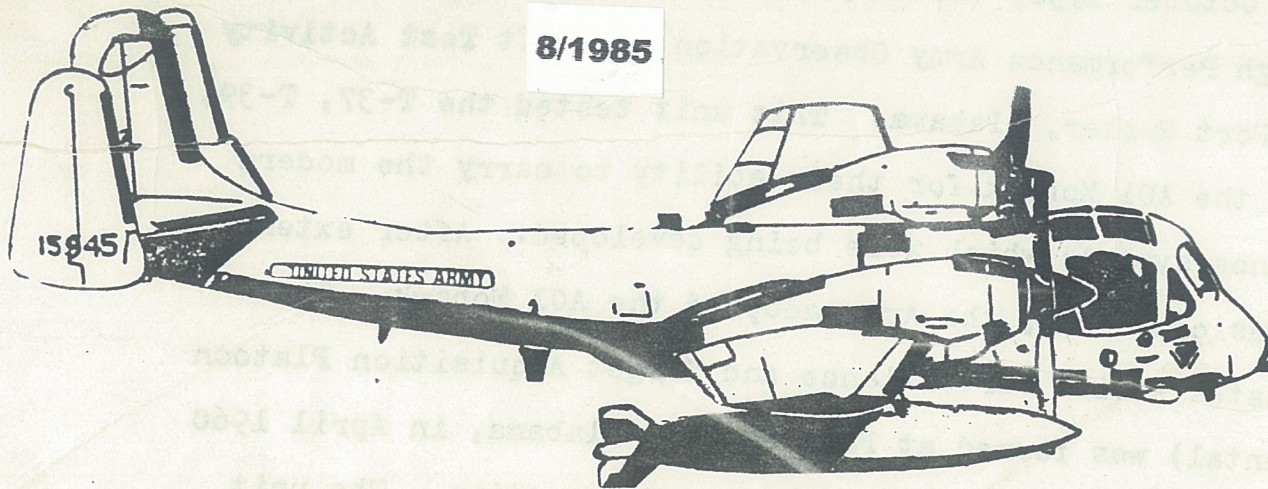


8/1985



## NIGHTHAWKS

The history of A Company parallels the history of the CV-1 Mohawk in the Army. Our lineage has been marked with many casings of guidons and unit numerical changes as different branches of the Army battled to gain control of Mohawk assets. This brief history traces the Mohawk from it's beginning to the present to help us appreciate the proud heritage of A Company, 15th MI BN.

Long ago, the Army realized the need for fast, accurate information on the battlefield. While the Air Force has always had the responsibility for aerial reconnaissance, their priority has been the acquisition of information deep behind the FLCT (Forward Line of Troops). To bridge this gap, the Army acquired light fixed wing L-4 aircraft during WWII. They were used for artillery spotting and to provide the commander with intelligence concerning his immediate area of interest. During the Korean War, the L-4s were upgraded to L-19s (Bird Dogs). The Bird Dog's capabilities differed very little from the L-4s; however, the L-19 did have a photo capability with a KA-20 mounted in a pod on the wing. As the battlefield became more sophisticated, the Army identified the need to upgrade its reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities.



Hence, in October 1956, the Army formed the T-37 Test Unit known as the High Performance Army Observation Aircraft Test Activity based at Fort Rucker, Alabama. This unit tested the T-37, T-39, L-23, and the A01 Mohawk for their ability to carry the modern surveillance systems which were being developed. After extensive testing was completed, the Army adopted the A01 Mohawk. The United States Aerial Surveillance and Target Acquisition Platoon (Experimental) was formed at Fort Rucker, Alabama, in April 1960 to test concepts of unit organization and operation. The unit consisted of six OV-1 aircraft and twelve USD-1 drones. The unit tested the first infrared system, the prototype UAS-4, and the Side Looking Airborne Radar System, AN/APS-94A.

