

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

First Lieutenant, United States Air Force

November 20, 1942 – March 15, 1967



531 Tactical Fighter Squadron

**Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry
(Unit Award)**



F-100 Super Saber

Remembered by Those Who Never Knew Him..... In late 2017, the Class Agents for the Texas A&M Class of 1964 gathered around a table in the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center for a monthly meeting with their Association of Former Students coordinator. This meeting was special because The Association had assigned a new coordinator, Freddy Rodriguez '12.

While everyone chatted after Freddy was introduced, Ken Stanton '64 noticed that Freddy was wearing a plain metal bracelet like those worn to remember a fallen hero. Freddy removed the band and held it out for all to read:

1LT VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III
15 MARCH 1967 ★ SOUTH VIETNAM
DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR

Freddy confided that he did not know much about Vic Thompson's story. He was told that Vic was "shot down in Vietnam," but he and his outfit buddies did not know more details.

Freddy explained that he and his classmates from Squadron "Hellcat" 21, the new Hellcat Squadron, were issued a bracelet after they completed their first March to the Brazos in the spring of 2009. The freshmen were told to wear the bracelet and never forget the Aggie whose name appeared on the bracelet.

Ten years later, Freddy wears Vic Thompson's bracelet and has not forgotten.

This tribute is dedicated to the memory of our classmate and friend,

Vic Thompson '64
and to

Those in Hellcat 21 Who Wear His Bracelet

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

Before Texas A&M.....

An Exceptional Family.....

Victor Hugo Thompson III was born and raised in Houston, the only son of Victor Hugo Thompson, Jr. and Pearl Frances Barnes. Vic was only eight months old when his mother died in the polio epidemic, leaving Vic's father in a difficult situation. Fortunately, the extended Thompson family came to the rescue. Thus, Vic's early development included much input from his grandparents, aunts and uncles.

When Vic was 9 years, his father and step-mother, Flavia, married. A year later twin sisters Karen and Kathy were born. From Vic's letters it is obvious that he was a wonderful "Big Brother" and the twins thought the world of Vic.



Big Brother Vic reads a story to the Twins, Karen and Kathy



Vic graduated from Sam Houston High School where he was Cadet Colonel in the ROTC. His senior yearbook shows he was selected "Cadet of the Year". He attended Woodland Baptist Church and was a life member of the Reagan Chapter of the Order of the DeMolay.

An Exceptional Father.

For obvious reasons, Vic's father, Victor Hugo Thompson Jr. '42, played a large role in his son's life. Brig. Gen. Thompson enrolled at A&M in 1939 but Pearl Harbor interrupted his junior year and he was off to Aviation Cadet training. At the end of WWII, Gen. Thompson retained his reserve commission and joined Mosher Steel Company (now Trinity Industries). He retired from the USAF Reserves in 1981 in as a Brigadier General serving as Reserve Mobilization Advisor to the Commander, USAF Air Education and Training Command at Randolph AFB. In 1989 he retired from Trinity Industries as Senior Vice President for Technical Services & Customer Relations.



**V.H. Thompson Jr '42
While at Texas A&M**



While at Texas A&M..... Vic Thompson reported to Texas A&M in September 1960 and was assigned to Squadron "Hellcat" 9.

No freshman ever reports to Freshman Orientation Week fully prepared for the "training" that is planned for them. For most of the new cadets, the week offers the first exposure to skills like drill & ceremonies or brass & boot shining. But, there are always one or two in each outfit who knew what to expect and how to respond. They know how to stand at attention, how to step-off on the left foot, and keep their eyes straight to the front. Vic Thompson was one of the few who come to FOW ready. He came ready to march, ready to spit & polish, and ready to respond to any Serge Butt (aka junior) orders.



As roommates we were sort of the odd couple. He was the sharpest and most military Aggie around. I was the opposite.

Ken Bush '64

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

Fish Drill Team.....

Vic's first great obstacle at A&M did not come from upperclassmen. Instead, the challenge came from a fish buddy. In early October, the Corps announced tryouts for the Fish Drill Team, and Vic Thompson and at least 500 of his classmates turned out at Spence Park for the try outs. After two days, the upperclassmen drill team advisors – guys like Pat Stancil '62 and Roger John '63 – had selected the final 44 fish who would march with the drill team. Vic Thompson was an easy selection.



This is the point where things got exciting. One of the 44 selectees would be Drill Team Commander, an extraordinary responsibility for a freshman. Several fish thought they were qualified and joined the competition:

