



BAILING OUT OVER 'NAM

**AN INTERVIEW WITH COLONEL
VIC VIZCARRA (RETIRED, USAF)**

WORDS TOM GARNER



Captain Vic Vizcarra pictured in front of an F-105 Thunderchief during the Vietnam War. Vizcarra was a 'Thud' pilot who flew 59 combat missions in the F-105

American pilot Vic Vizcarra flew F-105 Thunderchiefs during the Vietnam War and survived anti-aircraft guns, surface-to-air missiles and ejecting from his aircraft over enemy territory

The Vietnam War became synonymous with the distinctive sound of 'Huey' helicopters, but the use of jet fighters was a huge part of the American military strategy against North Vietnamese forces. The air war was decisively fought in America's favour, with a heavy emphasis on bombing missions over North Vietnam.

Nevertheless, American pilots were not immune from risk because the North Vietnamese were supplied by the USSR with MiG fighters. More importantly, US aircraft came under the most destructive attack from anti-aircraft guns and new surface-to-air missiles. Consequently, over 1,400 American warplanes were shot down over North Vietnam between 1965-68.

One of the pilots who fought against the dogged North Vietnamese air resistance was Captain Vic Vizcarra of the United States Air Force. Vizcarra flew hundreds of missions during the war, 59 of which were combat missions in F-105 Thunderchiefs with 80th and 354th fighter squadrons. Vizcarra experienced many dramatic incidents while flying in the F-105 but managed to survive a uniquely modern conflict where technology became the face of a hidden but determined enemy.

Deployment to Southeast Asia

Vizcarra had always wanted to fly and was greatly influenced by his older brother. "I got bitten by the flying bug at the age of six and knew that I not only wanted to fly but to fly fighters. I was greatly influenced by my older brother, who was 15 years older than me and flew in World War II. My dad would tell me stories about him fighting the bad guys and I said, 'How do you fight the bad guys?' He said, 'You fly an airplane.' That got me into aviation and I knew that's what I wanted to do."

Having joined an officer training corps program, Vizcarra was commissioned as a second lieutenant in January 1960 and began flying fighter jets. He built up his flying hours and even found himself caught up during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 while stationed at Okinawa, Japan. By the time Vizcarra was deployed to the Vietnam War to fly F-105 Thunderchiefs in October 1964, he had accrued hundreds of hours of flying experience and

spent a large amount of his first deployment escorting reconnaissance aircraft over Laos.

Based in Korat, Thailand, from October-December 1964, Vizcarra recalled the enthusiasm he shared with his fellow pilots for the opportunity of active service: "I was biting at the bit to get in there because, until you've been shot at, you really don't know what it's like. We were all keen to go, and during the first few days of combat we thought that it was exciting and the adrenaline was pumping. It wasn't until people started getting hit that all of a sudden you thought, 'Wait a minute, this is serious.'"

While conducting an airstrike over Laos on Christmas Day 1964, Vizcarra remembered feeling a "tinge of remorse. It really hit me, because we were celebrating the birth of peace, Jesus Christ, but dropping bombs."

Although Vizcarra had been flying active missions since October 1964 he didn't receive his first taste of combat until 19 July 1965.



An American F-105 shot down over North Vietnam by an SA-2 missile c.1965-66

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By then based at Takli, Thailand, Vizcarra's mission was a bombing flight against North Vietnamese army barracks at Vinh. Flying at a speed of 550 knots [1,019 kilometres per hour], he remembered, "I messed up. I was suddenly in a plane with eight 750-pound bombs and when you release them, they don't all release at the same time. If they did there was too much chance of the bombs colliding with each other. When you release the bombs simultaneously there is a 120-microsecond separation between each bomb. When I hit the release button I didn't hold it until all the bombs had gone. I pushed the button real quick, and once we left the target I still had two bombs left on the bomb rack."

Adrenaline played a large part in Vizcarra's first combat mission: "Because of the butterflies and the excitement of being in combat for the first time I really didn't know the target and was a little slow. I messed up again coming out of a dive recovery and was grinning from flying so fast."

Operation Spring High

One of the military firsts of the Vietnam War was the aggressive use of surface-to-air missiles. Known by the Americans as 'SAMs', North Vietnamese forces had first used these weapons in April 1965 and a rigorous debate ensued within the US government on how to deal with them.