The success with which this unit operated was instrumental in establishing an Aerial Surveillance and Target Acquisition (ASTA) Platoon for each division. Each ASTA platoon consisted of six Mohawks (2 OV-1A photo/trainers, 2 OV-1B SLAR, and 2 OV-1C IR, and 12 USD-1 drones).

While the ASTA platoons were being formed, the Army also formed the 23rd Special Warfare Aviation Detachment which was sent to Vietnam in the Fall of 1962 to test the Mohawk in a counter-insurgency role. With twelve A-model Mohawks that were equipped with pod mounted rockets and .50 caliber machine guns, the 23rd SWAD operated in Vietnam until 26 December 1964 when it was combined with the 4th ASTA platoon.

The combined assets of the 23rd SWAD and the 4th ASTA platoon formed the 73rd Aviation Company, the first Army Mohawk Company which operated out of Vong Tau, RVN. As the need for aerial surveillance in Vietnam increased, the 20th ASTA was formed at Fort Riley, Kansas, 1 July 1965. The 20th ASTA was deployed to



Nha Trang, RVN, after a brief training period in the United States.

The 20th ASTA operated from Nha Trang in support of allied operations in conjunction with other OV-1 units in the country.

On 15 January 1966, operations from Nha Trang ceased and on 15 February 1966 operations in support of I Corps were begun from Hue Phu Bai. In response to the U.S. Army's requirement for increased surveillance in Vietnam, the 20th ASTA was deactivated on 31 May 1966 and a new, more flexible organization, the 131st Aviation Company (AS) was created. The 131st had originally been formed at Fort Benning, Georgia, on 1 July 1965 as an Aerial Weapons Company of the 227th Aviation Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division. When the 227th went to lettered companies, the 131st AVN Co. (Aerial Weapons) was deactivated and the unit designation was placed on the inactive list. When a new company is formed, the U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry usually activates a number from the inactive roster. On 1 June 1966, the new 131st began operations working directly for the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MAC-V) J-2 and the 7th Air Force. They were supported in their expanded mission by the 223rd Aviation Battalion.

In September of 1967, the 131st was reassigned to the newly formed 212th Aviation Battalion at Marble Mountain Army Airfield. They continued to operate over all of Southeast Asia, including North Vietnam, from their base in Hue Phu Bai with flights also operating out of Udorn AFB, Thailand.

Still in A Company, 15th Military Intelligence Battalion's possession is the Night Hawk designed by First Sergeant Monico and created by the men of the 131st in December 1967. This artifact is a black colored hawk made of tile, bordered by gray tile. This was the floor tile in the 131st Officer's Club in Hue Phu Bai.



Traditionally, when a new pilot came into the unit, he would be required to step on the "Night Hawk" and donate \$10.00 to the club. At the end of his tour he would do the same. Of course, any individual who stepped on the "Night Hawk" would pay a fee of \$10.00 to the club. When the 131st left Hue Phu Bai, the "Night Hawk" was cut out of the floor and went with the unit at all times. Even today as we look at this "Hawk" we can still see the footmarks of those who lived and those who died as they stepped through the 131st searching for what was to come.

While operating from their base in Hue Phu Bai, the pilots of the 131st adopted the call sign "IRON SPUD". Legend has it that the IRON SPUD was a bucking bar used to flare red hot rivets. Later the call sign was shortened to "Spud" which we still use today. Upon arrival at Hue Phu Bai, new pilots were required to purchase a small brass plate and a black Spud Suit. The brass plate was engraved with the pilots name and dates of service with the 131st and mounted on the board that still hangs on the wall in flight operations. The black Spud Suits exclusively identified the Night Hawk pilots and became their trademark throughout Vietnam. The same Spud Suits are worn by many A/15 pilots to company social functions.