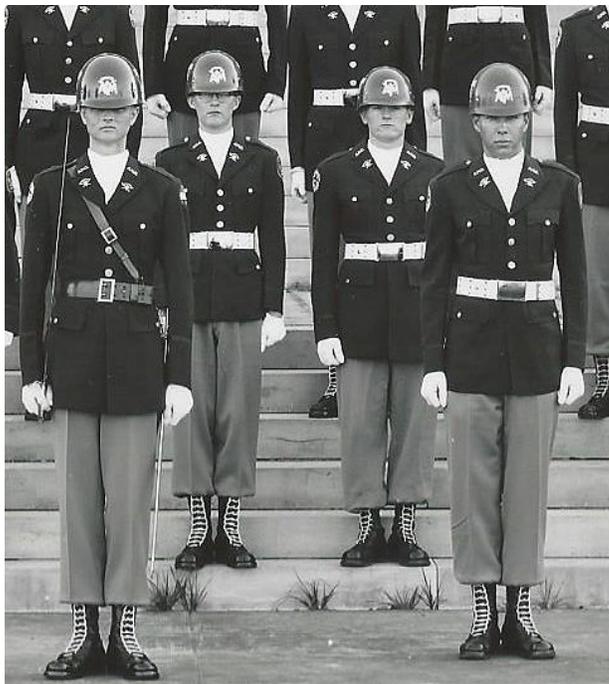
The first time I noticed Vic Thompson was at the Fish Drill Team's third or fourth practice session when we had tryouts for drill team commander. Vic was "well-drilled" and had this great, booming baritone command voice that echoed off the back wall of old Guion Hall and across to old G. Rollie White. When Vic gave a command, there was no doubt what we were supposed to do.

John Dickson '64

After the second full drill session, the field of candidates was pared to two – Vic Thompson and Bill Schmid. Like Vic, Bill Schmid was tall and well-drilled, and the product of San Antonio Central Catholic. In those days, Central Catholic had a strong Junior ROTC program that produced cadets who knew the Army's manual for Drill & Ceremonies. The Central Catholic drill team was among the best in the Country.



Class of '64 Fish Drill Team at its Last Performance – Mother's Day 1961



Bill Schmid
Commander

Vic Thompson
First Sergeant

3

'64 Fish Drill Team Leadership

The two candidates for Fish Drill Team Commander had several opportunities to drill the platoon and to speak to their fish buddies about how they would be the best choice. Finally, the moment arrived, and it was time to count the votes.

Bill Schmid won. Bill immediately invited Vic Thompson to be the Drill Team First Sergeant, and Vic accepted. Together, the two gave the strong leadership needed to create one of the most successful Fish Drill Teams ever. There is no doubt that Vic was disappointed, but he never let it show or tarnish his performance as second in command. The drill team enjoyed successful trips to Baton Rouge, Galveston, Laredo, and San Antonio, and culminated the year with an impressive demonstration at Mother's Day.



VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

A Writer of Exceptional Letters.....

In the days before e-mail and cell phones, an Aggie was forced to use his best writing skills and “snail mail.” Letters were used to do things like impress a distant girl in Austin or Huntsville, make Corps trip arrangements, or keep Mother informed and happy. Everyone wrote letters. Everyone made a daily run to the post office to check the mail box.

Vic Thompson wrote exceptional letters. Each letter was carefully composed and neatly written. It is our good fortune that Vic’s younger sister Kathy kept a box of most of Vic’s letters from College Station, Laredo, and Vietnam. These letters tell volumes about Vic’s personality, his experiences, and his priorities.

Two examples are short notes to his parents late in his fish year and halfway through his sophomore year. In both, Vic thanks his stepmother for pies and cakes she sent. One letter includes Vic’s plan for three dates with two different girls in two days. Gig’em!



Texas Aggies

May 1, 1961

Hi there,

...Mother, the pie was delicious and so is the cake..

...I will be home this weekend and will probably get there sometime Friday afternoon. I have a date with (Girl #1) for Friday night and church on Sunday morning and a date with (Girl #2) for Sunday afternoon. She is the brunette I told you about.

See you all this weekend.

*Love
Victor*

Texas Aggies

December 2, 1961

Dear Mother & Dad,

Here it is Saturday afternoon already. It hardly seems possible that Christmas leave starts in eighteen days....

I got the cake and it was real good. Everyone who had some of it said to tell you how much they enjoyed it...

Must close now and read Hamlet.

*Love
Victor*

Free of the Fish Drill Team commitment, Vic’s sophomore year was an opportunity to build his GPA and enjoy his new role as an upperclassman, molding the Hellcat 9 fish class into a cohesive unit. But some things never change:

One little thing that really sticks in my mind is the mental picture I have of him spit polishing his shoes and boots. Seems like he was forever polishing, and I never saw him in uniform that he wasn’t ready for inspection.

Glenn James '64

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

What are you thinking about, Mr. Thompson?.....RVs, Sir!

At Final Review 1962, Vic exchanged his starched khakis that were the freshman and sophomore uniforms, for the comfort and good looks of uniforms made from serge wool. He and his classmates were officially “Serge Butts!” (Editor’s Note: Though the term Serge Butt is still used in today’s Aggie Corps, it has lost all significance. Freshmen and sophomore cadets now wear these comfortable uniforms.)



With the uniforms of a junior in the Corps came greater leadership opportunities, and greater recognition. In late September or early October of 1962 Vic received the traditional “envelope under the door” notification that he was selected for membership in the Ross Volunteer Company – the Honor Guard to the Governor of Texas. This selection assured Vic that he was highly regarded by upperclassmen and would have another year to put his spit-shining and close-order drill experience to good use.