The threat became real on 24 July 1965 when a SAM shot down an American F-4 aircraft, and the danger to US pilots increased. Vizcarra explained, "We couldn't attack SAM sites up to that point. The head of the CIA had recommended to President Johnson many times that the SAM sites should be taken out before they became a really serious threat. Unfortunately, Robert McNamara, the secretary of defense, was opposed to the idea because he was concerned that it would be seen as an escalation of the war. He would always overrule military advice, and Johnson would always side with McNamara. As we were flying our missions we could see these SAM sites being constructed but we couldn't attack them. It was not until the F-4 was shot down that Johnson finally approved to take them off the 'Do Not Attack' list."

Because of McNamara's reluctance to destroy SAM sites, Vizcarra and his fellow



F-105s taxiing to the arming area before taking off on a combat mission

pilots despised him for putting their lives in danger. "Many military people did not hold McNamara in high regard. I would later tell my children when they were growing up, 'Hate is a very harsh word and you need to reserve it for people that you really do hate.' However, I have to admit that I hated McNamara."

On 27 July 1965, 48 'Thuds', including Vizcarra's, were finally ordered to attack two SAM sites in North Vietnam on a mission called 'Operation Spring High', which was the first counter-airstrike against SAM sites in the history of aerial warfare. Vizcarra approached this mission with trepidation. "I was really feeling fear. There were supposed to be 48 aircraft simultaneously hitting two SAM sites that were three miles [five kilometres] apart, and this was the first time we had gone against them. I was in the final flight of six flights from Takhli. Two aircraft from the first and third flights got shot down and I could hear it, we were all on the same frequency, so I found the target under quite stressful conditions."

Armed with napalm, Vizcarra's target was a barracks housing personnel that manned a SAM site near Hanoi. Descending to 31 metres (100 feet), Vizcarra flew down the Red River valley and was exposed to anti-aircraft fire. "It was really wide, flat terrain and you couldn't use it to hide. We were out in the open and flak burst right over our heads, which forced us to descend even

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lower. The closer we got to the target the lower it would get and my flight lead got so low that he probably got within 20 feet [six metres] of the ground. As we approached the target we had to climb to 50 feet [15 metres] to release our weapons at the target."

Vizcarra and his flight were now flying at extremely high speeds at a very low altitude. "It took us between 5-6 minutes to travel 50 miles [80 kilometres]. I remember turning at the Red River valley and we were about 50 miles from the target and going at 500 knots [926 kilometres per hour], which was close to eight miles a minute."

Once he reached the SAM site, Vizcarra's flight deployed their weapons. "Half the strike

force was armed with 'CBU', which were intact pieces of bomb nuts. These would be torn into thousands of pieces and used to destroy soft targets such as armoured trucks or personnel. Two flights would give the SAM sites CBU and one flight went with napalm. I was carrying napalm so we dropped it and destroyed the barracks," Vizcarra explained.

The mission was so stressful that Vizcarra was given a shot of whiskey to calm his nerves upon his return: "It was the only mission where I was served 'Combat Whiskey'. At the end of a flight, the flight surgeon would open up his whiskey cabinet and pour each guy a shot. I'm not a whiskey drinker, but I was so tense from that mission that the gentleman came up my ladder before I'd even unstrapped and handed me a shot. I didn't ask what it was, I just took it and it burned my throat!"

Anti-aircraft fire

Days after destroying the SAM site, Vizcarra came under fire from 37mm triple-A anti-aircraft guns while flying at 1,370 metres (4,500 feet) around the Laotian-North Vietnamese border on 3 August 1965. Vizcarra's target was a bridge, and he recalled seeing anti-aircraft fire flying up towards him: "The 37mm looks like a large, glowing orange golf ball, and you could see them streaking up beneath you. When they sprung them there was a white puff, and I was



A flight line of F-105s at Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base in late 1965



A 37mm triple-A gun emplacement manned by North Vietnamese troops. Vizcarra recalled that these guns would fire rounds that looked like "large, glowing orange golf balls"



An intelligence target photo, provided to each mission pilot for the first airstrike against a SAM site in military aviation history, July 1965

F-105s conduct a bombing run above low cloud formations, North Vietnam, 14 June 1966

