



**CAPTAIN DON PELLECCIA  
&  
CAPTAIN JACK SCHAEFFER**

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

**3RD MARINE DIVISION AERIAL OBSERVERS  
WITH THE  
220TH AVIATION COMPANY**



**Capt. Don Pelleccia, Dong Ha  
Marine AO quarters, 1967**



**Jack and Jan Schaeffer,  
Sasebo, Japan, early 1967.  
Jack departed there for Vietnam.**

If you were to see Don Pelleccia for the first time in a crowd of people you would think, "What a mild-mannered, disarming fellow he is!" That's what I thought when I met him in Seattle, Washington, during our 2012 Catkiller reunion. There are no clues to his past or present in his calm manner and quiet disposition. Yet, his smile, like that of Jack Schaeffer's, displays a confidence men enjoy and admire in another man.

Don is a man who is thorough, confident and brave. That preposition and those two adjectives are obvious from reading and studying his flight log book from the 1967 era. So was Jack Schaeffer.

"The picture of Jack and I is from the Marine Barracks, Sasebo Japan, which is where we were stationed when Jack got his temporary orders to Vietnam. (If I remember correctly, all the officers at the barracks were rotated into Vietnam for a couple of months to get advance training because that's where they would be going next).

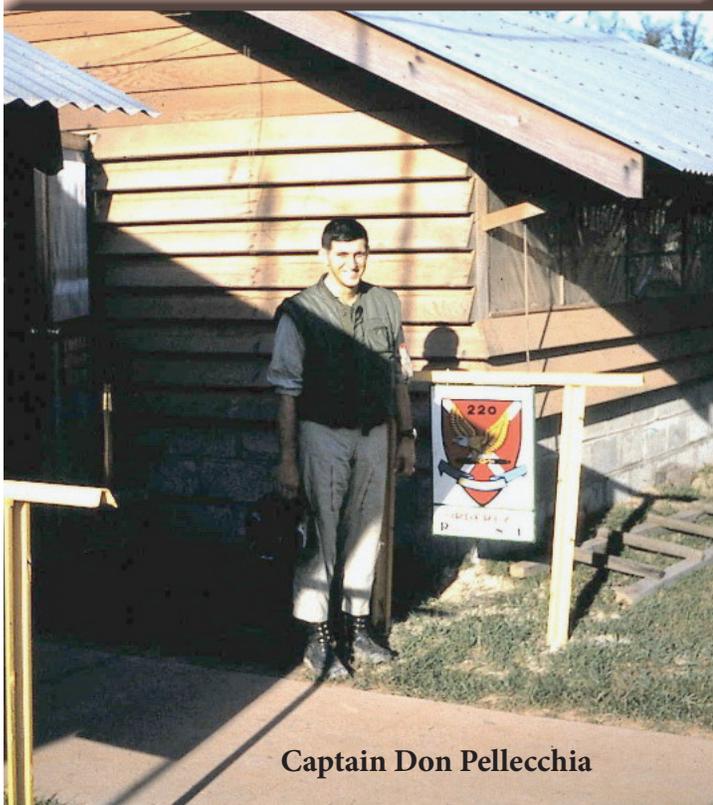
Jack had received training as an AO while still at Camp Pendleton in 1965. His combat record shows: March-May 1967, Counter Insurgency Operations-Vietnam:

- Operation Big Horn- April 5-21
- Operation Shawnee- April 22-May 21
- Operation Chootaw May 22-May 30

## CAPTAINS DON PELLECCIA & JACK SCHAEFFER



Above and below, Capt. Jack Schaeffer, USMC AO, 3rd Marine Division, March—May, 1967. The 220th Company Area is in the photo below.



Captain Don Pelleccia



Jack Schaeffer (left) and Dave Buckner  
DARPA program, Da Nang

Continuing the letter from the previous page from Jack Schaeffer's wife, Jan:

“Jack mentions Carl Collins in an April letter stating that Collins popped popcorn for several of the captains in the section, and they sat around battin’ the breeze.

Tim McTigue is mentioned in several letters. I think that he was another AO.