Another Easterwood “Flight Ace”



Without a doubt, from his perspective, the highlight of Vic’s junior year was the opportunity to fly through the AF ROTC Flight Screening Program. Once or twice each week, after classes were done, Vic put on a flight suit and was out at Easterwood Field learning to fly a Cessna. The training culminated with an opportunity to solo and do at least one cross-country mission.

Roadside Assistance: Aggie style....

The story of how Vic met his future wife, Charlotte, is almost like a movie script. Sometime during the spring semester of his junior year, Vic was driving on the freeway in southwest Houston when he spotted a cute brunette with car problems. His gentlemanly instincts took charge and he pulled over to “rescue the damsel in distress.”

We don’t know details of what happened next, but we remember Vic Thompson well enough to confidently speculate that he made the first move, got her phone number, and followed up. We do know that they dated through the rest of the spring semester and all through Vic’s senior year.

Vic and Charlotte were married in Houston in 1964, shortly after Final Review, and the newlyweds moved into Hensel Apartments so that Vic could finish his degree plan in the summer and fall semesters.



Vic at Final Review with Charlotte on his far left; “Mother” Flavia, far right; Grandmother Barnes and “Mama” Grandmother Thompson on his shoulders; Uncle Charlie Thompson and Aunt Dorothy Robinson, back row; and twins Kathy (left) and Karen (right) front row.



VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

On Jan. 19, 1965 Gen. Earl Rudder presented the diploma to Vic certifying him as a Bachelor of Arts in English. Later that day, Vic was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. Vic and Charlotte packed up their belongings and headed to Laredo Air Force Base where Vic reported for Undergraduate Pilot Training in UPT Class 66G.

We started in late April 1965 and graduated in early May 1966. During training we flew the Cessna T-37, a twin-engine jet trainer and the Lockheed T-33, a single engine jet aircraft. The T-33 had been around a long time. It had been derived from the F-80 Shooting Star a Korean War vintage fighter. We were the second to last class to fly the T-33. When the T-33 was phased out the replacement trainer was the T-38, a supersonic twin engine jet. A variety of this aircraft became the F-5 fighter. We started out with 31 students in our class and ended up with 21, so we lost 1/3 of our class during the year. They basically "flunked out". Pilot training was demanding both physically and mentally.

Fred Fenn, Classmate UPT 66G



Lockheed T-33



Cessna T-37

In UPT, Vic had the opportunity to meet and compete with carefully selected guys from other colleges and career fields. The competition to excel was a daily stressor, and it served to help Vic set a personal goal to do more than avoid a wash-out. Vic always wanted to be the first to solo or first to fly formation. The class yearbook did a brief and occasionally humorous description of Vic that "hit the target."

Vic was the class's "thinking man's" Aggie. He came to Laredo after specializing in Air Force at Texas A&M. A native Houstonite, he never did get used to Laredo and often longed to go out and back to Easterwood Field.

...Always a top student on the flight line, Vic impressed everyone on the ground as well as in the air.

...Vic was a man of many talents who never ceased to amaze us.

UPT Class 66G Yearbook

It is clear that the training was intensive for Vic and his classmates. Their typical day would start on the Flight Line at 0530. After a morning of flying under the close supervision of Instructor Pilots, they spent afternoons in the classroom or at physical training that often lasted until after 1800. Add performance pressure to the equation and you have the formula for a long, hard day.



VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

For Vic, the long, hard days paid dividends after the second month of training, when he soloed for the first time. Naturally, he immediately wrote a letter telling the news to all the family.



Monday, 4 June, 1965

Dear Mother, Dad, Kathy & Karen:

Well, today was the big day.

They sent me off in a jet to fend for myself, and I made it back down both me and the airplane all in one piece. I feel pretty good about it since only three others soloed before I did...

...They keep us busy and we are still running a twelve-hour day... It's long and hectic sometimes, but I am doing exactly what I have always wanted to do, and I love it.

Love,

Victor

That last sentence tells the Vic Thompson Story in less than 30 words. From the time fish Thompson reported to Hellcat 9 for FOW, or perhaps even earlier as a high school cadet, Vic had visualized the day he would solo in a jet. Every bit of work he did was in preparation for that moment.

Vic's preparation and strong sense of purpose, along with a good measure of natural talent, brought him much success at Undergraduate Pilot Training. After thirteen months of tough training, when the last check flights were history, and all the academic tests were complete, Vic won the trophy for Best Pilot and finished a very close second in Academics. His performance in UPT made him a "hot commodity" and caused a lot of angst when the time came to decide what Vic's next move would be.

We saw a real battle of wills toward the end of the program over Vic's assignment preference. Captain Raphael ... campaigned to have Vic become an IP. Vic's preference of planes that he wanted to fly changed almost daily: today an F-102, yesterday an F-101 or was it an F-100 or 105, etc. Luckily for Vic, he had one lobby trying to get him out of Laredo. After the hard times he gave the base barbers, it's no wonder they'll be glad to see him go!

UPT Class 66G Yearbook

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

Vic's argument must have been convincing. Or, perhaps success went to the "one lobby trying to get him out of Laredo" that was mentioned in the class yearbook. No matter what the explanation, Vic could not have been happier. His aircraft assignment would be F-100s – The Super Saber!

