



It's a small world and Hack Miller makes the most of it. At an airfield in Da Nang he looked up Lt. Col. Gerald Hamilton, left, B57 pilot from Layton.

HACK MILLER REPORT

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Utahns Fly Daily Raids

Editor's note: The life of a bomber pilot in Viet Nam is pretty rugged. They fly a mission every day, sometimes two. Today, Hack talks with some Utahns.

By HACK MILLER

Deseret News Staff Writer

SAIGON — Who was it said that this was a small world? Certainly not Magellan. Yet I was waiting for a plane near the hangar at Da Nang the other day when I saw an old friend, Lt. Col. Dan Farr, who the Utah National Guard airmen will remember was one of their former advisers.

Dan's been flying here a long time. I met with him last July at the same hangar. In fact, I had inquired about him when he happened to pass by.

Dan was on his way for another briefing — still flying one or two B57 missions a day.

Inasmuch as the 8th Bomb Squadron had made me an honorary member of their unit I was anxious to look some of them up. Our schedule had been a busy one, but



Capt. Thales Derrick
... DFC winner

this short wait gave me the chance.

In the same briefing with Dan Farr was Lt. Col. Gerald

Hamilton, from Layton, Utah. Gerry had just received the word that he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. He was just five minutes old in his new rank.

Gerry was my pilot the day I bummed a ride in his B57 and we ran a good raid over a small Viet Cong village 10 miles east of Ban Me Thuot. That was the day I learned the risks involved with these flyers who make one, two or three bombing runs a day.

I had heard by way of our Distinguished Flying Cross winner, Capt. Thales Derrick, whom I met again one day in Albuquerque (after Thales and I had spent part of a day together at Tan Son Nhut airbase) that Gerry Hamilton had been shot down over Pleiku, and picked up.

I had to know the story. Gerry told me.

He was going in on a real open target — which these pilots seldom see in this jungle land — and came over the target in a dive. This, of

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Utahns Still Flying Daily Bomb Raids

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course, puts them in some- thing of a good target position for ground fire because they are coming into the fire rather than across it.

As he passed his target his plane failed. He had taken some ground fire and although he tried hard to pull it out, get out to sea, where they like to be recovered (because there is no bush there for a V.C. to hide behind), he couldn't make it. He and his mate "punched out" as they call it.

"I was picked up immedi-

ately," Gerry said. "That's a wonderful feeling to know that they will come and get you. And I was back on the bombing run the next day. Haven't missed a run yet."

HAD TO LEAVE

Lt. Paul Stunseth, my contact officer for the July run, who also had written me a nice letter at home, couldn't be reached except by phone. We talked and he issued me another invitation to fly with Gerry again.

"I wanted to, and if opportunity allows, I shall. But we had been scheduled for the far-in Special Forces camps, the real front line.

HOME-TOWN MAN

Down country a piece, that same day, at a far-away Special Forces camp at An Tuc, isolated from the Viet Cong only by deep trenches, bunkers and barbed wire, was another home-town man, Capt. Robert White.

He had been injured when his vehicle came undone in the steering apparatus and plunged about 100 meters down a canyon side. It rolled all his crew and smashed up a few ribs.

Bob was still taking his breath in short gasps. But was healing fast.

COUNT FINGERS

"When you're out in this country, you don't worry about broken ribs. You get up and go. Then when you're behind the barbed wire and punji stakes again you can take the time to count your fingers, examine your abrasions.

"And when you get them counted it doesn't make much matter. You have a first aid kit and a man who has been trained to cut tape and apply the ointment."

NOT ON MAP

"You just sort of hope yourself healthy again." I promised to phone his wife, Ute, when I got home. By then he will be using his full rib cage.

It takes a little while to

hedgehop to the various Special Forces camps. But that day we visited Plei Delin, Plei Me, Duc Co, Plei Da Drag, An Khe, Phu Tuc — and then went on to Dalat.

If you look at a map and can't find them, worry none about it. These are the most remote places in the known world. Not even the mappers have been there. Just our Special Forces troops and their friendly little Montagnards working for their 40 cents a day.

Flying the bomb run has its moments, but methinks mine is an interesting way of life, too.

DFC Honor To S.L. Pilot

A Salt Lake City pilot has been awarded the U.S. Air Force Distinguished Flying Cross for leading his flight of F-100 Super Sabres in the destruction of a Viet Cong communications site on Oct. 7, 1965.

Capt. Thales A. Derrick, 31, son of Mrs. Hattie C. Derrick, 1345 Edison St. (140 East), and Col. Thales M. Derrick, 2554 Alva Cr. (3540 S.), was given the award at Cannon AFB, New Mexico.

Capt. Derrick was also presented five other awards of the Air Medal for aerial achievement during 129 combat missions against the Viet Cong.

The captain had to lead his flight through low clouds and intense ground fire to reach the site, the citation said.

"Once we got to the target and the hill where the radio station was, we noted there was a thunderstorm sitting right over the top of the hill and low clouds at the base of the hill. We elected to use low altitude tactics in approaching the target because of the weather,"



Capt. Thales A. Derrick
... Utah hero

Capt. Derrick said.

"We even had a couple of
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rifle grenades launched at us. We were so low the V.C. were throwing everything at us but the kitchen sink," the captain explained.

A graduate of South High School, he attended the University of Utah where he received his commission through the ROTC program.

Capt. Derrick is married to the former Willa Nita Brooks, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Brooks 346 N. Main, St. George.