

# Da Nang

## B-57 CANBERRA

*May Day ... May Day ... May Day ...*

12 January, 1966

(c) 1996, by Don Poss



### USAF K-9 Sentry Dog Handlers:

L/R: Lee Miller, Shep A902; Tom Baker, Rex; —; Patrick Compton, Vaughn 826F; Gary Eberbach, Bucky A748; Don Poss, Blackie X129. *Additional Handlers at the south end of the runway are not shown.*

**FORWARD:** By June of 1965, the U.S. Air Force 3rd Bomb Group had moved to Da Nang AB to carry out night interdiction operations over North Vietnam and Laos. Principal targets were trucks, storage and bivouac areas, bridges, buildings and AAA sites. When deployed at Da Nang AB, the 8th and 13th Squadrons came under operational control of the **6252nd Tactical Fighter Wing** which became the **35th TFW** about a year later.

Combat attrition in the B-57 force, plus the increasing availability of higher performance fighters to carry out the air war against the North, caused the 3rd BG to be withdrawn from operations against the North in October of 1966 and relocated to Phan Rang AB, just south of Nha Trang AB and Phu Cat AB.

**Out of the 94 B-57s that were assigned to the Southeast Asia theatre, 51 were lost in combat** (including 15 destroyed on the ground). This is the story of the deaths of USAF **Captain Leon Boyd Smith II (pilot)** and **Major Elijah Goar Tollett Jr (crew)**, who crewed one of the 51 B-57's lost.

## Da Nang Flight line, January 12, 1966: 6252 Combat Air Police Squadron, 366th SPS (K-9)

As the sun sat in the west, a dozen K-9 sentry dog handlers, including tentmates A2C Gary Eberbach and A2C Tom Baker, waited at the north end of Da Nang's only active runway for a B57 Canberra to complete its taxi and rolling take off.

Photo: Left, A2C Tom Baker. 2nd Rt. A2C Don Poss, Rt: Gary Eberbach.



As soon as the tower gave us the green-light we could cross to the runway's west side perimeter and take up our posts every thousand feet. My sentry dog, Blackie 129X was at heel, sitting patiently on my left side; soon we would arrive on post between the 2,000 and 3,000 feet runway markers.

I watched for the pilots of the Martin B-57 Canberra, a tactical fighter bomber, to glance up from their preflight, as they almost always did, so that I could wave a thumbs-up. But this time, both were intently focused upon their instruments, glancing neither left or right. The bomber was fully armed for a bombing mission, and would join-up with other bombers orbiting nearby. Several minutes passed—*something seemed wrong*. Handlers knew it was dangerous to



to patrol along runway's edge. Plane crashes were common. Explosions were common. The bomber was heavily armed with wing bombs, and its nose seemed to dip slightly lower than the normal nose-down rake attitude of a B-57. When the heavily bomb laden Canberra began to roll forward, the nose sagged a little further. The B57 fighter-bomber lumbered down the runway, picking up ground-speed, with dual engines roaring. All of us sentry dog handlers followed its acceleration—we sensed that it was not a typical take-off, and we were right.

The Canberra passed what should have been a point of no return and committed to take off and vertical rotation that would lift the nose to a high attitude. Suddenly the nose gear collapsed onto the asphalt runway—trailing sparks and fireworks, like a thousand giant sparklers burning at once.

We knew the B57 pilots could not eject at ground level because it had the old cannon shell ejection seats that would literally blow the pilots out of the cockpit and throw them onto the runway in front of the still accelerating aircraft. The pilot was obviously fighting to control the aircraft and managed to lift off the runway. For several seconds the nose lifted high, then settled back and pancaked on the runway with a screeching shower of sparks like a comet's tail skipping across a lake of fire. Racing ever closer to the south end of the runway, it was *lift off* or die-time for the pilots.

*Please God ...* I prayed, willing it into the air.

We watched helplessly as the B-57 labored to raise its flaming nose again—and suddenly it popped up—and the bomber was airborne but shuddering dangerously close to stall speed. The pilot instantly raised its landing gear in an attempt to reduce air drag. The plane did gain precious air speed and an altitude of at least fifty feet, its wing overflying a sentry waiting to be relieved. Without warning, the Canberra wig-wagged its tail and began to settle back to earth, less than three-thousand feet to the end of the runway, perimeter road, concertina wire, and the largest a field of land mines in South Vietnam.