Toby Decker is mentioned as an officer that Jack knew (1LT, commander of the 231st Signal Detachment.

On May 14th, the Marine AOs were moved from 3rd Marine Division at Phu Bai to a new building (left photo) that was constructed at the 220th. Jacks comment was that it was like moving from a flea bag hotel into the Hilton. He commented that there was even grass.

Jim Ragsdale was also AO and Jack notes that Jim crashed at Con Thien, his pilot (Catkiller Bobby Ray Jermyn, 23 May 1967) was killed and he was evacuated by medevac with serious injuries.

Tim McTigue left on 22 May and was replaced by Don Pelleccia from Dong Ha on the 23rd.

Jack flew out of Phu Bai on the 30th for Okinawa with Carl Collins who was going on R&R in Hong Kong.”

(continued next page)

## CAPTAINS DON PELLECCIA & JACK SCHAEFFER

“Jack’s next orders were to Vietnam and we left Sasebo mid January 1968 when our 2nd child was 6 weeks old and permitted to fly. After 30 days leave, he went to Camp Pendleton and was assigned a company. Right before they were ready to deploy, he was pulled from the company and assigned to a special classified project. March and April were spent on San Clemete Island training for the project. Marine LtCol Christian was the co-ordinator of the program and the other three Marine Captains were Dave Buckner, Bill Negron and John Dempsey.

The other attached picture is Jack and Dave Buckner (top right, previous page) with the drone in the background. The drone was the classified project and they were being trained to pilot it. It was a DARPA program.

Jack and the 3 others went to DaNang with the project the 1st of May and waited for the drones which were arriving by ship. Evidently there were only 3 of them. One arrived safely (in the picture), another was damaged and the third was dropped in the ocean. The project was scrapped and Jack was assigned the CO of a Company, “K” 3/9. He joined the company on May 10 and was with them until early November. He was hoping that the project would be reinstated or that he would get an AO assignment but went to H&S, G-3, HQ where he worked on all kinds of special projects until his tour ended in June.

A side note: Jack always wanted to return to Vietnam. He thought that it was a beautiful country. He actually had reservations with a trip sponsored by the Marine Corps in 1999, but ended up cancelling due to health reasons. Vietnam was life changing for our family. Jack was a career officer and decided to resign his commission during his tour. His death was the result of all the exposure to Agent Orange while in the bush in Northern I Corps.

I had been searching for a trip to Vietnam that went exactly where I wanted to go for almost a year when I found Vietnam Battlefield Tours. Their tour to Northern I Corps goes to exactly the places that I want to visit and “bonus” they are retired Marines. All 3 of our children independently decided that they also wanted to take the tour so we are all going together.

Jan Schaeffer”

**Jack’s log Book:** [www.catkillers.org/schaeffer-log-book67.pdf](http://www.catkillers.org/schaeffer-log-book67.pdf)

**Army Birdog 57-2914:** This aircraft sustained damage by enemy fire on 8 Jan 1967, flown by 1LT Ivon Borgen, 2nd Platoon. Capt. Charles Goode, USMC AO, and 1LT Borgen were wounded when the aircraft was hit. Click to view: [www.catkillers.org/Maint-Log70.pdf](http://www.catkillers.org/Maint-Log70.pdf) for details (page 12).



