

Memory of a MAC Flight

This is the second publication (a re-write) of this original story in black font. It was originally published in my website [SeeStories](#) as a part of the “My Solid Ground” tangent. At the end I will explain the “difference” between the first story and this one.

The title uses an acronym MAC, which stands for Military Airlift Command. The Military Airlift Command is a merged operation of military aircraft utilized to transport men and equipment to locations where those men and that equipment is needed. You may have seen if you closely observed my orders in various videos, I have done that it states on my orders that if I had to travel anywhere, I was supposed to utilize MAC Flights where-ever possible FIRST, before using commercial travel. And yes, I did use MAC Flights very often.

There was one occasion where I didn’t use the generic MAC flight, and I didn’t use a commercial flight. I used a subcategory of the MAC flight organization, strictly because an Air Force dude, felt it was the best choice of options. I flew on a MEDI-VAC flight from Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines to Honolulu. This is that story.

At the end of one of my runs, I received an Addendum to my orders terminating the mission. On the orders (signed by Bernard Clarey) “Return Pearl Harbor soonest”. When I got these new orders, I was pretty depressed, as I really wanted to stay on the boat for a while. It was a good boat, and I was having a good time. But for some reason or other they wanted me back in Pearl – Soonest. So, I packed up my stuff and caught the bus from Subic Bay to Clark Air Force base, to catch a MAC flight home.

When the bus got there, the other passengers on the bus and I got to the MAC flight booking desk; we all found out one at a time that there were no regular MAC flights that day headed to Pearl. One by one we were all provided with passes to the local barracks to spend the night and tickets for the meals that would be needed before the next regular flight. There was one exception in that line of sailors – me. I was the only one that had orders signed by Clarey that stated “soonest”.

The dude behind the counter looked at my orders, looked at me, and then called his supervisor over. They talked quietly for a moment, and then the dude told me: “There is a MEDI-VAC flight coming in for fuel in a half hour. We are going to put you on that flight.” He marked up some paperwork and the supervisor who had gone away came back, took the paperwork and told me to go with him – we walked off.

We got in a jeep with all my stuff, and we drove away from the terminal over to an area with several fuel trucks parked. There was a ground crew standing around, waiting. As we waited the supervisor explained to me that they didn’t usually put people on Medi-Vac flights but because of

my orders signed by CINCPACFLT they were making an exception, strictly because they had been notified that there was room for “a couple” on the aircraft.

During the wait for the C-130 to arrive, he explained that it was not the fastest way to get there and there was going to be a stop in Guam, but by the clock, I would be back in Pearl faster than anything else they had coming in the next 24 hours. So, there is no time in any bar for me.

The aircraft landed and taxied over to where we were waiting. As it came to a stop two fuel trucks approached the aircraft and went about refueling it. At the same time, the rear ramp was lowered, and the supervisor led me over to it, me - dragging my stuff. I lagged behind a bit and by the time I got there a guy from the aircraft grabbed my toolbox from me and led me up the ramp. He led me forward past four long lines of gurneys all with patients in them. Then we got to an area where there were about a dozen seats along both bulkheads facing the center of the aircraft. There were a few open seats near a ladder that went up further into the aircraft. My guide pointed to one of the seats at the end, very close to a side hatch and he set my toolbox down next to it, strapping it in place alongside. We then shoved my seabag and briefcase into some voided area running up the curvature of the aircraft.

With everything stowed, I turned to him, and he showed me a copy of my orders, saying “This is you right?” I looked at them and confirmed. He then said, make sure you are on board when they start raising the ramp, and this will be your seat here, pointing to the one alongside my toolbox. He turned and left. Me, I went back through the aircraft and down the ramp, searching for the supervisor. He was back over by the jeep, so I went and joined him to smoke a couple.

About 20 minutes later the fuel trucks buttoned up and started to leave, I put my last cigarette out and got back on the aircraft. By myself this time and without dragging my stuff along with me I had the time to pay attention to those who were laying down on the gurneys.

I walked slowly and became very much aware that these fellow passengers were not the best of shape or fortune. This time, through the aircraft people were not making way for me, I made way for them. I became aware of about a half-dozen Nurses working their way through all the gurneys. Bandaged heads, arms, legs, some missing limbs, some with multiple wounds, all in various stages of consciousness. As I finally made it past all the gurneys, nurses and carts, I got to the area that had the people seated.

It was then that I noticed that these Marines and Army dudes were not just patients or passengers like me. A couple of them were seated near where I was going to be and they were separately different from the others – they had guns, and others were bound. The ones with guns had MP bands on their upper arms, those that didn’t had leather bands on their wrists and ankles. The leather bands had straps between the wrists and a separate strap between the ankles with both tied together at the midpoints. Their ability to move was severely restricted. I could only imagine how horrific that flight would be for them – with no ability to move.

I was shocked and curious. One of the MPs was sitting very close to where I was going to be sitting, and there was an empty chair alongside him. I took that seat and whispered, "What is with all the bands with these guys?" He looked at me and said, "They are medical prisoners." I asked, "What do you mean medical prisoners?". He went back to what he was reading and quietly said, "They are all drug abusers, who are considered mentally unstable. They are being sent back to the states, because they are no longer fit as soldiers."

That was the worst flight of my life – unsurpassed to this date.

Vietnam had a huge cost, to people my age,

we don't ever talk about it.

But I ponder – [Solid Ground?](#)

The horror told in this story so far, only addresses my huge issue with how the "drug abusers" were treated. The second is far worse and enlightened now by my son Jesse. He sent me a link which addresses another aspect that is not even mentioned in the first publication. There were several "shipment" coffins on board. And I say "shipment coffins" because they were re-usable metal containers, nothing close to the fine coffins that illustrate respect for those contained within.

You should watch this YouTube video; it is a very well-done performance from back in the day

Of the Vietnam War.

<https://youtu.be/7EH40la-2Jc?is=qX1qGtAqy-yH0clj>