on the ball for obvious reasons and the airplane had to be one of the most dependable in all respects. I chose an olive-green painted craft and her accompanying crew chief, the number of the airplane was 43-7522. That meant that the airplane was made in 1943 and the rest of the number signified the place it took in that particular block of numbers assigned to the manufacturer. Our call sign became COMMANDO FIVE DOUBLE DEUCE and remained as such for the whole summer.

The crew consisted of me as the aircraft commander, the copilot and the crew chief and that was all. It became our job to take the airplane to the Tachikawa Air Base where FEAMCOM workers were to install two 750-gallon tanks that were usually used as long-range fuel tanks in the cargo compartment of a C-54. These tanks were connected together and held the DDT and diesel-fuel mix that we were to spray. An electric pump was installed between the tanks and controlled by an ON/OFF switch located on the co-pilots window sill. Two one-inch metal pipes carried the mix from the pump out of the aircraft to the underside of the horizontal stabilizers and ended sticking straight down, but cut off at a forty-five degree angle and were located so that the

vortex of the propellers would break up the stream into droplets.

For the benefit of the engineering type, the tanks were located near the aircraft's center of gravity and the tanks already were baffled inside to keep the mix from sloshing around too much on takeoff and landings. The weight of the mix was near seven pounds per gallon and a little arithmetic shows that a full load with all the rest of the equipment gave us a load of about eleven-thousand pounds. The only thing left was learning to fly the bird in all the maneuvers required of a spray airplane. Every bit of it was close to the ground. For some reason there was always a thin flat deck of clouds over Tsushima straits, the body of water between Japan and Korea. That became our training ground, and it afforded flying low on top of the clouds, sharpening our depth perception to aircraft speeds without tearing something up. Our altitude above the cloud deck was about twenty feet.

We also learned how to turn the aircraft on a dime and get back a nickel change, ready for the next pass. For the pilots reading this: The crew had to be alert at all times ready to expect anything. It took a lot of coordination and cooperation not normally required of any crew, especially flying transports. The C-46 was powered by two R-2800 engines swinging Hamilton Standard three-bladed props, or Curtis Electric three-bladed props, variable speed, and DOUBLE DUECE was equipped with the latter. We learned that power settings were never changed. The turn around was all done by maneuvering the aircraft and depending on changeable flap settings and trim tabs. As a matter of further explanation let us describe a 180-degree turn to the left.

The heading from the previous run was noted and the ship was started into a RIGHT climbing turn to about 45

degrees from the original heading, with airspeed dropping off rapidly and quarter flaps were called for immediately. The aircraft was hung on the props and flaps through the turn back to the LEFT, the airspeed was monitored closely through the turn which determined the position of the nose of the craft at



least through the ninety degree to ORIGINAL heading, flaps were retracted to the full-up position, the craft continued the turn to the one-hundred-eighty degree heading with the nose coming down to pick up spray airspeed. Right there was the scary part and everything had to work just right or 7522 and crew would be history. It was no place for the faint of heart with the aircraft nose pointed towards the ground which wasn't too far away, a low but increasing airspeed, and a little airmanship didn't hurt a bit. The angle of bank in any of the turns rarely exceeded thirty degrees.

The flaps on a C-46 retracted a little slow but when they were full up and airspeed regained as the turn maneuver was completed, spray altitude and position were on the money. Slight variances of these procedures were changed as aircraft weight changed but that basically was how it was done time and again. It sure made for a close-knit crew and it didn't take long to see the "makins of the man"! That copilot's switch got a workout and had to be turned on and off at exactly the right time and that had to be determined by me, just another little thing to think about.

The equipment HAD to be in A-1 shape--or fixed so that it was--nothing was overlooked that I knew of. You could lay money on the fact that all crew members relied on their equipment. We were working with an Air Force entomologist while we found out all these little secrets about spraying. After we had gotten used to flying low over a cloud deck it was time for the real thing. A

strip of beach barely out of the water became our next training ground. Approach to the beach was made from the water at spray altitude and a slight pull-up was required to remain at that altitude.

