

MOTON HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION, INC.

THE TIGER NEWS

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*President's
Message*
**Happy New
Year**

If you have made a New Year's resolution I hope you will keep it. We are trying to keep our promise to you on posting issues of the Newsletter as noted in the last newsletter. I think we will keep our promise.

It is with sadness that we share some information on the death of Mr. Ridout.

Other articles will feature alumnus Albert Nash, Class of 1959.

Albert spent twenty-eight years in the United States Air Force and was a part of a special mission while serving his country. He has submitted a copy of the Story of 883, which is reprinted from the AIRMAN Magazine in 1970. The Basketball Classic, our Financial Report and the Membership Roster will also be included. The Membership list will include only individuals who have paid dues for

2013 as of now. Your names will be added in the next issue as we receive them. Mail dues to: Moton High School Alumni Association, P. O. Box 152, Royal Oak, Maryland 21662.

We are in the process of identifying a person from each class to join us for our monthly meetings. This will be another source for you to contact for information. We encourage all members and friends of this association to pay dues each year so that you will have access to the newsletter either through the website or by US mail.

As long as we have some members working we plan to continue to keep our high school, an active and viable association for years to come.

Let's continue to keep our school spirit alive.

*Gladys H. Giddens,
President
Class of 1960*

(The Story 883) continued to that part of the story, we should tell it from the beginning.

It is May 6, 1970, an AC-119, an Air Force gunship, tail number 883, sits outside waiting for its crew, waiting for tonight's mission- an armed reconnaissance mission over one of the most heavily defended road sections in Southeast Asia. In one of the briefing rooms, a group of men are gathering around in that special closeness that only an air-combat crew knows so well. Captains Alan D. Milacek, pilot; Brent C. O'Brien, copilot; Roger E. Clancey, navigator; James A. Russell and Ronald C. Jones, sensor operators; flight engineer TSgt. Albert A. Nash, illuminator operator SSgt. Adolpho Lopez, Jr.; aerial gunner A1C Donnell H. Cofer, and crewmembers SSgt Ronald R. Wilson and Sgt Kenneth E. Firestone. The crewmen didn't know that the mission they were about to fly, their 100th together; was going to be just a little bit different from the rest.

Weather, targets, coordinates, rescue procedures. A normal briefing. Soon, the engines are warming up, taxi is underway, and 883 and crew are airborne.

For a while all is "routine". The crew has already discovered two

trucks when sensor operators Russell and Jones spot three more trucks on the road below. Pilot Milacek begins maneuvering the aircraft, placing it in a firing orbit. The crew is alert, each man at his post. Ready for action, Suddenly, everything changes, the equilibrium of the night, such as it is, is gone. All at once the odds have turned against the crew of 883. Burst of anti-aircraft fire begin cracking and 883 is now engaged in the classic air battle. Co-pilot O'Brien clears two F-4s are called in as 883 maneuvers through the deadly circle of fire, Seconds and minutes they remain on target. After 17 minutes of the deadly duel, guns firing away at the trucks below, 37 mm rounds whizzing by 883 from the positions below, the crew feels that a "tenuous balance" might best describe the situation. One more truck has been hit and the fire from it lights the area.

Suddenly at exactly 1 a.m., everything changes and makes the previous few minutes seem as though they had been spent in Disneyland. "The whole cargo compartments lit up and I felt the aircraft go into a right bank dive". Recalls Airman Cofer, aerial gunner. No one knows exactly where they had been hit, the gunners didn't answer right away.

(The Story of 883) continued All they knew that the nice steady left bank that 883 had been flying had been violently wrenched into a violent right bank dive. Milacek called out, “ Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, we’re going in.” He gave instructions for jettisoning the flare launcher to the Illumination Operator, Sergeant Lopez, and told the crew to prepare for an immediate bailout. If they were going to go in, they had picked a mighty bad spot to do it.

Things became a bit more complicated for the pilot. The plane was coming down fast, having already lost about 1000 feet in altitude, while the crew struggled with the worsening problem. Milacek and O’Brien put in everything they had to try to pull out of that dive. Finally, with full left rudder and full left aileron, along with maximum power on the two right engines, they regained “stabilized flight”. They pulled out of the dive. It wasn’t the easiest thing in the world to do. Navigator Clancy said later, “ When you go on these missions, you brief for rescue procedures, where to head for and so forth. But this plane was going where it wanted! On top of that there was an additional problem. With the right engines at full power; they began

to glow, providing an easier target for gunners below. That wasn’t all the crew had to worry about. After a quick evaluation, they discovered that they were headed away from their home base. Even worse, there was a range of mountains between them and home base, and they were too low to go over in their present condition. But let’s take one problem at a time.

There wasn’t much they could do about their existence as a bright target in the sky, of course. They had to remain in a stable flying altitude. But Milacek, with guidance from the navigator, Clancy edged 883 around to the correct heading. Slowly, slowly like a trickle of sand in an hour glass, 883 strained around until she was pointed in the right direction. Now there were the mountains to overfly. The entire crew began throwing out everything they could to lighten the load. Adrenalin working at full bore, like the engines on the right wing, Sergeants Wilson and Firestone found that they could rather easily throw out the cans of ammunition with only one hand. It was working. The aircraft began a slow climb to get over the mountain. Once over the peaks, Milacek began a slow descent. Sergeant Nash recomputed the expected dry-

**(The Story of 883)
continued**

tank time and discovered that the fuel consumption had been reduced considerably. For the first time they had been hit, the crew could think realistically of landing the stricken bird instead of bailing out. It looked like the emergency might be ending.

Approaching the landing area, Milacek carefully performed a controllability check on 883. He found, after some experimentation that, at reduced speeds and with gear extended, control could be maintained with almost full left rudder and aileron. Since flap damage couldn't be assessed, he decided to do a no-flap approach at 150 knots, somewhat faster than the usual landing technique. Down they came, each crewmember wondering what the dark night held for them as they came closer to touchdown. The first bump, then wheel roll, then finally, taxi up. They had made it. They were down, after their 80-minute ordeal. It was over; and no one was hurt. Perhaps, though, no one was more relieved than Milacek, who was heard over the intercom, saying as they went onto the taxiway at the end of the runway: "Thank you, Lord, thank you."

It wasn't until the crew got out of the aircraft that they saw for themselves, for the first time just what damage had been done. One-third of the right wing had been shot away and one aileron along with it. Technically, the aircraft was almost unflyable.

A year later, the crew of 883 was together again, this time to receive the coveted Mackay Trophy for the most Meritorious Flight of the Year. The citation reads, in part:

Working as a team and displaying the highest degree of airmanship and courage in the face of extreme danger, they managed to successfully return to their home base, thereby saving a valuable aircraft. The exceptional distinctive of Captain Milacek and his crew reflect great credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force.

Stories are submitted based on the authors recollection and verification of events and equipment of many years ago. If you detect an area of the story that needs to be corrected please contact the [Webmaster](#). [When doing so it will be helpful if you have personal information supporting documents to justify making the correction.](#)



