

SUBJECT: Trip Report

MISSION: Ferry ACFT 67-21494 From Otis AFB, MA to Korat Royal Thai AB Thailand

DATE of MISSION: On or about the inclusive dates of: April 6th to April 16th 1969

SPECIFIC INCIDENT: Damage to #3 Prop by nose gear pin

PREPARED BY: Gordon Tatro (then A1C and Assistant Crew Chief) on Feb 24, 2002

DATE PREPARED: Feb 24, 2002

[[PG #]] Report references photos by page numbers (upper left) and numbers (1 through 4) from top left to right and then bottom left to right for each page.

During my short stay at Otis AFB, MA (Jan to September 1969)[[PG1]], I got the opportunity to fly to Keflavik Iceland many times [[PG8&9]], but one trip stood out as totally exciting (at least for this...then A1C). I got the chance to be on a ferry crew to deliver an ACFT to Thailand and rotate out another back to the states. The R model Connie we flew over to Korat (to the best of my knowledge) was #67=21494 (see page [[2]] lower right...this is the only mention of ANY aircraft tail number during the trip).

As I remember, we left on or about 6 April and stopped at Mecklellan, CA; Hickem, Hi; Wake Island; Guam; the Philippines; and then finally Korat, Thailand.

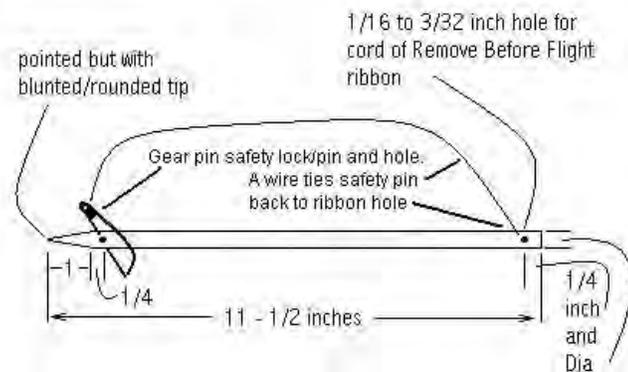
The trip was uneventful except for one episode, which nearly cost me my life. During our taxi roll after landing at Clark AB, PI an Assistant Flight Engineer (or someone) opened up the vertical sliding door just to the right of the Flight Engineer's panel. My seat was facing the rear but I was out of it and looking out the small starboard side window at number 3 prop/engine (I was not in my seat). As the individual lifted the door the center twist handle caught the long strap of the gear-pin bag...got wrapped up in it (somehow), and the gear pin bag fell out the door. As it tumbled towards the ground the bag turned and the nose gear pin came out of the bag and hit the tarmac. Because the Aircraft was still moving, the pin (and the red "Remove Before Flight" streamer) went into the number three propeller. It whipped the pin bending it [[PG10&11]] and sent it into the fuselage about two feet from my head (the streamer in the picture is NOT the real one...of course). The pin went clean through the starboard side and stuck into the port side of the fuselage (I wrenched it out of the padding and skin and have kept it ever since). Had I been sitting in my seat it would have come even closer to my head than it did. Because I use to pull pins and chocks during ground marshaling duties, I remember that we had a specific manner in which we were to show the cockpit (pilot and/or co-pilot) that we had pulled three pins (the long nose pin and the two shorter and a bit larger diameter main gear pins), wrap each pin in its streamer, and then stuff them all in the gear pin bag which was then pulled up into the cockpit via the Engineer's overhead sliding door.

The prop needed to be changed (it had a half inch notch in one of the three blades about a foot from the tip) and the fuselage needed to be scab patched on both sides of the fuselage (to allow for pressurization). We stayed at Clark only about 6 hours more than we had planned but the prop and engine shops (and me) along with the sheet-metal folks worked rather hard during that time. We did get the opportunity to visit the city of Angeles and go to a bar called the Blue Eagle(?) but I was really tired and we did not stay much longer than "just one drink" of Leaping Deer or Rocking Chair (if I remember the odd names for the bottles)!



The pin in the picture at the left IS THE REAL ONE! The pin is suppose to be straight. Contact with a rotating propeller on a running Wright R-3350 engine created the multi angles shown. Somehow I managed to keep it with me all these years and it even survived a rather messy divorce in which I lost MUCH military memorabilia (including a couple of photo albums).

Drawing at right it what an undamaged nose gear pin looks like.



While at PI and after the maintenance, I remember being quite tired (we all were) and answering the phone while the crew chief was in the shower (we had shared a room). Being a bit new to all this Air Force stuff and the oddity of the situation, when I answered the phone I did not 'ooze' forth the necessary, "Yes, Sirs" and "No, Sirs." The person on the other end was the AC and he was already not a happy camper, and I had not recognized his voice nor did he identify himself. And, I had just pissed him off! I remember that he was a full bird Colonel but I do not remember his name. It was recommended (by the Crew Chief) that I apologize to him for my rather "unnmilitary use of the phone" and not to say words such as "Oh Hi" and "what-cha need?" anymore!!! The AC had wanted to speak to the Crew Chief (who I can not remember except that he was a TSgt) and I had not recognized him over the phone. I apologized and the incident was forgotten...I always remembered that...incident!!

When we got to Korat, I was there for about three days and we then returned. I do not remember much about the return trip and some of the film/pictures had since been lost.

Gordon Tatro, MSgt, USAF (Ret)
(1968-1991)