Since the Military Intelligence Branch assumed responsibility for the training and development of the Mohawk program, the decision was made, on 1 July 1971, to change the names of all Mohawk units from Aviation Companies to Military Intelligence Companies (Aerial Surveillance). On 10 January 1972 the advanced party of the 131st Military Intelligence Company (Aerial Surveillance) journeyed from Hue Phu Bai to Marble Mountain. By 1 February 1972 the entire company had departed the base they had operated from for the past five years. The 131st continued to operate from Marble Mountain



until they were moved to Da Nang on 1 September 1972. The last combat Mohawk mission flown in Vietnam was on 18 October 1972 by Major Roger Smith and Co-pilot Captain David Fordianne. The 131st had participated in fifteen out of seventeen campaigns over a six and one half year period. The colors were cased and transferred to Fort Hood, Texas, along with the airplanes. Some of the airplanes that were with the unit in Vietnam are as follows:

990	996	009	022	026
994	997	016	023	
995	005	018	025	

On 30 November 1972 the guidon of the 293rd Aviation Company (Surveillance Airplane) was retired and the guidon of the "Nighthawks" was unfurled over Fort Hood. From 1972 to 1978, the 131st Military Intelligence Company was the only Mohawk Company in the Continental United States. During this time period the 131st supported numerous Readiness Command Exercises as well as Project MASSTER and TCATA. The days of separately numbered companies were nearing an end. On 24 April 1978 the guidon of the 131st was folded for the last time. On this day the colors of the 15th Military Intelligence Battalion, which had previously been a Military Intelligence Battalion Air Reconnaissance Support (MIBARS) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, were uncovered. As B Company, 15th MI BN the unit earned a reputation as one of the best units in III Corps by excelling in all areas of endeavor. On 16 September 1983 the unit designation was changed to A Company, 15th MI BN and on 15 November 1983 we became a separate company under the 504th MI Group as the attachment to the 163rd MI BN (TE) was finally ended.

The old 131st may no longer exist, but its' spirit lives on in the hearts and minds of the soldiers of A Company, 15th Military Intelligence Battalion. This is evident from the "Spud" call sign,



the "Nighthawk" unit designation, the Spud Suits, the hawk handcrafted from floor tile, the brass plates that bear the names of the pilots who flew in Vietnam, and the attitudes of the present soldiers that strive to live up to their proud heritage.

Written by  
CPT Mark W. Stephenson A/15 XO  
CW3 RET Peter J. Bonner B/15 II Tech  
Accuracy checked by old spuds Coast  
to Coast



## BEHIND EVERY MOHAWK THERE ARE PROFESSIONAL SOLDIERS

Fort Hood – like any other Army installation; large, sprawling, wooded, barren, paved and gravel roads, housing, shopping areas, schools, families, and soldiers. Yet unique due to stationed units, events and activities, the families, and soldiers themselves. Not to mention the leadership and different missions.

One of the many things that made Fort Hood unique was the 15<sup>th</sup> Military Intelligence Battalion located on West Fort Hood. The time is 1982 to 1985. Company B, changed to Company A of the 15<sup>th</sup>, was the only unit activated of the Battalion. A separate Company within the 504<sup>th</sup> MI Group. A Mohawk unit, full of professional NCOs and outstanding soldiers. Housed in crowded barracks and old hangers; yet a ready unit, completing its primary mission and any other given to the Company. Soldiers that worked hard, and played just as hard.

I was assigned as the Company's First Sergeant upon completion of the Sergeants Major Academy. After settling into the job and getting me feet on the ground; talking to the soldier, I identified areas that would improve the quality of life and sharpen the readiness of the unit. The areas are the same in most units and requires that 'extra effort', going that 'extra mile'. These are the areas that require immediate, on-going attention; and are the same in every unit.

These included: overcrowding in the barracks; a poorly equipped and furnished dayroom; attached soldiers that did not understand the meaning of 'attached to'; lack of including the family as part of the unit; events that included the customs and traditions of the NCO; an attitude that common training had to be done, so lets do it and get it over with; training the promoteable soldier to be promoted; training the NCO so they understand and are responsible for more than just their 'desk top' and soldiers assigned to them, but for the unit overall, in all areas, every soldier. You can tell a soldier all day that you care for him and his family, but actions speak louder and are more believable.