"EVERYBODY LOVED THE FACT THAT IT WAS FAST AND COULD OUTFLY MIG-17S WHILE FULLY LOADED"



Left: An F-105 in flight with a full bomb load of 750lb bombs. This aircraft was later shot down over Laos on 24 December 1968

FLYING A 'THUD' THE REPUBLIC F-105 THUNDERCHIEF FLEW THE MOST AMERICAN BOMBING MISSIONS DURING THE VIETNAM WAR AND WAS A FORMIDABLE AIRCRAFT

With a top speed of 2,237 kilometres per hour (1,390 miles per hour) and a maximum bomb load of over 5,442 kilograms (12,000 pounds), the F-105 conducted 75 per cent of bombing missions over North Vietnam. Developed in the mid-1950s, this supersonic fighter-bomber was designed for low-level, high-speed attacks. It initially had a poor reputation and pilots nicknamed F-105s 'Thuds', which eventually became a term of endearment. With design modifications and improvements,

the Thud achieved great performance capabilities that enabled it to carry the heaviest conventional weapons further than any other fighter-bomber. It was faster than most opposing aircraft and was able to sustain heavy damage.

The F-105's weapons system was formidable. Vizcarra recalled, "It could carry a variety of weapons, most commonly eight 750-pound bombs. As the war got more serious with SAMs we had defensive weapons, such as electronic

countermeasure pods. We could also carry two 3,000-pound bombs, which was a huge weapon."

Vizcarra remembered the Thud with affection: "I definitely loved flying the F-105. It had an extremely comfortable cockpit and was very stable. Everybody loved the fact that it was fast and could outrun MiG-17s while fully loaded. The Soviets initially armed the North Vietnamese with MiG-17s but they couldn't catch the F-105s. That's why they started giving them the MiG-21, their best fighter."



Three F-105s take off to go on a bombing mission over North Vietnam in 1966. In the early part of the war the F-105 was not camouflaged and had a silver coat



Left: F-105s refuelling over heavy cloud cover before heading to North Vietnam. Vizcarra's aircraft, 357, is pictured after taking on fuel

The 354th Tactical Fighter Squadron. Vic Vizcarra is kneeling on the second row, far right



An SA-2 surface-to-air missile. Vizcarra and his colleagues would joke that these fearsome weapons looked like "flying telephone poles"

DEFEATING A SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE

VIC VIZCARRA HAD TO FREQUENTLY COMBAT THE SA-2 MISSILE – A DANGEROUS WEAPON THAT REVOLUTIONISED AERIAL WARFARE

Developed by the USSR, the SA-2 was widely used during the Vietnam War. The heat-seeking missile used a two-stage rocket booster system and was fitted with a 197-kilogram (434-pound) warhead. Its range was up to 48 kilometres (30 miles) with a maximum height of 18,288 metres (60,000 feet).

The SA-2 was an innovative threat to American pilots in Vietnam, but Vizcarra explained that they could be successfully outmanoeuvred: "We referred to them as 'flying telephone poles'. They were easy to spot and luckily they were large enough that you could see them coming at you. You had to take defensive manoeuvres, and with hard manoeuvring you could out-run it, but that's not how you would defeat it."

Defeating a SAM required skilful flying. "When you saw a SAM coming at you, you had to see the launch so you could spot it early because they spewed a lot of burst and smoke. The burst would

put out a large flame, so as soon as you spotted one you really had to put it off. You'd manoeuvre to a three or nine o'clock position so that it came at you from the side. The SAM always launched to a high altitude, so it would start off high and turn down towards you. As soon as you saw it you had

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to put your nose down to force it to do a bigger turn towards you. Once you got it coming down towards you, you would pull back up. It would try and follow you but it couldn't do it because it had very small wings. So as it tried to pull back up it would just tend to stall out and tumble. That's the way you would defeat a SAM."

Vizcarra recalled that surviving these missiles was different from standard anti-aircraft fire: "It made it very personal. Because the North Vietnamese would shoot at you with triple-A fire, they would just put up a large barrage and hope that you'd run into it. A SAM is looking right at you, it's got your lead and it's going after you, so it's much more personal. To be honest though, the SAMs were not very effective at all. You could defeat them, and for the whole Vietnam War their effectiveness rate was actually less than 1.2 per cent."

