

# Joseph W. Widhalm

## F-105 History

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09-Dec-68

253

The twenty-third F-105 RTU Class 69CR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 24 June 1968 with 22 students. Sixteen graduated: one Capt and 15 1Lts. The class deployed 20 F-105s for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 22 Oct - 5 Nov 68 with the 4519 CCTS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Harry W. Schurr. The Outstanding Graduate was 1Lt Stanley E. Boyd.

Two members of the class died in F-105 accidents. The student pilots were:

Capt Gerald E. Zoehler, Jr. at Smokey Hill range on 13 August 1968.

Capt Wayne Wright in F-105D 60-0416 at Smokey Hill range on 18 October 1968.

2Lt Hugh W. Gill III successfully ejected from F-105D 60-0515 when he ran out of fuel three miles west of Hutchinson KS on 6 August 1968. He was eliminated from F-105 training.

During their eight days of flying at George, the class flew 298 sorties and 265.2 flying hours. "The deployment mission was very effective in that all the flights completed a low-level navigation mission and bomb drop on Leach Lake Tactical Range (Missile Complex) prior to landing at George. This permitted the students some local area orientation prior to their first scheduled flights at George AFB. Since eighteen aircraft were deployed with the SUU-21, extremely effective GAT missions were possible at George. The flying profile consisted of low level (200' - 1500'), not possible at McConnell, Road Recce (5000'), and random multiple attacks on the Leach Lake Tactical Range. Students led these missions and upon reaching the range complex the IP acted as airborne FAC and directed realistic attacks using Southeast Asia tactics. The airborne FAC procedure was also used for a GAT mission when the dart target failed to launch properly.

"... Two in-flight emergencies occurred, one for 'gear indicators' and one 'no flap' landing. The squadron experienced zero drag chute failures, no blown tires, and only one landing graded as dangerous. ... Without exception, all assigned instructor pilots have combat experience in SEA and 100 missions over North Vietnam. Every effort is expended to insure that all of the latest SEA information and tactics are incorporated in the training syllabus."

The graduating pilots were:

Capt Jerome M. Modolo	1Lt Craig H. Gutchow
1Lt Raymond M. "Mike" Bennert	1Lt Frank T. Hayman IV
1Lt Stanley E. Boyd	1Lt Paul D. O'Connell
1Lt David A. Bruns	1Lt Daniel P. Seals
1Lt Randal D. Carlson	1Lt Edward L. Sykes
1Lt James L. DeVoss	1Lt Joseph W. Widhalm
1Lt Bobby L. Efferson	1Lt Sidney J. Wise
1Lt Bruce D. Gillett	1Lt Jerry A. Wrucha

Lt Widhalm flew the F-105 for the first time on 1 July 1968. After training at Nellis he arrived at Korat in January 1969 and was assigned to the 34 TFS.

*23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 68, USAF microfilm MO555, frames 0173 - 0175 & Ed Sykes, telephone interview 12 Sept 2010 & Joe Widhalm, e-mail 7 May 12.*

09-May-69

410

The 34 TFS flew its last F-105 mission before it converted to F-4Es at the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

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The F-4Es were delivered on 11 May 1969 by the 40 TFS from Eglin AFB FL. The 40th changed its designation to the 34 TFS when it arrived at Korat. "...They were met with cold beer, a lei, a parade of smoke bombs, water hoses, and welcomed through most of the streets of Korat ...". The 40th designation returned to Eglin.

The final 34 TFS squadron commander with F-105s was Lt Col Harvey W. Prosser, Jr. When the squadron converted to F-4Es, he was replaced by Lt Col Joseph M. Potts. Col Prosser was reassigned to Kirtland AFB, NM where he flew the F-4 and F-104.

On 10 May 1969, Capt Clayton Bane Lyle III was one of the F-105 pilots who transferred from the 34th to the 44 TFS. (Bane Lyle, e-mail 20 Aug 2010.)

1Lt Joseph W. Widhalm, assigned to the 34 TFS in January 1969, also transferred to the 44 TFS. (Joe Widhalm, e-mail 7 May 2012)

On 11 May 1969, the 34th distributed its F-105s to the 355 TFW at Takhli, RTAFB and to the 44 TFS, the only unit still flying F-105s at Korat. The 44 TFS possessed 23 F-105s. Its squadron commander was Lt Col Herbert L. Sherrill who had replaced Lt Col Guy J. Sherrill on 12 March 1969.

F-4E pilots of the 388 TFW called the F-105 "Thud" ("... cause that's the sound it makes when it crashes!") while Korat F-105 pilots referred to the F-4E as the "Thumb" (Two-Hole-Ugly-Mini-Bug). (388 TFW history)

Harvey Prosser commented on the attitude of the F-4 pilots. "They were not a happy bunch. I could have as many F-4 guys switch to 105s as I wanted. All the 34th young guys and the old F-4 pilot Gibs much preferred the Thud. We put up a big sign at the entrance to the O Club stating 'Tiny Tim flies F-4s'. The new F-4 guys refused to take it down and it stayed up for at least a month when the Wing Commander commanded the 34th pilots to remove it because it hurt the F-4 pilots' feelings. Also, the nickname for the F-4 at Korat at that time was Mini-Buff. Again, at the Wing Commander's order, we desisted." (Harvey Prosser, e-mail 2 Feb 10)

During the time the 34th flew F-105s, the squadron received three Outstanding Unit Awards and a Presidential Unit Citation. After it began flying F-4Es, the squadron received its fourth Outstanding Unit Award for the period 1 July 1968 to 15 September 1969 as well as the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross With Palm for the period 15 May 1966 to 29 January 1973. (James Geer, "The Republic F-105 Thunderchief Wing and Squadron Histories", Schiffer, 2002, pg 241.)