The B-57's fuselage tail scrapped the surface first, then the body belly-flopped hard. Landing gears-up, the fully fueled and armed bomber slid and scrapped along the runway flaming sparks like a high-speed but upside down car sliding on its roof. Metal to runway, the scrapping-screeching noise of a thousand fingernails on blackboards assaulted our ears. The bomber slid on the pavement from runway's center toward the right edge. God knows how, it bounced airborne again then immediately pancaked on the runway shoulder and plowed a shallow furrow for several hundred feet raising a dust storm and skidding sideways.

Wind quickly swept the dust cloud away and we could see the bomber, still upright, as it rocked from left wing and settled onto the right bomb-laden wing. All was quiet as the cockpit opened and the pilot, Captain Leon Boyd Smith II, climbed out near the wing. Miraculously, the crewman Major Elijah Goar Tollett Jr., followed him, both standing near the dipped wing no doubt surprised to still be alive! A 500 pound bomb directly beneath the wing near where they stood, exploded. The first millisecond: a glass-dome a hundred yards at its base and filled with white-fire engulfed the bomber. The next instant: a massive concussion wave (literally visible like a fog) slapped sentry dogs and handlers to the ground. Debris rained down from the heavens and a large chunk of fuselage crashed on the rim of a gouged red-earth crater as a Hiroshima-like mushroom cloud roiled upward—smoke with raging fireballs within.

Wreckage, strewn over hundreds of yards, began burning furiously. A hundred-pounder exploded in the bomb bay, hurtling 5,800 pounds of unexploded bombs like dagger-leaves in a hurricane. 20mm cannon shells began to cook-off, driving the Pedro helicopter with its dangling fire retardant container away—white arcs snapped violently, leaving sonic white-vapor trails to mark their passing and adding a surreal fourth of July effect like fireworks and Roman Candles. First you would see new explosions or 20mm cannons arcing, then two or three seconds later you would hear it. The earth itself quaked an appropriate response this California boy easily felt.

Crash and Rescue trucks began to arrive nearby, having left their hangers before the wounded bomber had settled to earth for the last time. Fire fighters leapt from their Pumpers, and seemed to pause as if resisting orders to climb back onto the rig. The Crash Crews, as one, jumped back in and on the Rescue Trucks and raced backwards away from the exploding holocaust before them.



A Pedro Rescue Helicopter fluttered once more in orbit directly above the bomb-spewing cauldron as flaming tongues of cannon-fire dared it closer. Another bomb exploded and 20mm cannon shells spewed wildly. The chopper, dangling its globe of fire retardant, suddenly flipped on its side and fell a hundred feet before righting itself and riding the heat-thermals away to safe orbit. Oily black smoke roiled from the flames. For more than an hour, exploding ordnance rocked Da Nang Air Base.

Air Base, as fellow pilots waited for the inevitable news of death.

Night was falling fast. Another half hour had passed since the last bomb detonated in a fireball which revealed the carnage had actually formed its own cloud layer above. The Pedro Rescue chopper returned and dumped its fire retardant chemicals on the billowing flames. Like a team of wolves on a fallen prey, Crash Crews attacked the fallen bird. Hundreds of gallons of fire retardant foam was sprayed, from roof mounted cannons, on the main wreckage and nearby glowing bomb casings. Oily smoke was everywhere and rotating emergency red lights strobed the ground-hugging smoke adding a surreal effect to the crash.



Rescuers shouted, P.A. systems calmly barked orders, and teams of highly trained men went about their tasks in silver space suits. War, once more, had provided a real-live hands-on experience. MMS men began searching for unexploded nearby bombs, and gave orders to secure the area until dawn would permit further search for bombs laying in tall grass over a wide area.

Through the night, a monster bomb crater gaped like a black eye-socket in its promise to reveal

something hideous.

At dawn's first light, the foamed wreckage was still too hot to touch. Wisps of gray-white smoke signaled a warning of potential danger. The smoldering pit, thirty feet across and twenty feet deep, oozed a sludge of muddy-foam on one side, in stark contrast to the red-clay. A two foot deep pool of water and scum ringed the bottom. The stench of JP-4 jet fuel and plowed earth was heavy in the air.



Bomb disposal teams combed the field, carefully removing unexploded bombs and cannon shells. A Crash Truck was manned nearby with a fire fighter alert at the water-cannon. A cluster of other Crash Teams parked a hundred yards further away. Air Police guarded the crash site as investigators searched the broken earth. At a signal from a Crash Team leader, a crowd of rescuers gathered near a stump of something. The leader, dressed in a hazmat fire-suit, was covered in dirty foam and smeared with charcoal-soot. Like others, he had

entered the fires of hell at its zenith, hoping—but knowing nothing—no-thing could live.