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rolling in on a wooden bridge. I could see the orange golf balls flying all over me, and when I released my weapons I started pulling to recover from my dive and rolled to the left."

During this engagement, while under fire, Vizcarra thought his aircraft had been hit: "Once I rolled up and was climbing out I looked over to my left and three feet [0.9 metres] of my leading-edge wing flap was missing. You could see that it had torn off so I thought I'd been hit. But after looking at the damage back at base it became obvious that the pressure equalisation valve in the drop tank had failed during the dive on the bridge and it had imploded."

Mechanical problems would later cause Vizcarra even more worrying problems, but it was the constant flying that was beginning to induce stress. During what was his second deployment over Vietnam, Vizcarra regularly began attending Mass: "When you get shot at, you get very religious all of a sudden. There was a very small circle of guys that thought they were invincible and were always biting at the bit to lead the dangerous missions. Then the junior pilots, where I placed myself, strapped up everyday, day after day. You felt that, 'This could be the guy going to be hit, not me.' If you ever thought you were going to be hit all the heart went. There was also a very small circle of those who

thought they weren't going to make it and actually asked to be relieved of duty. I needed religious faith to give me the courage to go day after day."

Conversely, Vizcarra admitted that flying combat missions was "really addictive because of the adrenaline. It was like the challenge and excitement of scoring in rugby. As long as you weren't getting knocked out and getting hit it was exciting, particularly when you're on a roll and flying some pretty interesting missions. You had a lot of anxieties going to the target, but there was a great feeling of satisfaction coming home and accomplishment that you shot the target."

For Vizcarra, this addiction to combat missions was put into sharp perspective when he went on his third deployment between September–November 1967. "The more you did it, the more you wanted to do it – until I had the experience of bailing out."

Ejecting over enemy skies

By 1966, casualties were rising among Thud pilots and Vizcarra was losing colleagues in combat. "It got to be a

little bit troublesome, and the reality hits you that you may not come back."

He was also coming to respect the North Vietnamese forces: "They appeared to be very capable learners. The Russians trained them, and because they were operating the SAMs they knew how to use sophisticated equipment. They did things that Americans did not think was possible so they deserve recognition for being capable people."

Vizcarra was now taking part in 'Iron Hand' missions, with the objective to suppress enemy defensive systems, particularly SAMs. Thud pilots would deliberately challenge SAMs before airstrikes destroyed their sites. Dedicated crews in two-seater F-105Gs would act as 'bait' while wingmen such as Vizcarra would bomb the targets. By November 1966, "the North Vietnamese were establishing more and more SAM sites and putting them up from Hanoi down towards the south, and they kept moving them down there."

On 6 November 1966 Vizcarra went on an Iron Hand mission acting as wingman to an F-105G over a southern area of North Vietnamese SAM activity. Vizcarra and his lead aircraft were looking for three suspected SAM sites, but their flight turned into a fruitless search. On a return journey to the first site Vizcarra began having problems with his aircraft. "So far we had not been shot at by the North Vietnamese, so we started this journey back to the coast again to look at the first suspected site, but I got an engine compressor stall. If you got a compressor stall in the F-105 you knew there was something wrong with the engine."

Vizcarra initially believed he could nurse his aircraft back to base, but "after a short time it became obvious that I had an engine failure. It was still running but I could not maintain altitude or air speed, and I didn't realise how quickly it deteriorated. It wasn't until the flight lead said, 'Dip your flaps', which you needed when you're very slow, that I realised the plane wasn't flying anymore and I had to get out."

With the F-105's sudden engine failure, Vizcarra now had no choice but to eject over enemy territory: "I told them I was going to have to eject and I did. The ejection was surprisingly smooth and mild because I took it at such a slow air speed. I didn't panic and everything worked properly. The seat blew up and did a kind of summersault before the seatbelt was automatically disconnected."