The F-100 Super Saber

In its heyday in the late 50's and early 60's, the F100 was the dream of Air Force pilot trainees. Like the sportscar the young pilots planned to buy, the Super Saber was fast and sleek. It could fly faster than the speed of sound, MACH 1.3 to be exact, and it had the agility and armament needed to challenge any MiG or SU fighter the "bad guys" could put in the air at that time. It could even deliver a nuclear weapon. It was hot!



The F100 served admirably in Vietnam. The Super Saber deployed to Southeast Asia in 1961 and became the longest serving U.S. jet fighter-bomber to fight in the Vietnam War. Initially, F100's in the air-to-air configuration served over North Vietnam as MiG combat air patrol escorts and Wild Weasels to suppress the enemy air defense missile system.

As newer aircraft were introduced, the F100 was reconfigured as a fighter-bomber and relegated to close air support and ground attacks in South Vietnam. By the time Vic Thompson qualified in the F100, the Super Saber was halfway through its ten-year tour of duty in Vietnam.

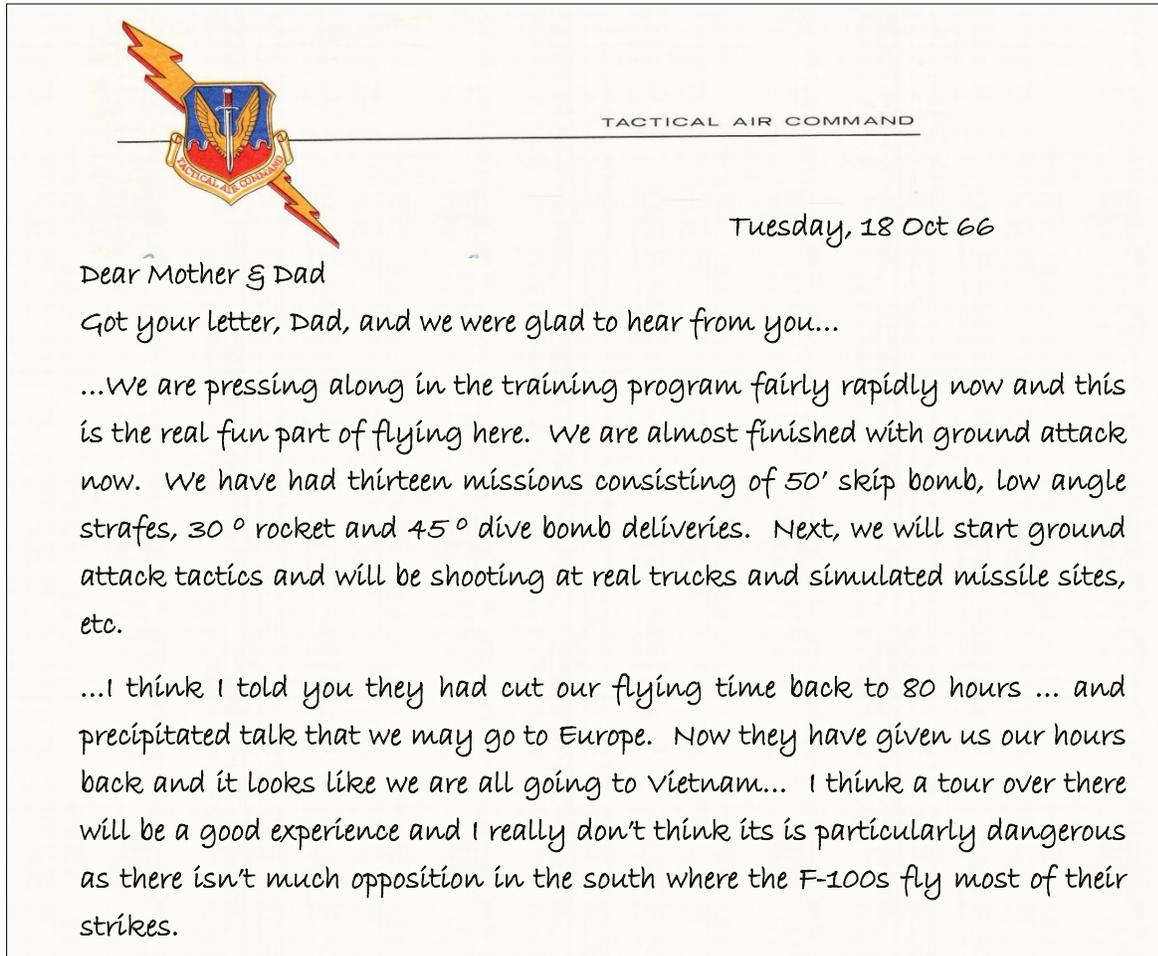


More Training

With his new Pilot's Wings pinned on, once again Vic and Charlotte loaded their belongings. This time they pointed the car to the west, toward Phoenix, Arizona, and Luke AFB for 2-3 months of transition training in the F-100.

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

The training at Luke was much more than familiarization with the F-100. Much time was spent on F-100 tactics and techniques. The training was exciting and challenging. It demanded much from the trainee, and Vic had to use every bit of the skills and knowledge he demonstrated in UPT. Again, Vic shared his experiences with his father and the twins.