Several men stared down at the ... remains ... and one called loudly for stretcher bearers. Amongst the smoldering debris were human remains, including a charred torso stump; headless and limbless.

The group of K-9 handlers crossed the runway. Night was coming and the runway perimeter area had to be secured. K-9 posts were adjusted well away from the danger of encountering scattered bombs.



It was a long night. I understood if the crash occurred a half hour or so later, at least two K-9 Teams would have been deploying their assigned posts directly in the path of the crash, as well as another group of handlers and dogs were also waiting the bombers departure and have begun posting at the runway's south end.

At Da Nang Air Base, aerial combat and battle damage certainly took a toll on pilots and crews. Worn equipment, fatigued pilots and ground crews—and yes simple *Acts of God* because stuff happens often in a combat area, and claimed too many lives of those who gave so much in return for so little return.

### **B-57 Canberra, 0-33876**





Da Nang AB flightline in background, across the runway.



B-57 blown apart and scattered in a thirty-yards debris field.



### **Official Information**

**Smith, Leon Boyd II**  
**CAPT - Air Force - Regular**  
**30 year old Married, Caucasian, Male**  
**Born on 01/02/36**  
**From Miami, Florida**  
**Length of service 6 years.**  
**His tour of duty began on**  
**Casualty was on 01/12/1966**  
**in Quang Nam Province (Da Nang),**  
**South Vietnam Non-Hostile, Fixed**  
**Wing Pilot**  
**Air Loss, Crash On Land**  
**Body was recovered**  
**Panel 04E - Line 68**

After researching the history of the Martin B-57B, I believe the bomber lost on January 11, 1966 was the Martin B-57B-MA 53-3859-3876 which exploded on takeoff at Da Nang. The aircraft was piloted by Captain Leon Boyd Smith II, and Crewed by Major Elijah Goar Tollett Jr.

### **Official Information**

**Tollett, Elijah Goar Jr.**  
**MAJ - Air Force - Reserve**  
**35 year old Married, Caucasian, Male**  
**Born on 08/30/30**  
**From Chattanooga, Tennessee**  
**Length of service 14 years.**  
**His tour of duty began on**  
**Casualty was on 01/12/1966**  
**in Quang Nam Province (Da Nang),**  
**South Vietnam Non-Hostile, Fixed**  
**Wing Crew**  
**Air Loss, Crash On Land**  
**Body was recovered**  
**Panel 04E - Line 68**



**Truck and Trailer remove crash debris of B-57's Nose remains.**



B-57 debris loaded on a flatbed truck in route to a hanger for evaluation, then to its final resting place in an aircraft boneyard.



## EMAIL Responses

**From: Phillip J. Lane**

**Sent: Monday, April 22, 2002 6:34 PM**

To: don@war-stories.com; larry@larryposs.com

Subject: 311th Air Commando Squadron, "Harry Haughton's Hog Haulers"

I was surfing for references to the 311th and came upon a story of a B-57 crash at Danang. The crash story was very interesting since I was there that night and saw it happen. I was a C-123 pilot on alert for flair missions and happened to be standing outside of our alert trailer and watched the crash unfold. I climbed up on the banister of the alert trailer to get a better view, and was awed by the fire and the 20mm cooking off. Then the 500 pounder went off and the resulting shock wave knocked me off of the banister.

The B-57 story awoke some memories...but... my question is how can I access the info about "Harry Haughton' Hog Haulers". I was one of Harry's pilots (Apr 1965-Apr1966) and certainly qualify as a "Hog HAULER". Major USAF (Retired)

I appreciate your help, and will read more stories. Phillip J. Lane

**From: Jane Tollett Odom, sister of Major Elijah Goar Tollett, IV**

**Subject: War-Stories:B57-Canberra; KIA: USAF Capt. Smith, Leon Boyd; Major Tollett, Elijah Jr. From: Jane Tollett Odom (Sister of Major Tollett)**

Don, this is from Jane Tollett Odom, sister of Major Elijah Goar Tollett, IV ... (yes, he was the 4th) .... Thank you so much for the story of his death ... We were told differently by official sources at his funeral in Arlington, Washington, D.C ...."Bud", as he was known by all who knew him, was from Crossville, TN and only went to Chattanooga to "sign up" with his Buddies ....