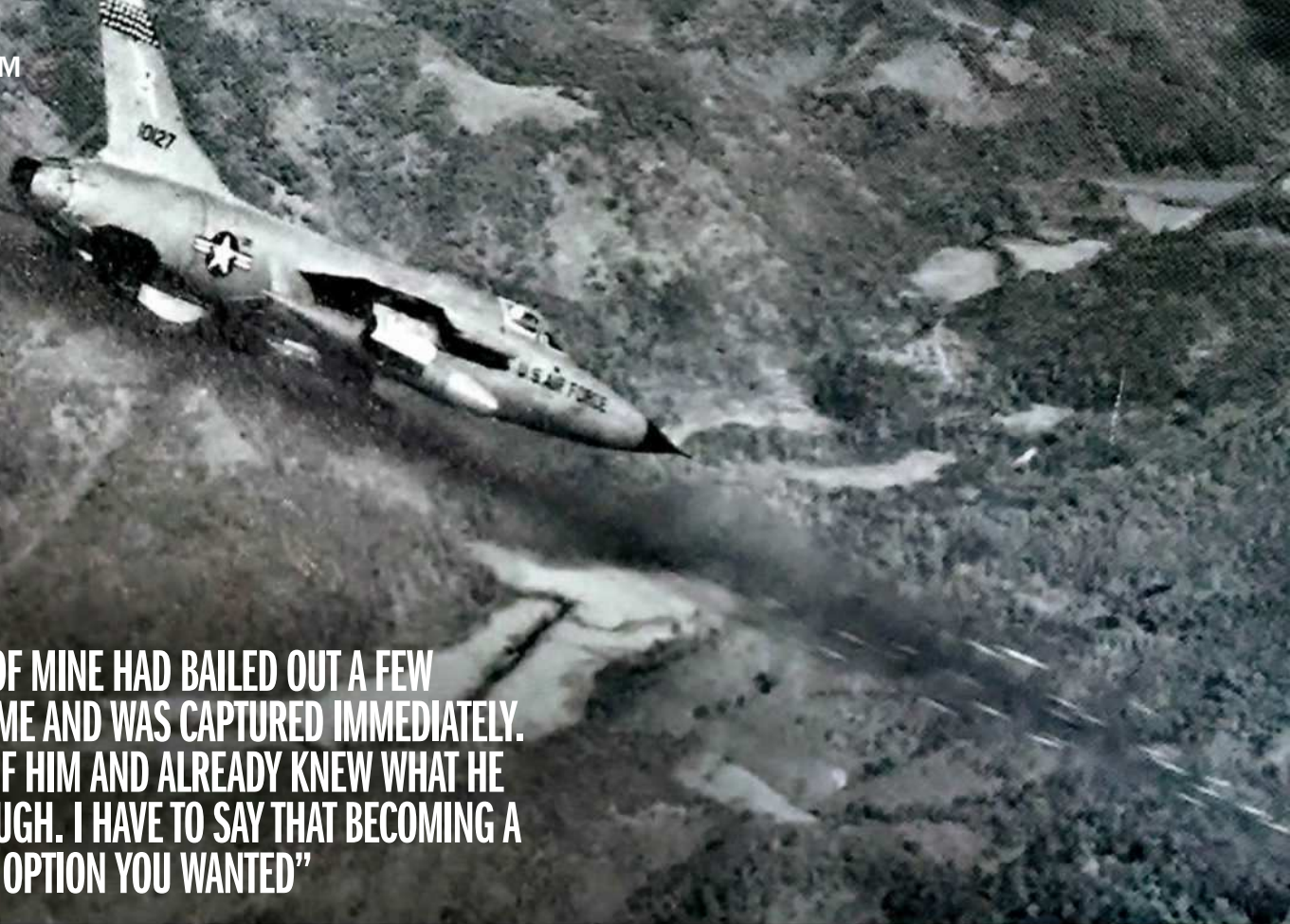
Vizcarra was now parachuting over "extremely dense jungle" and prepared for a tree landing. "I was shocked at the sudden stop, and it knocked the breath out of me because I hit the trees very suddenly. I ended up hanging upside down with my right ankle wedged between a tree branch that was split like a 'Y'."

Now in a precarious position, Vizcarra did not know how high up he was from the ground. "Trying to get out of this tree took a lot of effort, and I was doing pull ups upside down to grab hold of this branch. I managed to pull myself up but then did something really foolish. North Vietnamese trees are very tall, and guys who had bailed out had hurt themselves not realising how high up they were and they would break bones from the fall. I did have a 200-foot [61-metre] lanyard in my parachute that you could use as a pulley to let you down, but with



Left: Major Art Mearns (1929–66) was Vizcarra's flight commander and leader who was listed as missing on 11 November 1966 and later declared killed in action. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for "gallantry and devotion to duty". Mearns's citation read that he had "reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force"

An F-105 fires 2.75-inch rockets over enemy territory. Vizcarra would have performed similar manoeuvres during a mission in August 1965



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the adrenaline pumping and the excitement of ejection I couldn't remember how to rig it up.”