Vic was right. The extra flying hours meant the guys were preparing for Vietnam. They completed their training in December, 1966 and all said goodbye to Luke AFB just before the holidays.

Vic and Charlotte were able to enjoy Christmas with their families in Houston before Vic reported in January for jungle survival training. In late January, Vic said goodbye to the family and he and Charlotte left Houston for a week together in San Francisco. When the time came, the couple traveled the short distance to Travis AFB where they rendezvoused with others from his squadron. According to a pilot buddy, Travis Vanderpool (TCU '64), the night before they departed, all the married guys and their wives went to see "Dr. Zhivago" at the base theater.

On Feb. 7, 1967, Vic and Charlotte said their goodbyes, Vic and his buddies left for Vietnam. Charlotte returned to Houston where she planned to stay until he returned.

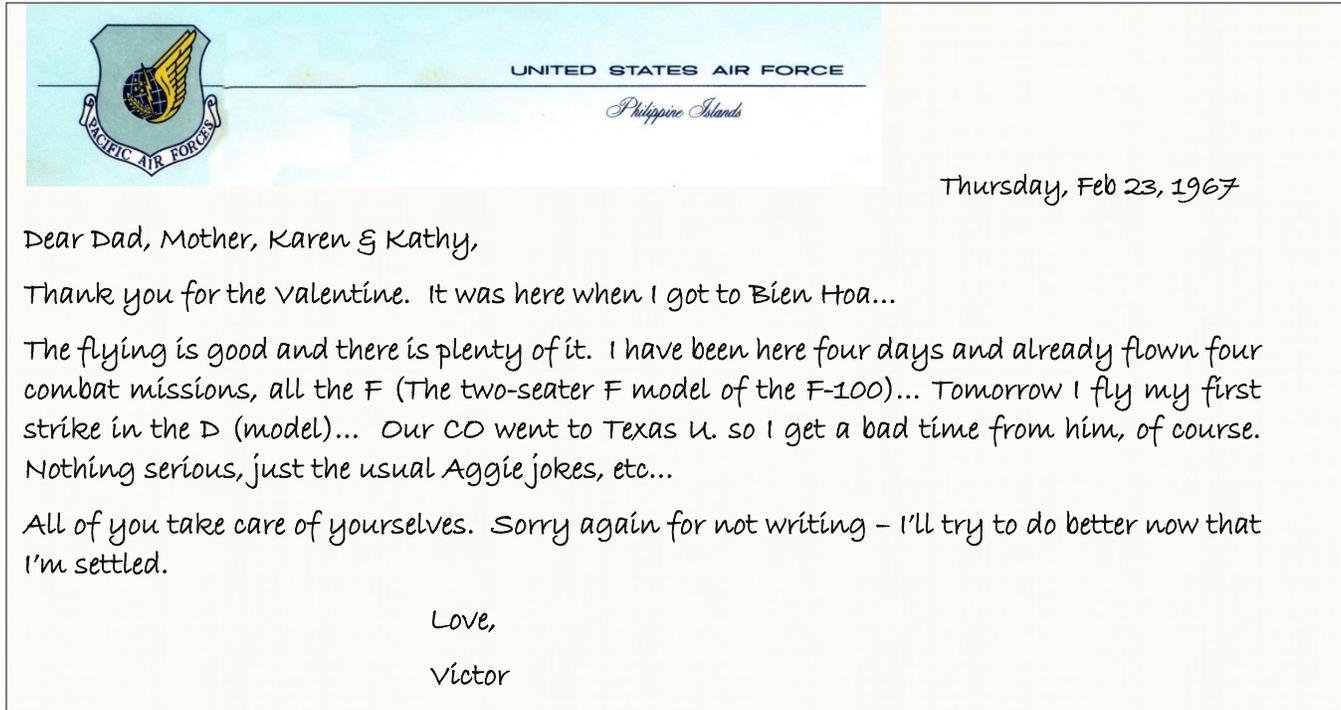


The Twins say goodbye at the airport as Vic and Charlotte leave for San Francisco

