

# Captain Brian Lincoln

## FROM THE PENTAGON TO A. A. B.

BY PAUL BACKSHALL



**PACING** the corridors of the Pentagon conferring with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the latest developments in the Middle East was once an everyday event for **Captain Brian Lincoln**. Now he lives in St. Croix and is a Vice President and Assistant General Manager of Antilles Air Boats.

Brian rose to the rank of Colonel in the U.S. Air Force and during that time flew missions in Korea and Vietnam, sat at the controls of 45 different Air Force planes, including supersonic jet fighters and helped design and update the most sophisticated airborne fighting equipment.

But with all of this behind him, he stepped out of the Air Force a full two years before he officially had to and came with his family to live in the Virgin Islands and help run **Captain Charles Blair's** seaplane airline.

The two men met after the Korean war when Capt. Blair was engaged as a consultant to the Air Force on new innovations in fighter aircraft. They worked closely together, mainly on improving navigational devices for high performance jet fighters, and kept in touch with each other over the years.

Brian was born in Pipestone, Minnesota in 1924. He could not claim to have flying in his blood, since his father had been an Army officer in World War One, but there was a family tradition of leadership since he is a direct descendant of **Abraham Lincoln**.

"He was my grandfather's uncle, or at least that's the easiest way to explain it," said Brian. He had an aunt who was big on family trees and she had a complete tree done all the way down from the former President.

World War Two had just broken out when Brian left school and he decided that, rather than get involved in the infantry, he would put in for the Army Air Corps as it was known then.

The recruits took a short course in Piper Cubs to find out who was going to be flying material. "With a

war in progress, there was not much time to waste and those who did not catch on quickly, were bracketed as gunner or navigator material while the rest went on to more advanced flying."

After a nine month course, Brian was all set to go into action at the controls of a P 38, twin engine fighter. But the Air Corps had other ideas. One of the men slated to be an instructor for the next batch of recruits, got into difficulties and ditched a plane and Brian got the instructor's job instead. When he finally got orders to go to the West Coast to become involved in the Pacific War theatre, the war in Japan ended. He stayed on in the Army Air Corps until it became the United States Air Force in 1947. The transition for Brian was merely a formality.

The Korean conflict found Brian based at K-2 (a convenient code name used by the Air Force to avoid using complicated Korean place names). It was located in south central Korea and his job was to fly fighter bombers on air-to-ground raids using bombs, napalm, rockets and guns. Their mission was to destroy ground targets like railways, bridges and warehouses. Brian flew 106 missions, was shot at many times but never hit.

After Korea he was stationed at Albany field in Georgia and it was there that he worked with Capt. Blair on improving aircraft design and performance.

Combat aircraft had to be able to make trans-Atlantic non-stop flights to Japan or Europe. "We had to be able to get anyplace that fighters were needed with good reaction time."

Brian, now a Major, was selected to work on flight testing the F 101 (Voodoo), which was the fastest airplane he had ever flown to that point.

"It would do Mach 1.5 or about 1,000 miles an hour. It had a fantastic climb performance. From the time of release of brakes it would climb to a

height of six miles in one and a half minutes."

He was then assigned to a unit equipped with the F 101's and he flew out of Texas until they were transferred to Royal Air Force Station Bentwaters, just outside Ipswich, England, where he was stationed for three and a half years. He would spend two weeks in every three months in Tripoli on training missions since the weather was often too bad in England and it was only a short hop to northern Africa.

His unit was a nuclear strike force and had to be ready for any threat such as the Cuban missile crisis.

"Everyone felt the tension over that crisis," Brian said, "yet we didn't



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think it would come to the stage where we would have to use nuclear weapons. The alert force was doubled which meant that twice as many planes had to be at a state of readiness but there were all kinds of safety measures to ensure that there could be no chance of a nuclear accident."