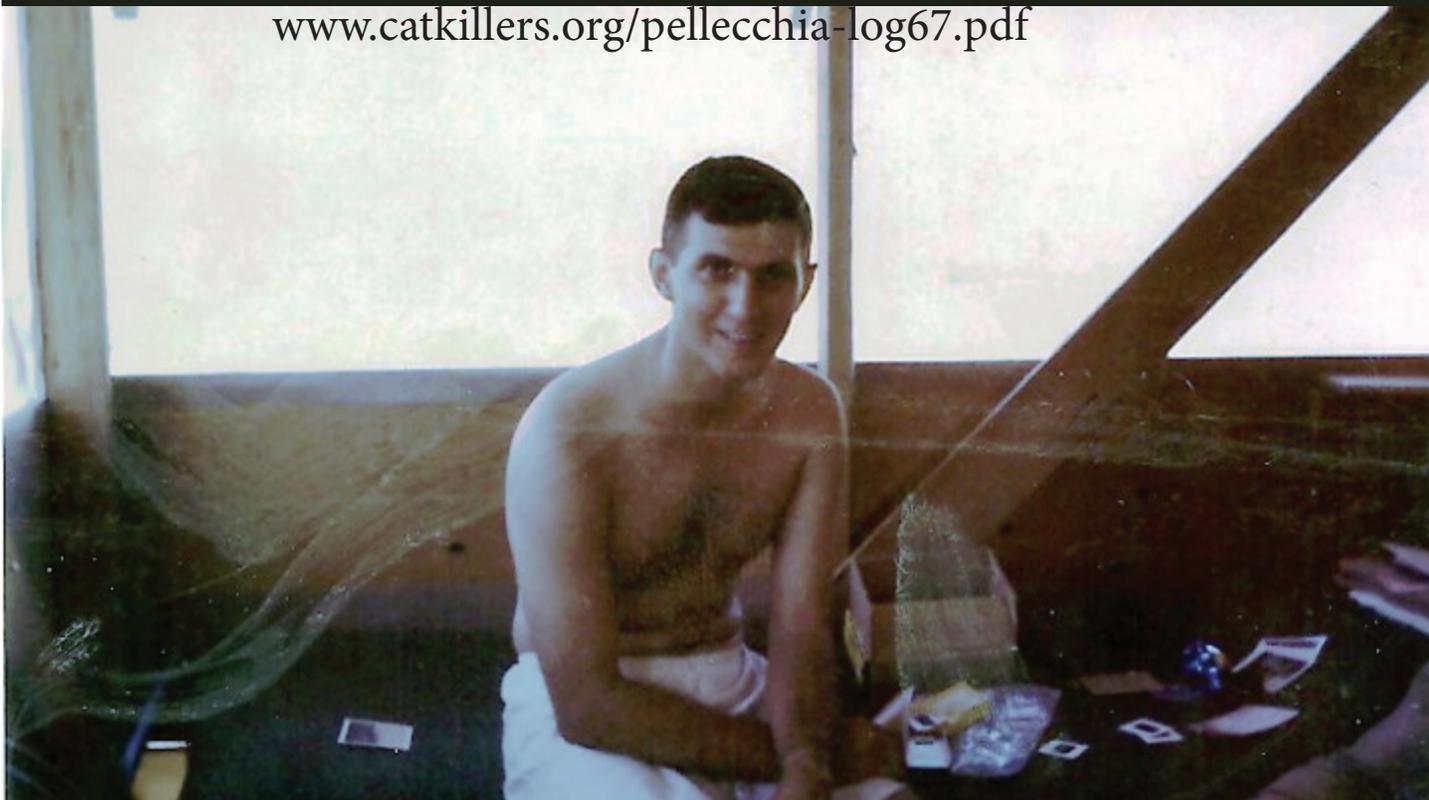
Photo by Capt. Jack D. Schaeffer, USMA AO, 3rd MarDiv, March-May 1967

## CAPTAINS DON PELLECCIA & JACK SCHAEFFER

Capt. Don Pelleccchia sitting on his bunk. Jack Schaeffer's right arm can be seen lower right. Marine AO quarters at Don Ha, South Vietnam, 1967. There were also two additional photos taken outside that day.