Elijah Goar Tollett, IV was the son of E.G. Tollett, III who was an attorney/judge/legislator in the city of Crossville, Cumberland County, Tennessee ... His grandfather, E.G. Tollett, Jr was Lt. Governor of the State of Tennessee and Judge of The Oklahoma Territory ... His great-grandfather, Elijah Gore (sic) Tollett was raised in The Sequatchie Valley, Tennessee and moved to Crossville, TN.

How can we get in touch with Capt. Smith's brother and also Howard Tollett (cousin), whom we do not know, but would like to share information with?

Major Tollett's wife Pauline (Polly) Richards Tollett now lives in Kokomo, Indiana. She has not remarried and we have kept in touch through the years ... Bud's brother Ralph (now deceased) was an attorney in Crossville, TN as was his Uncle Carlisle Springer Tollett (Private practice and Tennessee State Senator).

My husband was tracing our family tree when your site came on the screen ... At first he would not let me read the story ... Then he felt it might help for closure since Polly and I didn't know much about the event. Your sources helped both Polly and Me to put a lot of sadness (and some bitterness) behind us ... Thank you for your effort in presenting the facts ... Please feel free to contact me. **Jane Evans Tollett Odom**

## **RESPONSE:**

### **Dear Jane Evans Tollett Odom:**

Thank you for your e-mail. I certainly understand you husband's initial reluctance to have you read my accounting of your brother's death at Da Nang Air Base, Vietnam. I did not write it for many years, because I was afraid family members would be hurt or offended by graphic comments, which I felt were essential to convey the tragic and horrible sense of loss of that day.

I have posted the web page, War Stories, for eight years now. I have heard from hundreds of relatives of men killed in action and line of duty. Their comments are similar in that the government never told the real story of their loved one's death. I do not think that was a sinister act, but only that the information was not actually known by those relaying the message to family members. I also think the intent was to spare families details that could cause further grief.

One of my friends, and tent mate, James B. Jones, was killed by mortars at Da Nang, nine days following your brother's crash, within a few hundreds yards of that same location. His sister and daughters contacted me by e-mail. It took more than a month before I could reply. I don't know why, other than the sudden and unexpected contact. We have since communicated and have found it rewarding ... not as a "closure" (for me anyway), but more as an acceptance of what happened.

One thing I would like to add to the posted story, is a photo of Major Tollett. A photo, I feel, helps those who read the story understand that the men were once alive, and had all the dreams and hopes of young men with bright futures and loving families. If it is possible for you to e-mail a photo(s) I would include it with the story. A civilian photo would be all right, but if you should have one of him in uniform that would be ideal.

It is strange to note the real tragedy of war is never-ending, because loved ones will always remember those who fell . . . and those who served with them, cannot forget.

Don Poss

Da Nang AB: B-57, 35th Air Police Squadron: May-day! LOD: USAF Capt. Smith, Leon Boyd II and Major Tollett, Elijah Goar Jr. 1966  
I can put you in touch with another K-9 handler that was with me waiting to cross the runway until the B-57 took off, if you are interested in another witness' viewpoint.

Don Poss

Subject: War-Stories:B57-Canberra; KIA: USAF Capt. Smith, Leon Boyd; Major Tollett, Elijah Jr.  
From: Stephen Smith (Cousin of Capt. Smith)

Mr. Poss,

Two years ago, while surfing the Internet, I decided to research the type of aircraft my father flew when he was in Viet Nam, to try to find a picture of one. Being a father myself now, I had recently taken an interest in trying to learn something of the father that I had never really known. He had died when I was only five years old. Whether due to our youth, or an unconscious attempt to keep pain at bay, all that my two younger brothers and I knew was that he had died in Viet Nam in an aviation "accident", that he was buried in Arlington Cemetery, and that his name was on The Wall. I had a few vague memories of him, just a few mental snapshots. And our family has kept in touch with an old friend of his.

I was stunned when, a few clicks into my search, I found your web page and, B57, recalling so vividly the death of my father, Capt. Leon Boyd Smith II. I had never known any of the details, but reading your story took me there, hit me hard with the reality of it and the impact it had on others.

In the two years since, I have often thought of e-mailing you, but have never known quite what to write, quite what to feel. I still don't. I just felt a compelling need to reach out in some kind of acknowledgment, to share with you that the events of that day in 1966 still echo in many lives.