Training of the NCO was intensified. This was done through one-on-one training; group training; publication of a unit newsletter on leadership, professionalism, and suggested solutions to everyday soldier problems. During this period, the company became short of commissioned officers. The NCO took over many additional duties and responsibilities of the commissioned officer in all phases of leadership within the unit. This standard continued after assignment of officers some nine months later. Every ceremony was conducted by the NCO; PT was organized and controlled by the NCO and soldier; inspections of TA-50 gear, the barracks, the soldier, work area was conducted by the NCO; Change of Command ceremonies and Pass in Review – all accomplished under the leadership of the NCO. Let me tell you, this was not easy as some NCOs wanted to go back to the 'easy life of the desk top' and some officers felt this was not within the NCO area of responsibility or capability. But the NCO prevailed and both the soldier and the NCO learned and became more professional.



The NCO learned to conduct 'GI parties' weekly; to visit the barracks – some for the first time ever – from time to time during non-duty hours; not to depart for home at 5pm when the soldier continued to work – a surprise to some that this was not one of the benefits of being an NCO. The NCO learned to care for the soldier and their family as much as they cared for the unit mission and the Mohawk aircraft.

After some time and after hearing from many individuals at all levels but one – the Post Command Sergeant Major – 'you cannot do it', 'you won't get any', new furniture was obtained for the unit dayrooms and to replace missing or broken barracks furniture. The dayrooms looked like a inviting hotel lobby, and the barrack rooms became more livable with each soldier having the same amount of furniture. The soldier was encouraged to add their own personal touch to the room – and most did. The hallway walls outside the Orderly Room was established as a 'Photo Gallery' from unit activities, promotion and awards ceremonies, and everyday unit activities. Unit hallways, stairwells, and dayrooms were painted in colors other than 'battleship gray' or 'white' or 'green'. Outside the barracks were landscaped and proudly a large unit identification sign was hung. A unit motto was established unique to this Mohawk Company – Best of the Best, Leader of the Rest. Unit certificates were designed and printed for awarding the soldier and families of the 'Nighthawks'. These were also given outside the unit for special occasions. Stationary also was designed and printed. All under the control of the NCO with input by the soldiers of the unit.

One of the most exciting things that happened was the establishment and naming of 'Mohawk Field'. There was a large, clear, open area next to the barracks that was used for formations and PT. It was also the area assigned to the unit for 'police call' and grass cutting. The unit First Sergeant found that no one was 'signed' for this area. He went to Post Property Book office and signed for the area personally. He also found that there was a Engineer Company that was also looking for projects to do for the training of their soldiers. After coordination with the unit, brick and wood picnic tables were built; and a large brick grill was built. Some time later, a sidewalk and large platform area was put in for reviewing ceremonies on the field. A large covered gazebo was also built. The entire area was used for formations, ceremonies, unit gatherings, and by the soldier for picnics and parties. A large arched sign was installed that let everyone know this was 'Mohawk Field'. This may have been the first and only 'Mohawk Field'.

The families became a vital and important part of the unit. A Enlisted/NCO Wives Committee was established. The turn-out, interest, and excitement was great. They organized and conducted Bake Sales in order to obtain drapes, curtains, a TV, a Microwave, and a VCR for the unit dayroom. They added pictures and other accessories to the dayroom. This committee was established under the guidance of the unit First Sergeant – who was a single parent. This was likely the only Enlisted/NCO Wives Committee at Company level on Fort Hood, and maybe at any location Army wide.

One of the largest events organized and conducted by the NCOs and Wives Committee was the 'Mohawk Fair', complete with a 'Mohawk Queen' selected by unit vote from the female soldiers assigned to the unit. There was a 'Mohawk Parade'. Mohawk Field was



too small to use for this event. A large open area next to the West Fort Hood housing area was selected. The fair included a Flea Market; Antique car display; refreshments of hot dogs, hamburgers, popcorn, soda and dishes supplied by the families; a Bake Sale; a Pony Ride; music by the unit soldiers; Door Prizes; a award and promotion ceremony; and small booths of chance, to name a few of the day long activities. Profit realized by this event were donated to the 'Make a Wish Foundation' in the name of this Mohawk unit.