However, in its 3 years of flying the F-105, the 34 TFS paid a high price. Pilots assigned or attached to the squadron lost 39 planes to combat and accidents -- 37 "D" models and two "F" models -- enough to equip the squadron more than twice over. Thirteen squadron pilots died in combat (KIA), three more in accidents. Four pilots survived accidental crashes, ten were rescued, and 11 more became POWs, one of whom died in captivity. The following recaps each of the squadron's 39 losses, the pilots involved, and their fate:

	Date	F-105	Last Name	Fate
1.	03 Jun 66	58-1171	Pielin	Rescued
2.	15 Jun 66	62-4377	Kelley	Rescued
3.	21 Jun 66	62-4358	Sullivan	KIA
4.	30 Jun 66	62-4224	Nierste	Rescued
5.	15 Jul 66	59-1761	Hamby	Rescued
6.	20 Jul 66	62-4308	Lewis	KIA
7.	21 Jul 66	62-4227	Tiffin	KIA

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8.	06 Aug 66	62-4315	Rutherford	Rescued
9.	17 Sep 66	61-0191	Rutherford	Rescued
10.	10 Oct 66	62-4300	Bullock	Died
11.	10 Jan 67	62-4265	Gauley	KIA
12.	19 Mar 67	61-0123	Austin	KIA
13.	05 Apr 67	62-4395	Youngblood	Survived
14.	12 May 67	63-8269 (F)	Stewart	KIA
			Pitman	KIA
15.	15 May 67	62-4429 (F)	Heiliger	POW
			Pollard	POW
16.	02 Jun 67	61-0190	Smith	POW
17.	04 Jun 67	61-0148	Kough	Rescued
18.	15 Jun 67	61-0213	Swanson	KIA
19.	17 Oct 67	61-0205	Andrews	POW
20.	17 Oct 67	62-4326	Odell	POW
21.	17 Oct 67	60-0425	Sullivan	POW
22.	27 Oct 67	62-4231	Flynn	POW
23.	28 Oct 67	62-4356	Waldrop	Survived
24.	19 Nov 67	58-1170	Vissotzky	POW
25.	04 Feb 68	60-5384	Lasiter	POW
26.	14 Feb 68	60-0418	Elliot	KIA
27.	15 Apr 68	61-0206	Metz	POW Died
28.	25 Apr 68	60-0436	Givens	Died
29.	14 May 68	61-0132	Bass	Died
30.	28 May 68	61-0194	Ingvalson	POW
31.	31 May 68	60-0409	Beresik	KIA
32.	08 Jun 68	61-0055	Light	Rescued
33.	13 Jul 68	60-0453	Confer	Survived
34.	01 Sep 68	60-0512	Thaete	Rescued
35.	17 Nov 68	61-0092	Dinan	Survived
36.	11 Feb 69	62-4256	Zukowski	KIA
37.	17 Mar 69	61-0104	Dinan	KIA
38.	29 Mar 69	62-4270	Stafford	Rescued
39.	03 Apr 69	62-4269	Christianson	KIA

*388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 69, USAF microfilm NO586*

### 28-Jun-69

7154

Four F-105 pilots in the 44 TFS, 388 TFW, were awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses for missions they flew today. The pilots were:

Lt Col Harley N. "Chilly" Wills  
Maj Raymond Gene Schwartz  
Capt Henry C. Robert, Jr.  
1Lt Joseph W. Widhalm

The award was made on 21 April 70. Lt Widhalm's citation described his mission into Laos. "... Lieutenant Widhalm was the wingman in a flight of two F-105s tasked to silence anti-aircraft artillery and small arms fire which was preventing aerial evacuation of friendly forces. Despite extremely low clouds covering nearby mountains, and intense anti-aircraft artillery and automatic weapons fire directed at his aircraft, Lieutenant Widhalm, with deep concern for the friendly forces being evacuated, and disregarding his own personal safety, made repeated bombing and strafing attacks destroying one gun site and silencing several others, thereby contributing immeasurably to the successful evacuation of over 300 friendly troops. ...".

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*355 TFW History, 1 Apr - 30 Jun 70, USAF microfilm NO471, frame 0869 & Joe Widhalm citation via e-mail 7 May 2012.*

**10-Oct-69**

415

F-105s of the 44 TFS transferred from the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, where it had flown Wild Weasel missions, to the 355 TFW, Takhli RTAFB. For the first time since its organization at Korat on 8 April 1966 the 388 TFW had no assigned F-105s. The 388th wing commander was Col John A. Nelson. The squadron commander was Lt Col Herbert L. Sherrill who was replaced on this date by Lt Col Harley N. Wills.