Vizcarra took a dangerous step to get down from the tree: “I dropped my helmet to determine how high I was and then let myself go. I was shocked when I landed within six feet [1.8 metres] of the ground! I must have dropped dozens of feet before I was hanging upside down and my head had been only feet above the ground. I couldn't tell from my position because the leaves were so thick, so that was really chancy what I did there.”

A hostile environment

Once on the ground, Vizcarra had to be rescued as soon as possible, but that was easier said than done. He had landed in isolated jungle 33 kilometres (20.5 miles) southeast from the Mu Gia Pass on the Laotian-North Vietnamese border, which was used as a military route to infiltrate supplies to the Viet Cong. Vizcarra knew he could not be captured: “A dear friend of mine had bailed out a few months before me and was captured immediately. I saw pictures of him and already knew what he was going through. I have to say that becoming a POW was not an option you wanted.”

Vizcarra immediately attempted to contact his flight lead on a survival radio: “In my excitement I pushed the lever and asked to talk, but it was poorly designed. I pushed the button right through ‘Talk’ into a beeper signal without realising it. So there I was standing there talking, when really I was sending out a beeper signal. My flight leader and I couldn't communicate because I was not using the proper mode.”

Fortunately for Vizcarra, his flight leader found a way around the communication problem. “Luckily he was very smart. He started playing ‘20 Questions’ where he would

Below: This UH-2A helicopter ‘Royal Lancer’ rescued Vizcarra from the jungle and probable capture



ask me a question and get me to answer by using the beeper. One beep was ‘Yes’ and two beeps were ‘No’. We communicated like that for a while and he eventually said, ‘We’ve got rescue on the way. Turn your radio off, save the battery and come back up in 15 minutes’.”

Vizcarra was now alone and had to prepare for hiding and surviving in the jungle in case the rescue attempt failed.

Surviving in a cave

While he waited to be rescued, Vizcarra had to find immediate cover. “I sat there waiting for the time to go by and realised that, even though I was in really thick jungle I still was coming out in the open and needed to find a hiding place.”

Vizcarra soon came across a large hill of karst to the north of his landing position and discovered many caves. “Karst is a type of lava formation, which is indigenous to that area. I was shocked how porous it was and had a selection of many caves to go into. I picked the one that was right in front of me and found that it was a good hiding place and hid in there.”

There was no accurate way of knowing how long it would be before the rescue came, so Vizcarra had to rely on his survival kit. “One pilot spent 30 days in the jungle before he got rescued, so you had a poncho to keep yourself covered from the rain as well as a knife, plate, compass, mirror and fishing gear.”

One particular item had a novel use: “There was a condom in the survival gear. I joked with a friend years later that it was there in case you had to sleep your way out of Vietnam, but it really wasn't. Your condom was to be used as an additional way to collect water even though you had cans of water in your gear.”

While he was in the cave, Vizcarra reflected on his situation: “Up to this point I was reacting to my training, but I was now sitting waiting to be rescued with nothing to do. I suddenly started to think about my family and the terrible situation I was in. I resorted back to my faith again and said a little prayer, and sure enough as soon as I finished saying it I heard aircraft coming back. I felt like some of my prayers had been heard.”

Rescue

Vizcarra was being rescued by a US Navy helicopter, but the device the naval crew used to rescue him almost caused another accident: “The jungle rescue device is called a ‘Tree Pole Trainer’ and looks like an anchor as it's lowered through the trees. It had a safety harness but I didn't have enough strength in my thumb to open the clip all the way. It only partially opened or popped out. I heard the radio saying, ‘Hurry up, we're low on fuel, let us know when we can pull you up.’ That made me even more nervous so I wrapped this cable around me.”