In the area of Customs and Traditions, NCO/Enlisted Dining-In and Dining-Out events were conducted. These taught the young soldier some of the customs and traditions; refreshed the NCOs knowledge; and gave the families an insight into the Army's old and honored traditions. In addition to the regular program of these events, the unit included unique programs as part of the nights' activities. These included awards and promotion ceremonies; flowers given at the door to each wife or girlfriend of the soldier – made by and supplied by the Wives Committee.

Another program unique to this Mohawk Company was the 'Helping Hand' program. Canned goods and other food stuff was collected for Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas meals. These were then broken down and boxed by family size and given – privately – to unit soldiers that needed assistance in this area. Again, this program was established and controlled by the NCO and assisted by the Wives Committee.

All these noted 'Quality of Life' programs were successful and brought the unit closer together, accomplished the mission much better than without these programs, taught the soldier and families, as well as the NCO, in many areas without the obvious training taken place.

Improvements also included unit procedures and policies in written SOPs; conduct of duty; inspections by higher headquarters; conduct and results of alerts and field training; MOS and Common training; overall readiness; and aircraft and vehicle maintenance.

More importantly, the soldier responded to these efforts. They became better soldiers, better potential future leaders, more efficient in their performance of duty, more willing to give that 'little extra' and 'go that extra mile'. And it was this response that gave this Mohawk unit a professional reputation in all areas of Army life; and it made life a lot easier for the soldier and their families; increased esprit de corps; and great credit to the Mohawk effort on Fort Hood. Many soldiers found they were more than they thought they were or could be; the NCO did care about them and their families, and their quality of life, their well-being; their mission, the unit and their future as leaders, not only in this Mohawk unit but in any other Mohawk unit they may be assigned to in the future – or as citizens in civilian life upon departure from the Army.

These were productive, rewarding years for the unit and for myself as the units' First Sergeant, and later upon full activation of the Battalion as its Command Sergeant Major. Productive for the individual soldier and their families. We were 'Best of the Best, Leader of the Rest' MOHAWK!









"Demonstration Day"



"Workshop on the Bus"



Not Fort Hood but used  
for program cover, number of  
15th was crew member on A/C in Korea



OV-1 Mohawk

The Mohawk is a high-performance, two-seat, observation aircraft made by the Grumman Corporation. The first model flew in 1959 and the last came off the production line in 1970. First deployed in 1962, it became the mainstay of Army aerial surveillance during the Vietnam War. Since then, it has always been at the forward edge of preparedness, patrolling Germany's borders with East Germany, Czechoslovakia, North Korea, and other danger spots in the world. During the 1991 Gulf War, Mohawks were credited with locating and maintaining watch over Iraq's elite forces.

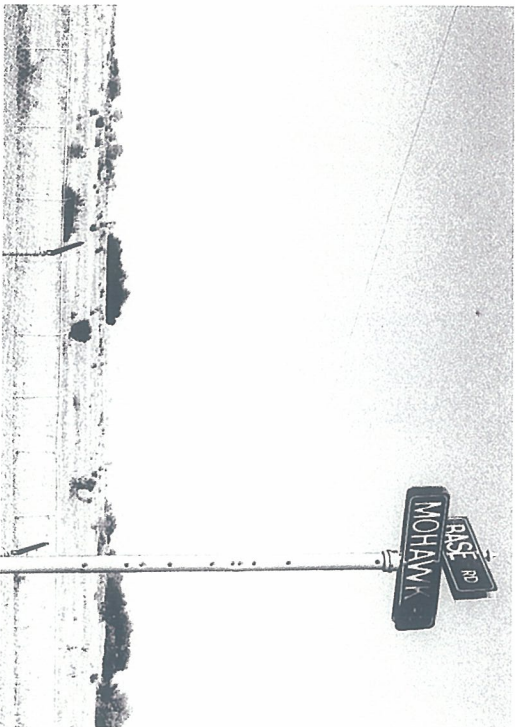


15th MILITARY INTELLIGENCE BATTALION





"Strong the colors"  
"Leading the way"