The 44 TFS's twenty-one F-105s (11 F-105Fs and 10 F-105Ds) were launched from Korat on 10 October 1969 with some fragged for combat missions that recovered at Takhli. Others flew local sorties to Takhli. The advance party moved in two elements, the first on 25 September 1969 and the second on 3 and 5 October 1969.

The relocation involved 459 personnel and used twenty C-130 sorties to move over 400 people and 156,108 pounds of cargo. The official transfer date of the squadron was 15 October 1969.

Capt Clayton Bane Lyle III and 1Lt Joseph W. Widhalm were two of the pilots in the 44th who moved to Takhli with the squadron. Joe Widhalm recalled that, "... I didn't fly any missions from Takhli after the move because some of us were sent TDY to Korea to pull Command Post duty until December 1969. ... I went to Osan with Ed Sykes and Paul O'Connell I think. Once we got there, we were sent on to Taegu AB where we spent the two months. Others from Takhli may have been involved in this, too. My understanding is that due to the decreasing F-105 sortie requirements in late 1969 the squadrons were over manned, so PACAF decided to use some of us in manning assistance programs elsewhere in the theater. ... I left Osan in late December 1969 to become a T-38 IP at Webb AFB."

Lt Widhalm last flew the F-105 on a combat mission on 6 October 1969 from Korat by which time he had accumulated 403.1 hours in the aircraft. (Joe Widhalm e-mail 8 May 2012 & F-105 Flying Hour Report, dated 18 Nov 1985 provided by USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.)

*388 TFW History, Jul - Sep, Vol III, USAF microfilm NO587 & <http://www.afhra.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=10609> & Bane Lyle, e-mail 20 Aug 2010 & Joe Widhalm, e-mails 7 and 8 May 2012.*

**30-Jun-70**

1986

The 355 TFW history listed the 44 TFS officers who received awards between April - June 1970.

**Lt Col Ronald J. Crozier - DFC (1st OLC) on 30 Jun 70.**

Lt Col William D. Lockwood - DFC (2nd OLC) on 5 Mar 70.

Lt Col Harley N. "Chilly" Wills - DFC on 21 Apr 70 and AM (1st - 8th OLC) on 10 Mar 70.

Maj Larry W. Crotts - DFC on 19 Mar 70.

Maj Raymond Gene Schwartz - DFC on 21 Apr 70 and AM (1st - 6th OLC) on 10 Mar 70.

Capt Charles J. Ferrari - DFC on 19 Mar 70.

Capt Eben D. Jones - DFC on 18 Mar 70.

Capt Henry C. Robert, Jr. - DFC on 21 Apr 70.

1Lt Joseph W. Widhalm - DFC on 21 Apr 70.

Lt Col David B. Hubbard, Jr. - AM on 1 Apr 70.

Lt Col William D. Lockwood - AM (4th OLC) on 8 Apr 70.

Maj Daniel P. Barry - AM on 12 Apr 70.

Maj James T. Brown, Jr. - AM (2nd OLC) on 1 Apr 70 and AM (3rd OLC) on 27 May 70.

Maj Paul S. Lasen - AM on 12 Apr 70.

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Maj Donald L. Scott - AM (1st OLC) on 5 Mar 70 and AM (3rd OLC) on 30 Jun 70.  
Maj Richard W. Simons - AM on 1 Apr 70.  
Capt John R. Casper - AM (4th OLC) on 30 Jun 70.  
Capt Thomas J. Doubek - AM (7th OLC) on 6 Mar 70.  
Capt John C. Giffen - AM (2nd OLC) on 27 May 70.  
Capt Gilbert L. Henry - AM (1st - 7th OLC) on 21 May 70.  
Capt Clarence T. "Ted" Lowry - EWO awarded AM on 12 Apr 70.  
Capt John W. Newhouse - AM (10th OLC) on 27 May 70.  
Capt Michael B. O'Brien - EWO awarded AM on 1 Apr 70.  
Capt Mercer B. Richardson - AM on 30 Jun 70.  
Capt Henry C. Robert, Jr. - AM (7th - 12th OLC) on 10 Mar 70.  
Capt William "Toby" Tyler - AM (6th - 12th OLC) on 29 Jun 70.  
1Lt Michael E. Chervenka, Jr. - AM on 1 Apr 70.  
1Lt Joseph S. Henderson - AM on 30 Jun 70.  
1Lt James B. Libertore - AM (1st OLC) on 27 May 70 and named "Thundergun" for May 1970.  
1Lt Robert G. Ludwig - AM (1st OLC) on 8 Apr 70.  
1Lt Thomas G. Ryan - AM (2nd OLC) on 30 Jun 70.

1Lt Michael H. Davis - Named "Thundergun" for April 1970.  
Capt Donald W. Kilgus - Named "Thundergun" for June 1970.

*355 TFW History, 1 Apr - 30 Jun 70, USAF microfilm NO471, frame 0869.*