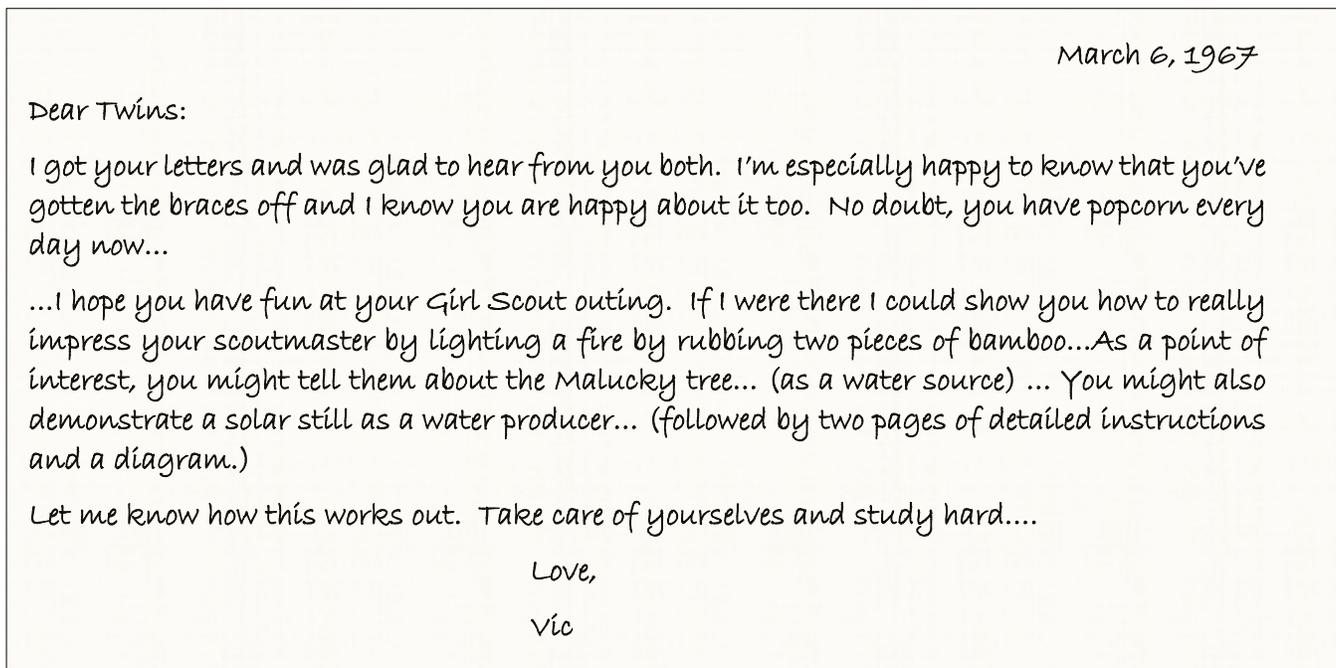
VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

In the Combat Zone...

Official records show that Vic did not arrive in Vietnam until Feb. 20 because he and his buddies had an 11- or 12-day delay at Clark AFB, Philippines, possibly for more jungle orientation training. The first letter from Vietnam to his parents is dated Feb. 23, on stationery he bought at Clark.



Just ten days before he died, Vic wrote a four-page letter to the twins that shows the exceptional person that Vic Thompson was. It is difficult to imagine how a "hot shot" fighter pilot who has spent the last two weeks flying at least one combat mission each day, can take the time to write a letter like this one:



VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

Combat Mission #20.....

We are fortunate to have a detailed description of Vic Thompson's 20th combat mission. A newspaper reporter, Mike Miller, climbed into the back-seat of an F-100 piloted by Capt. Don Severance, aka "Ramrod One." Miller was about to see first-hand what it was like to fly a close-air support mission with the 531st. There were three F-100's in the formation, with Vic Thompson at the controls of one of them. Miller filed the following story that appeared in the March 17, 1967 edition of the Houston Post and other major papers around the country:

March 17, 1967

On Target With Ramrod One

By MIKE MILLER

Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

BIEN HOA AIR BASE, South Vietnam, March 16

– In the air over the Mekong Delta the jet fighter seemed to stand on its nose and make a suicide dive toward the Earth.

"Ramrod One ...on target...dive bomb," the pilot radioed to his wingmen.

Air Force Capt. Don Severance, 32, of Knoxville, Tenn., veteran of 220 combat missions over North and South Vietnam, was one of the best.

I found considerable comfort in that. Because I was in the back seat of his F100 Super Saber.

The plane's canopy offered a magnificent view of the green, brown watery landscape of the Delta along the South China Sea.

The hues blended together, like water colors melted under a pounding rain, as Capt Severance put his F100 into the rolling maneuver preceding a swoop in on a target. I felt as though I was turning inside out.

Then suddenly the trees, the ground, a canal and the target came into focus. The F100 jolted as Severance loosed a 500-pound bomb.

VIET CONG GUNNERS probably were responding with everything they had, but all I felt was the awful gravity pull as Severance guided the ship out of the dive.

My G-suit inflated automatically, pressing hard against my legs and stomach. My hands reddened. Sweat gushed through the flight suit.

I wondered in those agonizing moments how anyone could stand such stress and still fly a complicated jet fighter. Severance kept up the chatter.

"Ramrod One pulling off target to the left. Buddy, I think we got something that time."

I strained to look back as the G's lifted, strapped hard into my ejection seat and 70 pounds of parachute and emergency gear. I glimpsed Ramrod Two, the

second F100, coming off target, and Ramrod Three going in. There was an explosion and fire.

I heard the voice of a guy whose code name was "David," a forward air controller in a little light plane somewhere down below.

"Beautiful," David said. "Beautiful." Our bombs were on target.

Severance circled quickly for another strike with Ramrod Two coming up on his tail.

THE TARGET WAS A refueling and resupply point from which the Viet Cong smuggled goods in from the sea.

"A company of Charlies (Viet Cong) lives there," David had radioed as we came in. "I don't know if they're home today".

I swallowed hard for another dive, a second strike with a 500-pound bomb. Next were two passes, with air-to-ground rockets, firing in bursts of 19 each. The three planes threw in six bombs and 114 rockets in all.