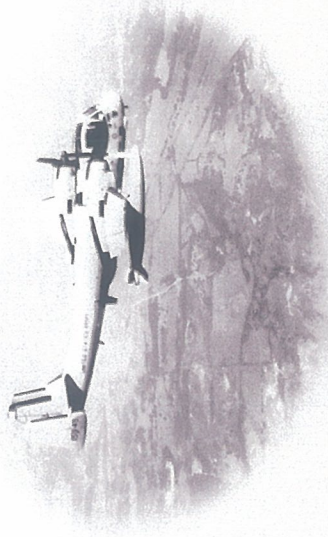


"Road Sign"



# ARMY AVIATION

OV-10H MOHAWK  
B CO 15TH MI BN



**THE ONLY WAY TO FLY**

*"The only way to fly"*



*"Promotion and Awards"*

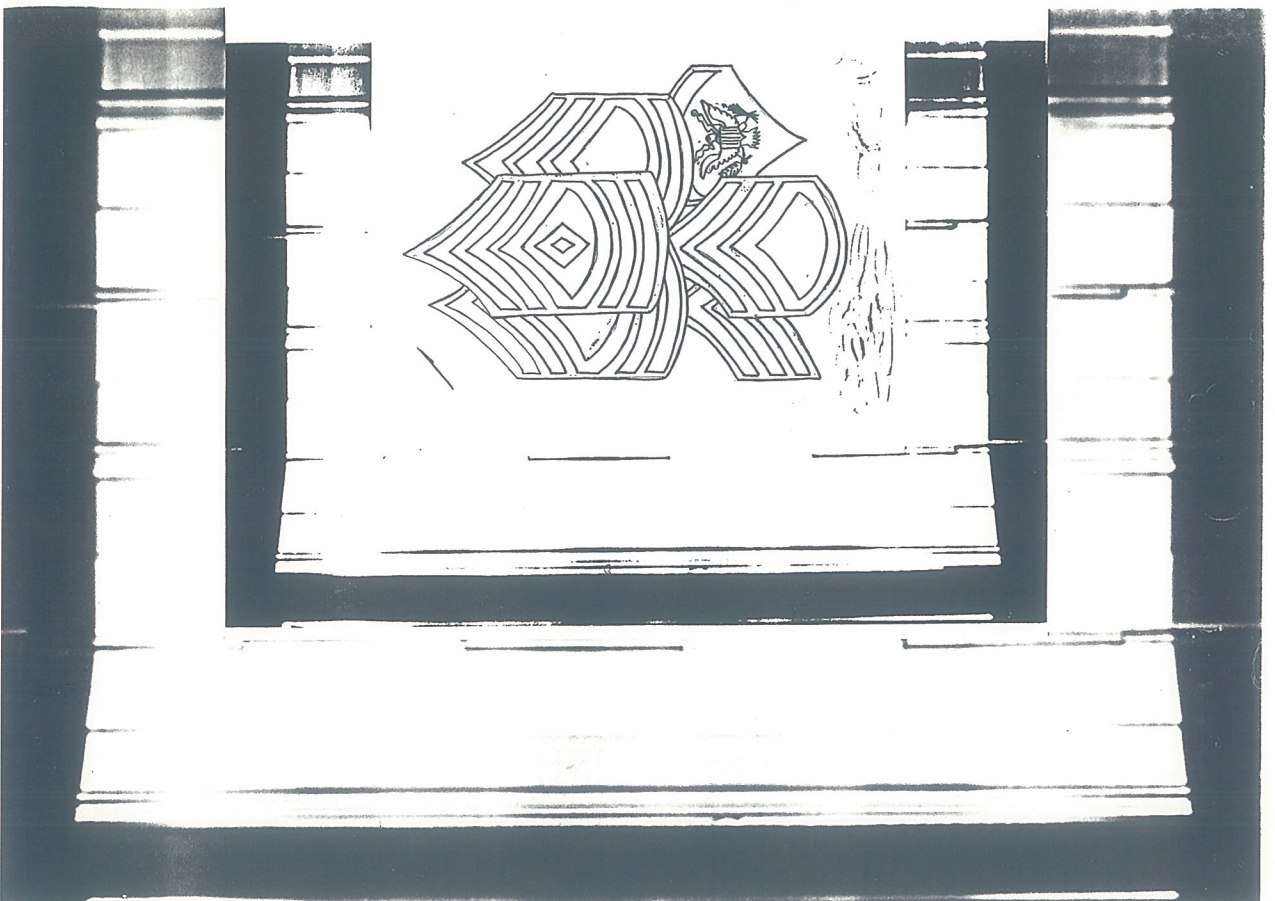