To view Don Pelleccchia's Aerial Observer log book, click on the link below

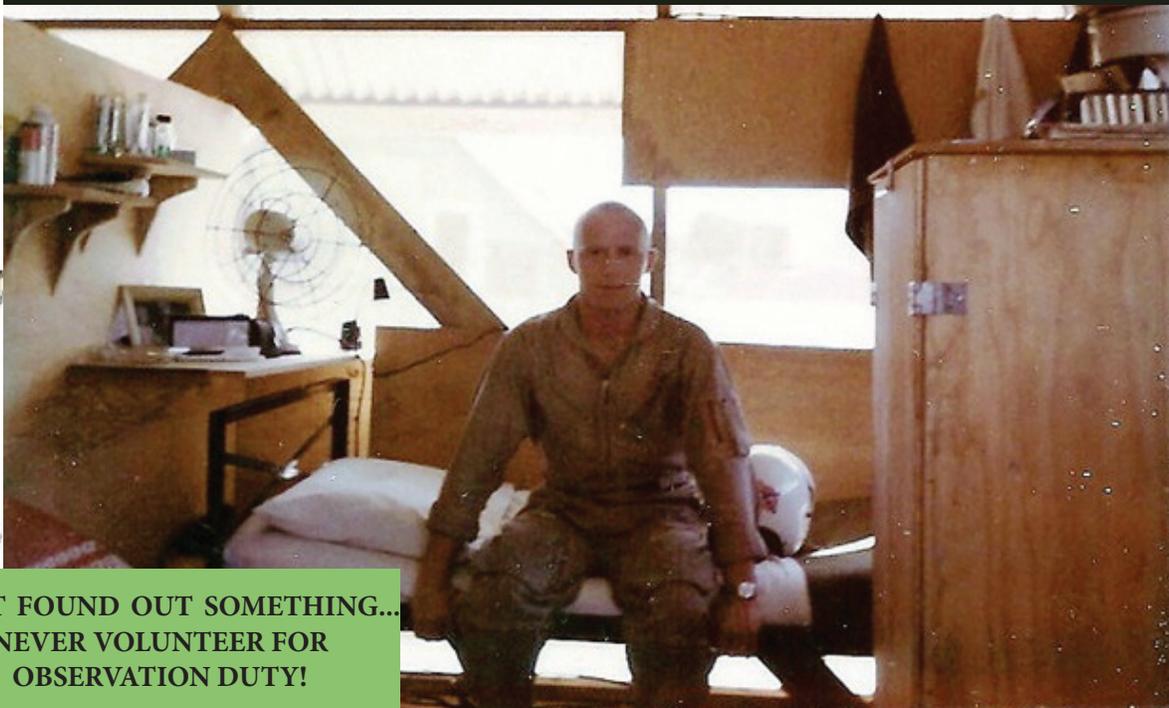
[www.catkillers.org/pelleccchia-log67.pdf](http://www.catkillers.org/pelleccchia-log67.pdf)



Capt. Don Pelleccchia: "Poor photo, but Jan says this is her bushand, Jack Schaeffer." Taken at the Marine AO Hooch, Dong Ha, 1967.

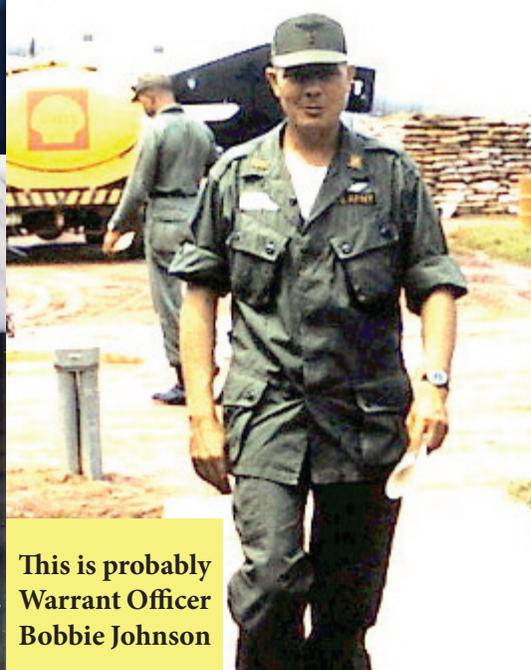


I JUST FOUND OUT SOMETHING...  
NEVER VOLUNTEER FOR  
OBSERVATION DUTY!