Stephen Smith

Dear Stephen: The day your father died is as vivid to me, 33 years later, as the day it occurred. Years later, I felt it necessary to write out what had happened, and perhaps touch someone who knew the pilots. There have been many responses over the years. I know exactly how you felt about e-mailing. I felt the same way when a KIA friend's sister suddenly e-mailed out of the blue, but when I finally was able to contact her I was grateful that she had made that first effort.

I do not think I can add much about that day. Your dad was, and is, a hero who served his country well. Perhaps you know the mission he was engaged in was completed successfully by his fellow pilots. I do have many photos, not posted, of B-57s at Da Nang. Perhaps one could be of your father ... although that is a long shot. If you want, I will e-mail them to you.

God bless. It seems that your parents did a very good job of raising a fine son.

Don Poss

**From : Robert F. Baity, Major, USAF Retired**  
**Subject: B57 Canberra**

Don: Reference is made to the B57 Canberra lost at Da Nang in January, 1966. I was a member of the 13th Tactical Bomb Squadron and was on the flightline getting ready for a flight scheduled to take off 1 hour and twenty minutes after the aircraft which crashed on takeoff. My Pilot was Major Charles Rose and I was the Navigator-Bomberdier. We did complete the mission, but I can attest that we made a very careful pre-flight of our aircraft. Another fact leading up to this doomed flight was that the Navigator crewed with Capt. Smith had just that day resigned his flying status. Major Tollett, who was the Squadron Navigator replaced Captain Smith's Navigator on that flight. I cannot remember Captain Smith's former Navigator's name but he was a First Lieutenant.

Sincerely,  
Robert F. Baity,  
Major, USAF Retired

**From : Howard D. Tollett (Flush), Cousin of Major Tollet**  
**Subject: B57 Canberra**

Don: I never knew how my cousin died, until I read your B-57 Canberra fighter-bomber story of what happened. Before, I only saw his name on The Wall, but didn't know. I was in the Air Force in the early 70's, was in the 4MMS, and being a distant cousin to Major Tollett, this was something of interest to me. I saw his name on the Traveling model of The Wall; last year, but all they had was his age, and no information on the crash.

Did you see it Don? It would be bad to live through the crash thinking, *We made it*, then having the bomb go off. I thought the bomb had to fall a distance, before it would arm itself? I'd have to find out more about my old job. If you run across some old MMS guys, have them hash this out with me. Thank you. Howard D. Tollett

**Response:** Howard, yes, I witnessed your cousin's death. I have tried to faithfully recreate that event in the writing, research, and dedication of the story, B-57 Canberra fighter-bomber, to USAF Capt. Smith, Leon Boyd II and your cousin, Major Tollett, Elijah Goar Jr. Out of the 94 B-57s that were assigned to the Southeast Asia theater, 51 were lost in combat (including 15 destroyed on the ground). There was indeed a moment of hope when the B-57 seemed to liftoff in spite of the collapsed nose-gear. And when it fell to earth and slide across the field near the end of the runway, another moment of hope as the cockpit opened and the pilot, Captain Leon Boyd Smith II, climbed out near the wing and Major Tollett followed him. A 500 pound bomb, directly beneath the wing where they stood, exploded and both men died instantly.

I can put you in touch with another K-9 handler that was with me waiting to cross the runway until the B-57 took off, if you are interested in another witness' viewpoint. Don Poss

**From: Robert F. Baity,  
Major, USAF Retired**

RE:da Nang AB: B-57, 35th Air Police Squadron: May-day! LOD: USAF Capt. Smith, Leon Boyd II and Major Tollett, Elijah Goar Jr. 1966

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**Sincerely,  
Robert F. Baity,  
Major, USAF Retired**

**From: Larry Bergstrom**

**Subject: War-Stories:B57-Canberra; LOD: USAF-Capt.Smith,Leon-Boyd;Major-Tollett,Elijah-Jr.**

Don -

Your detailed chronicle of this [B-57] tragedy is identical to my recollections of the event. When this took place, I was in the Marine Corps ordnance compound just inside the A/F wire off the perimeter road. I recall standing on top of our bunker's sandbags gaining a better vantage point of the runway to watch the upcoming takeoff of the B-57 flight. To me, the Canberra when loaded out, normally appeared to struggle for rotation when compared to the Phantoms that practically leapt into the air, but on this particular day we watched an unusually long roll out, and when the ship passed our position we knew that it should have been airborne. As it passed, we saw the trail of sparks and red hot metal originating from what appeared to be the nose wheel area. At first, we thought that the tire had failed and the wheel was on fire as a result of it running directly on the surface of the runway.

