

Bird Dog Teeth



The follow e-mail string describes how the 2nd platoon shark's teeth happened to be.

Rick, Good to hear from and to be updated by your note and the clear picture of your O-1. Sorry to hear about the loss of your aircraft. I guess the engagement occurred during the late Battle of Tet period. I recall you had near duels with the VC in the area of the river intersection called the "Y". By the time we painted the other aircraft the customary technical solution to reproduce your fine design was to use the skills of the painter from the airfield engineer shop at a rate of a bottle of whiskey each.

Curt

Doc,

The teeth and eyes were painted on my aircraft starting in the early afternoon and finally finishing in the early hours of the morning. The layout and painting were done by myself with a little help from my crew chief and a tub of beer on ice. I picked the paint up at the shop in Vinh Long that painted the "Mekong Mauler" and the "Little Annie Fanny" door art. My crew chief at the time was the one that later stole and crashed an O-1.

This aircraft was the one I put down in the rice paddy, west of Vinh Long, after having lost oil pressure due to a 12.5mm cutting an oil line. The incident occurred on March 30 and the aircraft was not returned to service before I left VN in June of 1968.

I was instructed to remove the painting from my cowling, but was able to delay the actual removal and the orders were finally rescinded. Until I left country in June 1968, my aircraft had been the only one painted with the teeth, or at least the only one that came into Vinh Long during that time.

I'm in the process of scanning a bunch of slides taken around the Vinh Long/Sadec Sector area. There may be more photos of the paintings, haven't looked at them in awhile. If there are, I'll send them along also.

Rick Shoup

-----Original Message-----

From: Ray "Doc" Jennings [mailto:r.jennings14@verizon.net]

Sent: Saturday, March 05, 2005 2:09 PM

To: 'Curt Herrick'

Col. Hutchens said in one of his e-mail of 3/17/03.

"I don't think Col Herrick will object to having his name in the registry. He was a charter member of the 199th. He was not the executive officer. He was 2nd Platoon leader. He was transferred to my staff as S2 when I took command of the 307th CAB. In the remarks section you might note that he took over operation "Delta Falcon" along the Cambodian border the first half of 1968 **Also, note that he got chewed out by Delta 6 for painting sharks jaws on his Bird Dogs. (Ref: Your shot of a Bird Dog in your web site).** He was a Bird Dog/Swampfox member from Feb-Dec 67."

From: Curt Herrick [mailto:herrickcurt@worldnet.att.net]

Sent: Saturday, March 05, 2005 9:14 AM

Ray, The well-earned and laudatory blame for the Bird Dog Shark's Teeth goes to Rick Shoup.

The teeth were a destiny for the 2nd Platoon of the 199th RAC. While we stirred around seeking a fox-head design to paint on the tail of the platoon aircraft, Rick innovated. He, a bottle of whiskey and a painter from the airfield maintenance section created the teeth. I believe we have a combination of an idea from a picture in a book and the skill of an oriental artist. A great rendering that appealed to the US and local folks. The passing farmers seemed to enjoy pointing to and talking about the teeth as they traveled past Rick's aircraft on a little pull off next to the narrow Sadec road strip. From what I have seen the 199th's Shark's Teeth rendering was the best in Vietnam. I dare not compare with the Flying Tigers who we all hold in high respect.

After my initial minutes considering the new teeth on Rick's birddog we moved to a vote to seek a win-win situation. In practice after the expenditure of a number of bottles of whiskey almost all the platoon aircraft were painted. I took the picture of The Mekong Mauler that appeared in the "Bird Dogs with Teeth" article. The aircraft, the crew chief and maintenance folks were probably working on the armament. I vaguely recall having the crew chiefs begin sanding the teeth away in response to an Aviation Group commander order just as LTC Hutchins, our battalion commander, arrived for a visit. Since Chuck did not seem overly concerned with teeth and we were relatively far from group headquarters the limited sanding on that very hot day was allowed to stop. Many soldiers on airfields at other locations in Vietnam came up and asked to have their pictures with the shark toothed birddogs. The crew chiefs enjoyed showing off their machines and clicking the pictures.

I do not know what happened to the teeth in the long run. Perhaps they are still seen from time to time in the delta as they shimmer through the thin gauze like cloud fronts that rise from the ground to several thousand feet.

Best wishes

Curt