



# **A Trip from DM to McClellan**

**by John Cook**

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In the early days of the Six, they spent lots of time going to and from the Mod Center at Sacramento, CA, and usually left McGuire with no clue as to when we might return. Either a breakdown en-route or a delay in the other bird being ready for pickup. As a result, we had lots of sit round time.

Normally, the route had to be pre-planned as the filmstrips for the US were sort of sparse. In addition, the ACAN control box, was a 1-20 selector, with a little index card to tell you what TACAN channel was represented by what number. Any route variance required that you take the box out of the hip, and carry it into Base Ops so you planned your alternate route. They were programmed much like the early RC-27 UHF, with a little tool on a string, and you moved some pins on a rotating cylinder. Probably too technical for a jock, but it beat calling some radio guy to help you out of a jam.

I was well along the route from McGuire to McClellan, down in southern Ariz, en-route to D-M, where I had an old Aviation Cadet buddy I wanted to visit. About 20 minutes out, my radio crumped out, and I got a pneumatic low warning light. Not a problem unless I wanted to have some clothes to wear, that were stowed in the bay. D-M was having some strong winds, and I just sort of guessed which way they were landing, and did the old NORDO wing rock and got a green light.

I could see the F-101 Voodoo alert barn, so taxied somewhere close to it and shut down. The pad commander, came out, and as luck would have it, he was a trooper I knew from the interceptor school at Moody Field. told him all I needed was some air to get my bay doors open and perhaps some radio swapping. No such luck on that, but Captain Harry suggested that I meet him in the AM, as he and 3 other pilots, plus the ROs would be off alert and were going to Hamilton AFB, CA, and could swing me by Sacramento on their way.

I had a nice visit with my Cadet buddy and his spouse, and consumed my share of his booze. The next AM, strolled out to my sick bird, and was met by a Warrant Officer maintenance officer, who had a hand receipt for me to sign. Those jokers

had strung a long piece of 3/4-inch rope from the nose area of my plane to the tail hook of one of the X-C Voodoos. The Warrant admonished me to keep the slack out of the rope and to make sure it got back to D-M.

After the usual, "first one off the ground is the lead" briefing we all headed in a general NW direction, four 01s and my Six. After way too short of a flight, they started down, and pretty soon the Pacific came into view. Those dips hadn't told me we were stopping at Oxnard, but no matter. The ROs all opened some hell hole panel in the ass end of their birds and headed off the flight line. I learned they were going to the BX for beer, and would be stowing it in the hell holes, so it would be cold when they got to Hamilton.

Approaching SAC, we got into some rag-tag formation, with myself as number 5. I'm sure they told the tower the facts, as each one of them made a low approach, and as I turned final, I got a green light. To add insult to injury, they rejoined and came by my parking spot in a sharp-looking diamond. I was just glad to get there and headed to town, as there were no pick-ups on the weekend.

***John Cook***