This conjecture along with the usual "scuttlebutt" afterward circulated as to what had been the causative factor. It is interesting to finally have the details after all these years. Thank you for your observations Don, and God bless the memories of those two young men who like so many others ... gave their all.

Larry Bergstrom  
USMC -  
RVN '65-'66

**Richard L Smith, SMS, USAF (Ret)**

**Subject: Here's to old Da Nang**

The story of the B-57, Jan 66, and death of J.B Jones sure stirred some memories. I was a TSGT, 6252d TFW, NCOIC, aircraft operations. I got to Da Nang on 10 Jan after spending 10 days at Tan Son Nhut. I was living in the tent city at south end of runway. I watched the Canberra's take off roll, heard that horrible screeching, and saw the gear collapse and fire. I watched horrified, knowing it would be impossible to survive, then saw the huge fireball and deafening explosion. I was able to duck quickly into an overturned garbage can just as the debris started falling from the sky. I thought it would never end. I watched the HH-43 Husky fly over the area, and knew immediately that he would have no chance of suppressing the fire or getting closer to the aircraft due to the exploding ordnance. WELCOME TO DA NANG.

Ref: J.B Jones: I did not know him, but was living in the hooch two rows up from the tank farm when the attack began. I was already asleep, but awakened immediately after the first round hit. I was on a top bunk, and blown off onto the floor. Fortunately, the man below in the bottom bunk was already on the floor, covered with his mattress which absorbed a little of the shock as I hit the floor. I did not find out for several hours that J.B had been killed. If you remember, the idiot in the command post sounded a "yellow" alert ... report to duty section, instead of a "red" alert ... take cover. So, a sizable bunch of us were out running through the streets headed for duty while the junk was dropping in. I too am a nondrinker, but believe me, I got drunk that night, for the last time in my life. My bunk mate worked at the NCO club and had a key to the back door. We stopped there about 0230 and drank till sunup.

You may also recall that a short time later, a memorial was erected out by the south runway tent city, commemorating the "Jensen-Jones" quarters area for J.B and a TSgt Jensen who also lost his life at good ole' Da Nang. I remember the EM club very well. We called it "Shorty's Place" because of the base commander at the time, a 5'4" Jewish Colonel whose name I definitely remember but would not put out in public. The real name was the "Blue Hawaii Inn". I was affiliated with a country-western band "Billy and the Bourbons" which played the clubs regularly during much of 1966. You may remember the theme song, "Here's to old Da Nang, a hell of a place. The organization's a disgrace." Also wrote a couple more songs, one honoring the 311th Air Commando Squadron, "Harry Haughton's Hog Haulers."

I do see The Vietnam Wall when it makes its pilgrimage to New Orleans, and have pencil-scratched Jones and Jensen. An A3C who gave the ultimate for this country. I have lots of other stories about good old Da Nang, but that's enough for now.

Richard L Smith, SMSgt, USAF (Ret) 1954-1974. Da Nang 1 Jan 66-23 Dec 66.

**From: Stephen Smith** (son)

Sent: Friday, February 28, 2003 12:30 PM

Subject: War-Stories: B57-Canberra; KIA: USAF-Capt.Smith, Leon-Boyd; Major-Tollett, Elijah-Jr.

Mr. Poss,

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I was stunned when, a few clicks into my search, I found your web page recalling so vividly the death of my father, Capt. Leon Boyd Smith II. I had never known any of the details, but reading your story took me there, hit me hard with the reality of it and the impact it had on others.

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Stephen Smith

**Response: Dear Stephen:** The day your father died is as vivid to me, 33 years later, as the day it occurred. Years later, I felt it necessary to write out what had happened from my perspective, and perhaps touch someone who knew the pilots. There have been many responses over the years. I know exactly how you felt about e-mailing. I felt the same way when a KIA friend's sister suddenly e-mailed out of the blue, but when I finally was able to contact her I was grateful that she had made that first effort. I do not think I can add much about that day. Your dad was, and is, a hero who served his country well. Perhaps you know the mission he was engaged in was completed successfully by his fellow pilots. I do have many photos, not posted, of BE-57s at Da Nang. Perhaps one could be of your father ... although that is a long shot. If you want, I will e-mail them to you. God bless. It seems that your parents did a very good job of raising a fine son.

Don Poss