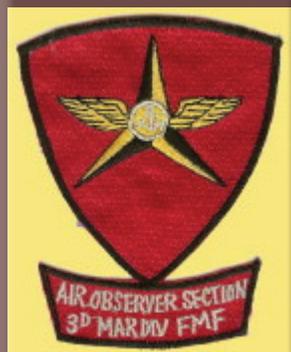


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CPT Walter "Chico" Fernandez, 2nd Platoon, Hue, Operations Officer/ Assistant Operations Officer (S2-Intel Security), 220th Aviation Co, 1966-67. Photo courtesy of Capt. Pellecchia. Don flew his first Catkiller flight with Gene Wilson, and his second with Chico Fernandez.



This is probably Warrant Officer Bobbie Johnson



Some photographs by Capt. Pellecchia, taken at the Catkiller company area. Upper right is an unidentified warrant officer walking toward the company orderly room.



Major Donald E. "Gene" Wilson, 220th Aviation Company Operations Officer, 1966-67

Left to right: Capt. Don Tremmel, Sacred Tango-Captain Tim McTigue, Sacred Hotel, Marine Ao's. Summer casual uniform, Dong Ha, 1967. Capt. Carl Collins (right) and Capt. Don Tremmel both signed Capt. Pellecchia's and Capt. Schaeffer's log books.



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HEADQUARTERS  
3d Marine Division (Rein) FMF  
APO San Francisco 96602

7B/ORD/rbc  
18 May 1967

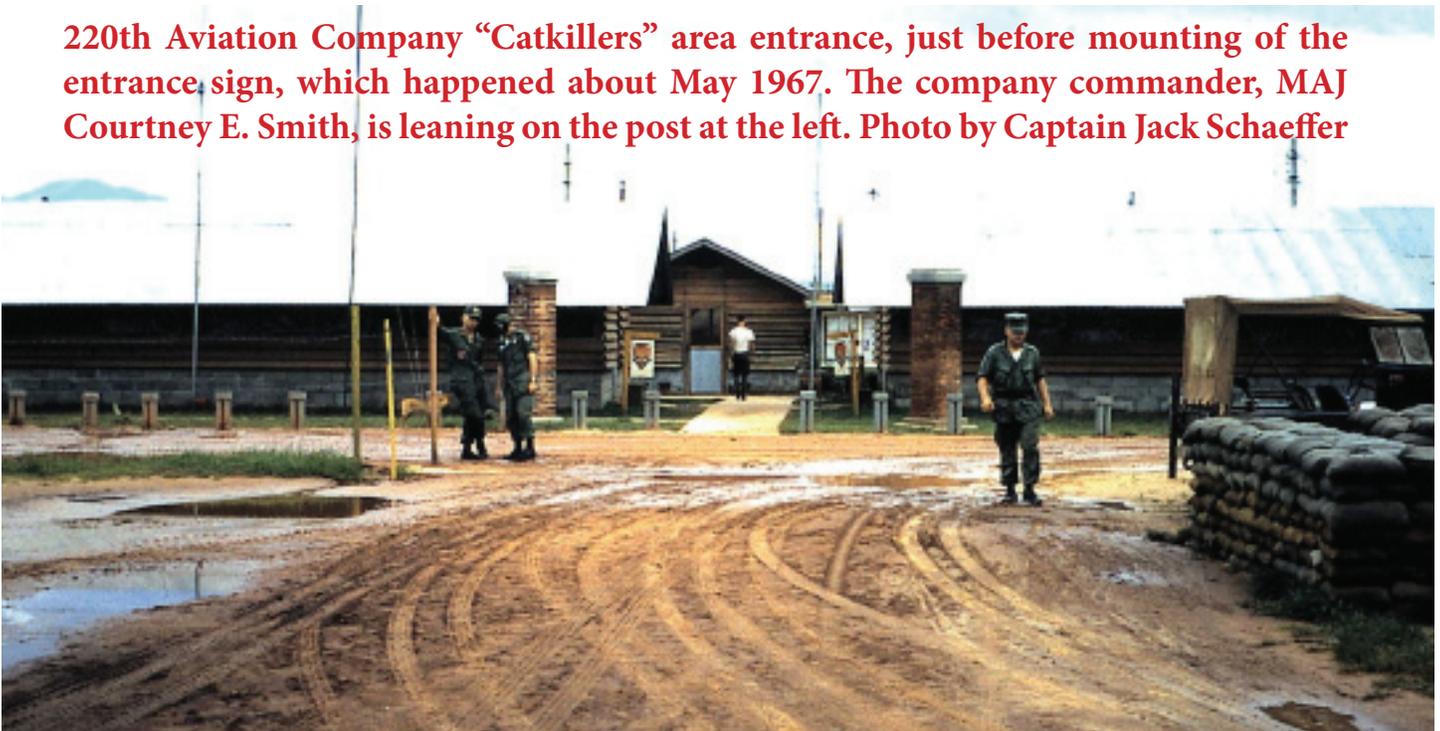
DIVISION SPECIAL ORDER  
NUMBER.....1752-67

