



Boeing B-52F-BW-70, 57-164, on Guam, March 1966. "Connie's Competition" had 55 missions. (All photos by the author)

BOEING B-52F'S ON GUAM

By CHARLES B. MAYER

A change of command ceremony April 1, 1966 marked the end of ten months of continuous combat duty by Strategic Air Command bomb wings flying Boeing B-52F type aircraft. During this period, personnel and aircraft from four different SAC wings were temporarily stationed at Anderson Air Force Base, Guam.

The 7th Bomb Wing, Carswell AFB, Texas, assumed command in August 1965 from a combined Wing which had been at Anderson since May 1965. The relieved Wing was composed of personnel from Barksdale AFB, Louisiana and Mather AFB, California. In turn, Carswell's 7th Bomb Wing was relieved in December 1965 by a combined Wing made up of the 454th Bomb Wing from Columbus AFB, Mississippi and the 320th Bomb Wing from Mather AFB. The ceremony on April 1st saw the 454th/320th turn over the responsibility of supporting U. S. Operations in Vietnam to a combined wing from Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota and Turner AFB, Georgia--the 28th/484th Bomb Wing (Provisional). Because the latter is equipped with B-52D aircraft, the last B-52F sortie in March meant the completion of a memorable combat tour for the "F Troops

The first bombs dropped in anger by SAC aircraft were loosed by B-52Fs on June 18, 1965. The following days and months saw an increase in the number and intensity of the raids as flight crews and maintenance men found their pace. Missions were flown almost daily throughout the last half of 1965, and multi-target missions occurred quite frequently. Old traditions, buried since World War II and only briefly revived during the Korean War, appeared again. Aircraft began to sport names on their noses and small painted bombs to indicate combat missions flown. Along with the names, in many cases, came artwork to illustrate the name.

Carswell's 7th Bomb Wing started a new tradition by adopting the name of "Black Knights of the Mekong" for the duration of its combat tour. The 454th/320th followed the lead and, early in its combat tour, chose the name "Vietnam Iron Dukes." In both cases, unit patches

of the appropriate insignia were worn on uniforms by all personnel. The names were justified by the statistics that accompanied them. The 7th Bomb Wing flew more than 1,000 combat sorties in four months. The 454th/320th bettered this record by flying over 1,400 combat sorties and dropping more than 60,000 bombs during the four months from December through March. The 28th/484th which has recently acquired the name of "Vietnam Black Barons", will have a tough time matching either of these records.

Of the B-52Fs on Guam, almost three-quarters were named. The names were generally painted on by the ground crews. Flight crews weren't assigned to any one aircraft, and seldom did they fly the same one twice in a row. They consequently did not take too much part in the naming of planes.

Some names were inspired by wives and girlfriends, as in "SusieQ" and "Love'n'Lois." Some were taken from TV shows, like "F Troop" and "The Lively Set", and some were meant to sound frightening, like "Thunder Express" and "Screamin' Demon." Others expressed the frustration of the maintenance men in trying to keep the planes combat-ready. Some examples were "The Old Sow" and "Crapp Out." But all of the names showed the humor of the crews and gave an indication of the spirit that enabled them, in the face of tropical temperatures and humidity, rains and typhoons, lack of parts and corrosive salt air, to keep the planes flying.

Many of these planes, named and unnamed, flew more than 50 combat missions. Some had 80 or 90 missions to their credit, and one flew 102 combat missions during its stay on Guam. It flew on the first mission and stayed to fly one of the last missions. It was also a distinguished aircraft for another reason--it was the first F-model to roll off the production lines at Boeing's Wichita plant some nine years ago. Its name? "Lady Luck", a B-52F, serial 57-139.



"Lady Luck", B-52F-BW-65, 57-139, after 100th mission.



"The Iron Maiden", girl riding bomb, 57-035, 35 missions.



"Mekong Express", 57-144, after 81 of its 86 missions.



A/C nos red, name yellow, bombs black--one ea red & yell.



"Thunder Express", B-52F-BW-70, 57-169, after 68 missions. Undernose section is white and underfuselage is black.