The entomologist would put four-inch square plates of glass at various places and count the drops of water on the glass we sprayed to make sure the coverage was what it was supposed to be. If there were not enough drops, we probably were not low enough. All of our self-teaching was done with full spray tanks of water and that meant a slightly heavier airplane than one loaded with mix. As a matter of note, our "checker" would fly with us from A to B but never on an actual or practice mission. The mosquito season was approaching rapidly and we headed for K-37 at Taegu, Korea, for the real thing. This was to be our base of operations for the rest of the summer of 1951.

One fuel truck had been designated for our refill requirements which were no longer under Air Force supervision but the Fifth Army Surgeon General. Since they were responsible for all Forces south of the 38th parallel, they were now our boss. They knew less about aerial spraying than we did as the whole thing turned out to be a successful experiment. Their requirements consisted of spraying all US and ROK (Republic of Korea) installations south of the parallel. Our first actual spray mission was the airfield we were on which turned out to be a snap. We notified the airfield control tower who in turn notified all interested parties of the time window when spraying actually took place. Mess halls and hospitals were of special interest because that is where the mosquitoes congregated. A one half mile area surrounding each installation was to be treated to make sure the bugs were killed.

As the season progressed, earlier and later spray flights were required and seventy degrees F. seemed to

be the limit. Anything above that temperature our lethal mix simply floated away and became non-effective. Malaria was rampant amongst the indigenous population because their rice paddies came right up to the edge of most fields. The Fifth Army Surgeon, a full Colonel (Medical Corps) visited us one day to show us why we were spraying. The crew piled into his Jeep and headed for the city of Taegu where he stopped near one of their open air meat markets. Refrigeration was not part of their culture and what meat they had hung in the open and was covered with black flies and other insects.

A concrete-lined river bank was nearby and the usual pile of garbage ran over the edge of the concrete. He flipped the top layer off the garbage pile with his swagger stick and the pile was alive with maggots eating their way to adulthood. It was enough for us to see the meat market and its flies but the maggots really brought the reasoning for our mission home to stay. Later on, that same Colonel wanted to fly a spray mission with us, to which we readily agreed. Everything was fine until it was necessary to head back for spray altitude after a turn around. The Colonel was sitting in the seat normally reserved for the crew chief and could see everything we did to make the mission successful. The color green adorned the cockpit for the rest of the mission and he never wanted to go on another. The four-inch square glass plates were still in use, however.

Most of the spray missions were of necessity flown very early in the morning and if it cooled off enough, in the evening. Those airfields close to the seas that surrounded Korea were kept cooler from an onshore breeze that was almost always present, but it was some of these fields that gave us the real headaches. As an example, K-10, located on the southern coast of Korea, was an older Japanese sea-plane base with one end of the runway sloped into the water to accommodate amphibious aircraft that wanted to get out of same.

There were a lot of other problems, such as a hangar with an open end that sat so close to the approach end of the runway that we used the space for a run-up area, the hangar being topless and unused, a very close mountain range that paralleled the runway, the water and some small islands being on the other side, a more or less permanent crosswind (there is that onshore breeze again) and an immediate turn was required after takeoff to miss the mountains. The living/operations areas were spread out on what flat land they could muster between the runway and the mountains.

Approach and landing were always made from the open sea towards the mountains located near the other end of the runway. The South Africans were operating P-51s from that field regularly but it had to be sprayed like any other Allied field. (Some of the South Afs were so tall that they could not fit into the cockpit of a '51 so they flew them without benefit of a parachute!) The Colonel from Fifth Army would have turned a different color than green if he had been along on any spray mission to that field.

There was one other area occupied by the ROK ground troops that had to be sprayed located south of Taegu and within spittin' distance of K-37, our "mother" airfield. The quick, small radius turn around came in quite handy because the area was located in a box canyon and on either side of a stream draining the valley. Their buildings were more like our tent areas, low and flat, without many electric wires and poles sticking up for us to miss. The valley narrowed and went uphill like all good valleys do and our turnaround had to be made there. Our mission was made easier as the ROK encampment ended soon enough for us not to leave any wingtips for them to play with.