1. The following assignments are effected.

NAME	ORGANIZATION	ED	TYPE	REMARKS
Capt RAGSDALE J E 070011	0302 : shq m	31Jul67	Duty	Asg as DIFOTECH NonCrew Sgtr Auth CMC spdltr DEA1- nlm-38 of 8May67
Capt WAKEFIELD H R 092592	0802 : -do-	-do-	-do-	-do-
Capt COLLINS C G 075136	0302 : -do-	-do-	-do-	Asg DIFOT Crew mbr as NAO(T) Auth CMC spdltr DFA1-nlm-38 of 8May67
Capt GOODE C J 075156	3502 : -do-	-do-	-do-	-do-
1stLt PELLECCIA D E 092288	0302 : -do-	-do-	-do-	-do-
1stLt REILLY R M 089869	0302 : -do-	-do-	-do-	-do-

NOTE: Capt. J. E. Ragsdale, USMC, first on the list above, was injured on 23 May 1967 in an aircraft crash at Con Thien. His pilot was killed (Captain Bobby Ray Jermyn aircraft 55-4747). Don Pelleccia had flown that same aircraft a week before with Captain Jermyn, in aircraft 55-4747.

**220th Aviation Company "Catkillers" area entrance, just before mounting of the entrance sign, which happened about May 1967. The company commander, MAJ Courtney E. Smith, is leaning on the post at the left. Photo by Captain Jack Schaeffer**



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Walking away from the 220th Orderly or Operations room is Capt. Carl G. Collins, 3rd Marine Division AO, 1966-67. The Catkiller unit sign is not yet mounted, so this was taken before May 1967. Below is a photo of a Marine O-1C, and to its right is Catkiller Birddog 72194. Both Don Pelleccchia and Jack Schaeffer flew as observer in the army aircraft, and probably also flew in Marine O-1C as well. Photos by Gene Wilson.

**Codes found in Don Pelleccchia's log book:** "The Aviator Flight Log Book codes and headings were designed for Navy/Marine pilots. So the codes don't correspond to the entries we made in VN. I do not recall what some of the entries mean, i.e. IV3 under the Flight Code heading. What the numbers are for under "Catapult" are a mystery also (I do know we never flew off any aircraft carriers!). The numbers entered under "Special Crew Time" represent the flight time of each mission, i.e. 2.5 equals two and a half hour flight. The names of the pilots listed are both Army and Marine pilots. You can determine who's who by the aircraft flown. O1-Ds [and G models] were flown by Army pilots; O1-C Birddogs were flown by Marine pilots. Additionally, we flew occasionally in HUEYs listed as UH1Es. Finally, the coordinates listed represent the site of some specific action taken (fixed wing airstrike, enemy unit sighting etc.). Some merely reflect the primary area of a recon flight. Don"



Army Birddog 72194, above

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According to their log books, Army Bird Dog 72779, initially known as “*The Gray Ghost*,” was on the list of tail numbers in which they flew. Photo Gene Wilson.



**In closing this file, here is a photo by Don Pelleccia: “CPT Dave Ohare, Catkiller 43, and I were on instruments that day (sometime between July-December, 1967, over I Corps)”**