Then came the finishing touches, several passes with the strafing guns.

From his closer-to-the ground vantage point David radioed the results – 10 Viet Cong killed, eight of 10 structures destroyed and the another two damaged. Four sampans sunk, two damaged.

During the ride back home, Ramrod Two pulled close on the right. It was piloted by Capt. Ronald R. Davis, 28, of Harding, Mont., another combat veteran.

1st Lt. Victor H. Thompson III, 24, of Houston, flew tight on the left, a rookie by Vietnam standards. This was his 20th mission.

On the ramp at Bien Hoa Airbase, I asked if we'd drawn any ground fire.

Probably so, replied the pilots. You can't see the rounds in daytime. You never know until they hit you.

That's how they get your attention.

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

Combat Mission #21..... Vic's next mission was very similar to the one described by Mike Miller the day before. The target was an enemy transshipment point located in the Cần Giờ Mangrove Forest, about 20 miles southeast of Saigon at the point where the Song Soai Rap (Soai Rap River) flows into the South China Sea.

The Cần Giờ Mangrove Forest is impenetrable to ground forces and inhospitable to them after they get in. At low tide, water-level drops 3-4 feet leaving a muddy landscape of tangled tree roots. At high tide, the South China Sea invades the forest and the water level rises 2-4 feet leaving only the trunks of taller trees. All manner of creatures inhabit the forest. Some are dangerous, most are obnoxious at best.

The forest is interrupted by several river channels and a few narrow man-made canals that allow small, flat-bottomed boats to enter or transit the forest if they know where they are going and how to get there. It is the perfect place for a Viet Cong transshipment point.



The Water Route: By early 1967, the North Vietnamese Army used the Ho Chi Minh trail to funnel men, weapons, and ammunition south to the war zone. To counter this, United States and Vietnamese forces established an effective perimeter around the north side of Saigon that discouraged the enemy from using the ground approaches to Saigon. This forced the enemy to use any possible avenue to support operations against the capital, including the South China Sea and the rivers and canals around Saigon. To get there, they used a complex system of routes and transshipment points along the Mekong River, the Mekong Delta, and the South China Sea to smuggle the material to distribution points near Saigon. The target for Combat Mission 21 was probably one of those distribution points.



Combat Mission 21 was a two-aircraft mission with Vic flying as Ramrod 2. The F-100's carried a full compliment of munitions for a ground attack mission – bombs, napalm, and 20 mm cannons.

The 40-mile trip to the target area took less than ten minutes, but it is likely that Ramrod One and Two loitered in a holding pattern over the

South China Sea for a few minutes while they checked-in with the Forward Air Controller (FAC) in an L-19 Bird Dog.

When the time came, the two F-100s turned out of the loiter pattern and approached the target at enough altitude – three or four thousand feet – to avoid detection. Without notice, the FAC turned his L-19 toward the target and fired a single rocket to mark the target. Ramrod One immediately banked his F-100 and dove toward the target to launch his first bomb. Ramrod Two (Vic) followed closely with his first “iron bomb.” Ramrod was on target again.

The air defense system used by the VC in 1967 was very simple. When our aircraft were overhead, they fired their AK-47s or 12.75 mm machine guns in the air and hoped the American airplane flew into the stream of bullets.

Ramrod One and Two made another bomb pass and two napalm passes without response from the defenders. Ramrod One completed his fifth pass using his 20mm cannon, and Vic followed for his first cannon run. Just before he could pull out of the dive, Vic's aircraft was hit by ground-fire and plunged directly into the ground 300m from the target. No parachute was seen. The location of the wreckage and the intensity of the ground-fire prevented any rescue or recovery. Ramrod One returned to Bien Hoa to report Vic as Missing/Presumed Killed in Action (KIA).

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

Notification.....

The day after the Mike Miller article appeared in the Houston Post, an Air Force survivor notification team appeared at Charlotte's doorstep to inform her that Vic was Missing and Presumed KIA. In most situations, Charlotte would then need to notify Vic's parents. However, it is possible that the Air Force recognized that Vic's father was a general officer and provided additional notification services for General Thompson.

Vic's Wing Commander sent a letter to General Thompson.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 3D TACTICAL FIGHTER WING (PACAF)
APO SAN FRANCISCO 96227



16 MAR 1967

Major General Victor H Thompson Jr
Address Removed
Houston, Texas

Dear General Thompson:

Please accept my deepest sympathy upon the death of your son First Lieutenant Victor H. Thompson III, United States Air Force.

On 15 March 1967, Victor was flying the number two position in a flight of two F-100s, which departed Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam on a combat mission.

Colonel Rauscher described the engagement and then provided new details of the effort to recover Vic's remains and the high regard the officers and men had for Vic.

Additional fighters were called in as air cover and a rescue helicopter was dispatched to the area and verified that he did not survive the crash. Hostile ground fire has prevented the employment of a recovery team to the scene of the crash at this time.

Our admiration for your son can only approach yours, but it was one of deep and sincere respect for a rare man. He risked his life by choice in accepting this duty assignment and was executing his assigned mission with the confidence born of an experienced pilot. Victor was a proud, capable member of the 531st Tactical Fighter Squadron.