NCO Conducted Ceremonies



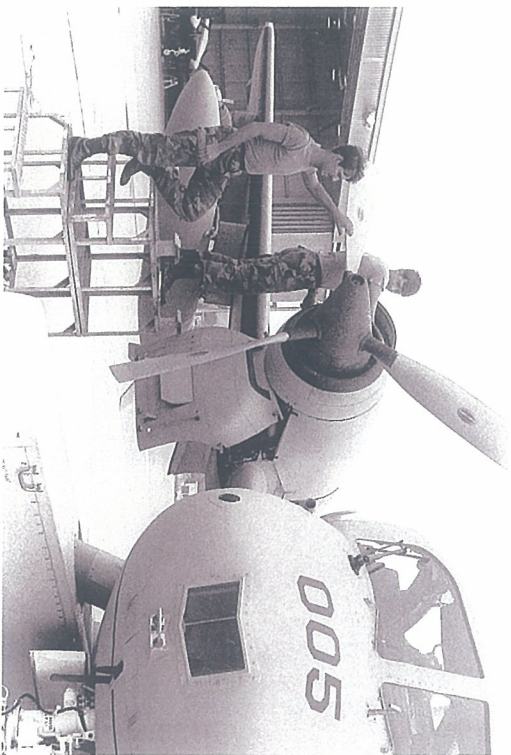








"Company Town"



"at work ..."



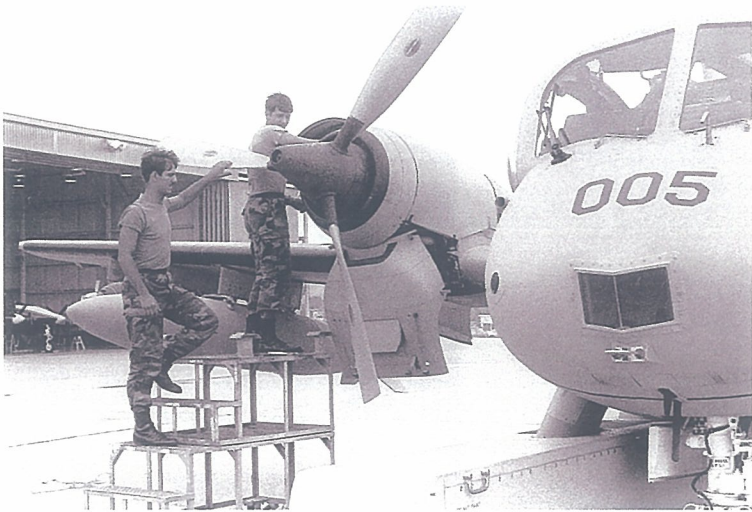


"Dining In"



"First Ride"





"at work..."



NCO Conducted Ceremonies