I don't know how many missions we flew against the

invasive mosquitoes and other strange bugs but that airplane taught us to fly in no uncertain terms--to fly IT, and not the other way around. I cannot thank the crew enough to stay as a cohesive unit and each do their part when the chips were sometimes down.

We got back to Brady Field in Japan once in a while for needed aircraft inspections and things of that nature. We got a day off but the "frag" orders still had to be delivered and the air cargo missions from Ashiya to Korea hadn't stopped. We pilots still had a bed in the Officers tent area because our duty in Korea was always on TDY (Temporary Duty open end) orders, sometimes lasting over a week.

Itazuke Air Base was just a little ways from Brady and the F-84 "bent wings" flew over head in loose formation on their way to the bomb line in Korea. The wing



undersides of that airplane were always loaded with everything from napalm to bombs of various sizes. On one of the trips back "home" I watched an F-84 climb out with the rest, get just past our base and lose his engine. I am

told, since I never flew that airplane, that the electrical system also quit and there was no way to jettison the load.

I next observed the craft on the final approach to our base, high, hot and long, and as a result, wound up as a ball of aluminum scrap on the runway. The pilot was decapitated and his wedding ring was found in one of the grooves in the PSP. On another occasion at K-9 I watched a B-29 on its way north to the bomb line that tried to land with his load because the salvo mechanism wouldn't work. The number three engine and prop were feathered and it looked like he was set up for a good three engine landing. His gear was down and locked, but he was also high, hot and long, and he wound up running

off the runway and burying the right gear in the sand beside the PSP. The crew survived that unfortunate incident and so did the airplane.

Yet another similar day at K-9, I watched a B-26 make a beautiful touchdown and landing, only the nosewheel collapsed when it was eased on to the PSP. I have a notion that they are still finding pieces of the nose section of that craft as it was made of glass. The bombardier usually occupies that space at least on a bomb run, but I noticed that it was empty as the aircraft went by. Our parking area was close to the runway which afforded my crew a ringside seat to many of these "accidents" which we hoped were not a part of the daily menu.

There were some days that were unsuitable for spraying because of the heat. Nevertheless, we watched predicted weather like a hawk as a summer shower could undo a mission very quickly. There were plenty of missions to fly in the little time we had at "home" and we got our share. Let it be said that the aircraft from our wing never sat idle if they were in flyable condition. Sometime during the summer the higher-ups had laid out a plan of rotation for the men they had sent over on the spur of the moment and like many others mine turned out to be one year. The summer was waning into fall and the rotation date of early October got closer.

My new station was to be Donaldson Air Force Base at Greenville, South Carolina. There is not a lot to tell about the trip home other than it was all by the same Flying Tiger Airline and the same airplane that had taken us over. The route of return and time enroute were about the same but the attitude was a lot different. Instead of the excitement of what lay ahead, most "heads" just slept. All of us had had screwy schedules and there was no better way to pass the time than sleep. Many of we returnees had stayed together for

the whole year and were going to the same place after our leaves were finished. All of us had a 30 day leave coming and it sure was welcome.

A year away from a young family is a long, long time and many things had taken place in that year. The kids were at home where they should be when my wife met me at the Omaha Airport. It is a different feeling to be in a country like ours and not having to look behind every rock to make sure of your safety and one does not get over that in a day. It was a sobering thought to see the family well taken care of after what we had experienced in Korea. The night was spent in an Omaha hotel and it was a joy to see the little boy and girl the next day. Thirty days of "vacation" time sounds like forever, but it went by fast and furious. I did think that I had done my part as best I could, and it was time for someone else to shoulder the burden. There was still a lot of flying to be done right here at home and Donaldson was fourteen-hundred miles away to the southeast.