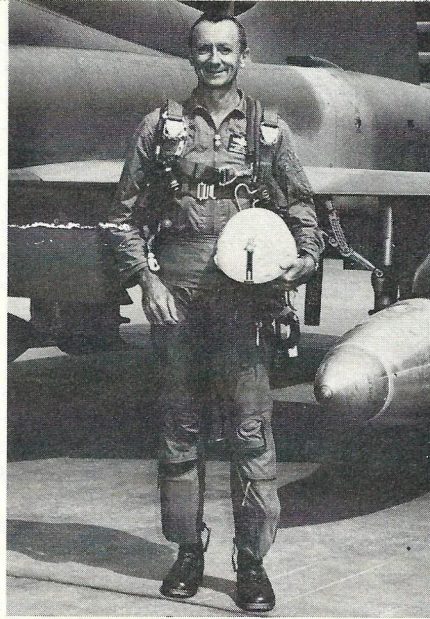
Just as he left his squadron to go to Air War College to familiarize himself with the latest procedures — something that was required of all officers periodically — the Vietnam war broke out and his squadron, minus Brian, was the first in. He was very disappointed but stuck out the nine month course and then went into staff work at Tactical Air Command Headquarters at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

Finally he was released to go to Vietnam where his job was air advisor to the South Vietnamese. He flew frequent missions with their pilots, most of whom had received their basic training in the U.S.

Most of the early bombing missions were in Navy Skyraiders (single engined, single seat aircraft). Brian converted them to their first jet squadron using F 5's (single place jets). Marshall Ky, South Vietnamese Premier, who was an accomplished

pilot, flew several missions with the squadron.

After Vietnam, Brian got a desk at the Pentagon and familiarized himself with war plans covering all contingencies in his particular area, which was the Middle East. His job was to brief senior people, up through the President, on what was going on



retired on June 1, 1973, was a two year stint as Director of Operations for the Fifth Air Force in Japan.

In February 1973, he flew half way around the world to St. Croix after receiving a letter from Capt. Blair inviting him to come down to St. Croix and look the place over. He flew over the route structure of Antilles Air Boats and was "most favorably impressed."

He went back to Tokyo and discussed things with his wife. "We decided jointly to retire and become Crucians," said Brian with a smile.

"There had been other job offers but this one satisfied two things that I was looking for. Firstly, something to keep me busy, because I have always been a busy person and secondly, a warm place that was nice to be in."

Now a Vice President of the company, Brian thinks the airline has made significant strides in the past few years. "We need a new type of seaplane though," he said, "because, although we can go on rebuilding the Gooses indefinitely, it becomes more and more expensive to do it. No such aircraft is being made at the moment but I feel that seaplanes are going to make a comeback because, after all, 70 per cent of the world's surface is covered by water.

"Although the seaplane is not as fast as the big jets, it saves an incredible amount of time by being able to land right next to coastal cities. Consider the time it takes to get from J.F.K. to downtown New York."

The great thing about flying the Goose as far as Brian is concerned is that it is "back to basic flying" and he is very enthusiastic about it.

In a modern aircraft you move the stick and you just reposition a hydraulic valve. In the Goose you control everything yourself and it is very refreshing to fly a plane that gets back to some of the basics of flight."

Brian's contribution to flying? "Well, you hear a lot of arguments about how much the government is spending on military aircraft but few people stop to consider that the technological expertise that goes into their construction and improvement is adapted for commercial use. Why do you think that practically all the commercial airliners in airports around the world are American made?"

Perhaps Brian and his fellow pilots at Antilles today are helping to prove the practicality of the downtown-to-downtown service provided by the Goose and will help to speed the day when the seaplane will be reborn.

in any given hot spot. On two occasions, Brian was called upon to brief the National Security Council. "It was just after Nixon took over. He wanted to know what the plans were if something let loose in the Middle East."

He was still flying out of Andrews Air Force Base, but mostly at weekends and on vacations and it just wasn't enough action for Brian. His Pentagon stint was supposed to last four years, but after two he got out and became Deputy Wing Commander and then Wing Commander at Nellis Air Force Base, Las Vegas, Nevada, which was lightheartedly referred to as "the greatest cross country stop in the world."

At Nellis Brian flew several types of fighter including the controversial F 111 Swingwing; the F 4 Phantom, backbone of the present U.S.A.F.; the F 105, the work horse of Korea and the A 7 ground attack plane.

The most exciting plane he flew in the Air Force was the F 105, known to pilots as the Cadillac of fighters.

"It was beautifully designed, flew like a dream and there are not many planes that fly faster than the speed of sound at low altitude. It would do Mach 1.1 at 50 feet or about 800 miles per hour.

Brian's last assignment before he

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