If I can be of any assistance to you, please feel free to communicate with me. I will consider it an honor to serve you in any way possible.

Sincerely,


FORREST L. RAUSCHER, Colonel, USAF
Commander

Houstonian Killed In Air Combat

First Lt Victor H. Thompson, III, 24, of Houston, son of a World War II pilot, was killed when the aircraft he was flying crashed in combat in South Vietnam, his family was informed Thursday.

Thompson's wife lives at 8010 Brockton. He was the son of Mr and Mrs Victor H. Thompson Jr of 24 Hedwig Circle.

A letter from an assistant chief of staff of the U. S. Air Force to the family said Thompson was flying a close air support mission when his F-100 Super Sabrejet crashed Wednesday, about 33 miles south of Bien Hoa.

"WHILE MAKING a pass his aircraft was observed by another flight member to contact the ground and explode. Death apparently was instantaneous," the letter said.

The elder Thompson, an Air Force Reserve major himself, said he had learned that ground fire in the area was heavy at the time of the crash.

The dead airman graduated in 1960 from Sam Houston High School, where he was cadet colonel of the ROTC.

He entered the Air Force after graduating from Texas A&M University in January 1965 and graduated first in his class in pilot training school at Laredo Air Force Base.

Only Thompson left from Houston for Vietnam last Feb 7. His father said he had been thinking of making the Air Force his career.

THE LIEUTENANT was assigned to the 531st Tactical Fighter Squadron, Third Tactical Fighter Wing, Pacific Air Force, and based at Bien Hoa.

He was a member of Woodland Baptist Church.

Memorial services are pending.

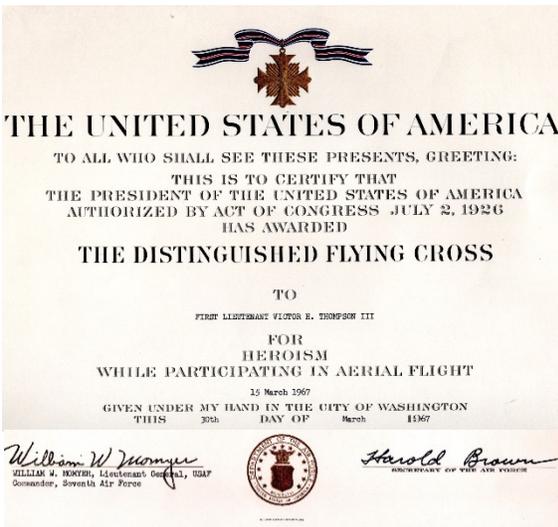
Houston Post, Mar 17, 1967

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

The Long Wait Until Closure.....

The area around Vic's crash site would remain in enemy hands until the war was over. During that time, Vic was officially carried as Missing and Presumed Dead.

In the meantime, on 30 March 1967, the U. S. Air Force approved the posthumous award of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and the Purple Heart to Vic. The medals were presented to General Thompson and Vic's Grandmothers.



At Last, Peace... and Recovery.....

Almost six years later, on Jan. 3, 1973, President Richard Nixon formally announced measures that would bring peace to Vietnam. That same year, the remains of 1st Lt. Victor Hugo Thompson III were recovered. A year later they were identified and brought home to Texas to be buried with full military honors.

General Thompson called me after the War was over. They had recovered Vic's remains so they had a funeral. Bill Hermann and I were pall bearers. I don't remember who the others were. ...Charlotte... came to the funeral alone. Since she had remarried she...(did not sit with the).. family. We sat with her since she was very alone.

Ken Bush '64

Some Afterthoughts...

The death of Vic Thompson is a perfect example of "asymmetrical warfare" - a concept that the Vietnam war gave us. In a brief moment on March 15, 1967, a Viet Cong gunner with very little training used a \$200 Kalashnikov or a \$600 machine gun to shoot a \$2.50 bullet that destroyed a \$1 million aircraft, and took from us a young man who, without a doubt, had a future of immeasurable value - to himself and to the world around him. And now, fifty-one years later, those that Vic touched in his short life, and those who knew him as a friend, are richer for it.

John Dickson '64

Vic Thompson relished his A&M experience. He embodied the ..."dashing and daring" fighter-pilot persona.

John Fondren '64

In Memory of...

In 1989 Vic's uncle, Mr. J.R. Thompson, then President of Warren Electric Company, established the **Victor H. Thompson III '64 Professorship in Electronics Engineering Technology** in the Texas A&M University Electrical Engineering Department. Dr. Behbood Ben Zoghi currently holds the professorship.

VICTOR HUGO THOMPSON III '64

*The Remains of
First Lieutenant Victor Hugo Thompson III '64
United States Air Force
were
Recovered in 1973 - Identified in 1974.*

*Lieutenant Thompson was buried with full military honors at the
Forest Park Lawndale Cemetery, Houston, Texas*

*Lieutenant Thompson is remembered on the Vietnam Memorial at
Panel 16E - Line 87*

The Victor H. Thompson III '64 Professorship in Electronics Engineering Technology
was established in the Texas A&M University College of Engineering

WELCOME HOME, VIC THOMPSON!



Photo by Mr. Randy Reyes '01