Vizcarra was then pulled out of the jungle slightly prematurely. “I was going to say, ‘OK, go ahead’ but as soon as they heard ‘OK’ they



A shocked Vizcarra is taken off his rescue helicopter onto the deck of USS Halsey, 6 November 1966. Vizcarra said that his "buggy eyes" were because "I got hit by salt spray as I jumped out onto the ship. I was totally shocked by being saved by the US Navy"



A USAF colonel greets Vizcarra after being transferred from USS Halsey to USS Constellation



Below: Vizcarra in the wardroom of USS Halsey with his rescuers and the captain of the ship. There is a gunpowder mark on Vizcarra's stomach from the seatbelt explosive charge during his ejection

started to pull me back up. I dropped the radio, which at least freed my hands so I could hang on for dear life, because I wasn't strapped in properly. The cable then draped over a branch and they used me as a battering ram to break it. On the fifth attempt they succeeded and I was finally free. When the helicopter landed on the ship it only had two minutes of fuel remaining."

The feeling of being rescued was a great relief: "Once I was on the helicopter I felt very good. I was on the ground for a little bit over two hours, and although it was only short it seemed like a long time." Vizcarra was flown to USS Halsey and "treated like royalty" before he was transferred to the USS Constellation and finally reunited with his squadron. For minor injuries he had received during the rescue Vizcarra was awarded the Purple Heart, although he recalled, "I did suffer bruises and scrapes on my arm, which drew blood, but I really didn't think I deserved it. It was a miracle I got rescued because I made lots of mistakes."

The cost of war

Vizcarra's ejection and rescue occurred towards the end of his time flying the F-105 and he recalled not being as enthusiastic to fly afterwards: "You're not so anxious to get back in a plane the minute you have to bail out over enemy territory." Although there was an unwritten policy that rescued pilots were sent home, Vizcarra's experience was valued, and he had to remain on active duty. After another near-accident Vizcarra was feeling edgy: "I was shook up and told [my superior officer], 'Sir, this is my third miss in a row and I think the good Lord is trying to tell me something.'"

397 F-105s were shot down during the Vietnam War between 1965-72, and in Vizcarra's wing dozens of pilots had been shot down by mid-1967. Many were rescued, but

"THE CABLE THEN DRAPED OVER A BRANCH AND THEY USED ME AS A BATTERING RAM TO BREAK IT. ON THE FIFTH ATTEMPT THEY SUCCEEDED AND I WAS FINALLY FREE"

a significant number were killed or captured. Vizcarra was eventually sent to Bangkok, but while he was there his flight commander Major Art Mearns was killed in action. "He was a good guy. I liked him and flew most of my missions with him, so that hit me hard. I felt guilty that I was in Bangkok instead of flying with him, and that's what keeps coming back. I don't think I could have saved him, but I did feel terrible that I was not with him on that mission." Vizcarra flew his last Thud mission shortly afterwards on 19 November 1966.

As for enemy casualties, Vizcarra explained that he had different views from some of his fellow pilots: "I didn't care for a few of the pilots' attitudes. Their attitude was that anybody in North Vietnam was an enemy, but I didn't see it that way. I had no qualms about killing the military because that's the enemy and that sort of thinking made it easy for me to bomb targets over North Vietnam. But civilians are civilians, and I didn't want to kill them."

The Vietnam War, then and now, has always been a deeply controversial conflict, and Vizcarra, who later retired as a colonel, felt that American politicians should bear the responsibility for the US defeat. "Unfortunately there was too much politics involved in the war.

My philosophy is that if a nation needs to go to war the politicians should tell the military what the objective is but then let them use military strategy to achieve the objective. But unfortunately the United States has got too involved in too many wars since World War II where the politicians run the war rather than the military."

Since the war ended, Vizcarra has thought about the consequences of the conflict and concluded that those who died should be honoured. "I went through a period where it kind of oppressed me because people had been lost unnecessarily. I started questioning in my mind, 'Was it all worth it?' I almost came to the conclusion that it wasn't, but what changed my mind was when I thought it would be a disservice to those that made the ultimate sacrifice. If it wasn't worth it, how can you say this to people who went there and did what their country asked them to do, even in adverse circumstances? Time changes your feelings somewhat, but as a combat pilot I mostly remember the good."

Vic Vizcarra is the author of *Thud Pilot: A Pilot's Account Of Early F-105 Combat In Vietnam*, published by Fonthill Media. Turn to page 93 for a review.



Vic Vizcarra was later promoted to colonel and is the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, several Air Medals and the Purple Heart

