

THIS BITES

by Rayford Jeffrey

I had departed landing site LS-20A for Udorn Thailand when I got a call from the Oscar Mike requesting me to divert to Vientiane, Laos to pick up a crew member dead-heading to Udorn. I, landed and welcomed aboard my friend, Paul Taylor who was a first officer working the C-130f. The ensuing flight to Udorn was uneventful and after landing I was completing the aircraft forms with Paul standing on the chain box behind me, overlooking Jack and me. When I got to the section of where I was to indicate anything requiring maintenance, I was about skip that when, close to my ear, I hear a scream; "OH! OH! OH!" I came up out of the seat in time to see Paul, jumping down from the chain box grabbing at his crotch. I quickly got out to him. He was bent over, Barry Reid thought Paul had gone off his rocker, trying to get his clothes off. "I GOT IT! I GOT IT!" I think, "IT? IT? WHAT IT?"

"Hey man, drop those pants!" As his pants hit the deck so did my jaw. His shorts were soaked in blood, which had smeared all over his legs; it looked like a massive amount of bleeding. I dashed back into the cockpit and radioed for an ambulance, then got back out to Paul, who, by then had lost his grip on whatever it was. The ambulance came and took Paul to the Air Force hospital across the base. Frank Renigar and I accompanied Paul to the hospital. The Doctor came in and said "Where is the guy who got bit by the centipede." By this time the member had swelled to considerable size. Paul says a size hard to believe.

"My word!" the doctor exclaimed upon examination of Paul's, uh, member. "Hey everybody you gotta come see the puncture wounds on this guy's penis!" After the procession of interested on-lookers had thinned, they packed the affected part in ice, and the doctor gave his prognosis: "Now sir, you are going to lose some tissue there, and I can't say with certainty but I don't think the whole thing is going to fall off."

Gladys Randal came by to offer sympathy and asked for a showing of the by now legendary bite. Paul replied, "Certainly, and for the ladies its by private appointment!" Gladys dropped the subject.

Since we couldn't find anything in the aircraft, I called Stan Wilson in Maintenance and requested that they fumigate the aircraft. Maintenance kept it grounded for three days. I was the first pilot scheduled to fly the aircraft after maintenance released it. This flight was a night drop northwest of LS-203. I was to depart L-54 after dark. It was raining and there were thunderstorms throughout the route. Jack Cavil was my First Officer. We flew time and distance to site 203. When we got there, there was no let up in the weather. I was circling the area, and looking outside trying to spot the runway, so that I could do a time and distance to the drop site. Finding that runway even in good weather was difficult. The kicker standing between me and the First Officer.

For the second time in a week I hear a scream right in my ear: "WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?!" I look around in the cockpit and see the kicker pointing to the instrument panel, and on that panel is the world's largest centipede with attitude. Okay, maybe he wasn't the world's largest, but at night in a I cockpit, when you see something 5 inches long with about a zillion legs crawling around it seems pretty damn big! All hell broke loose, the kicker stabbed at it with his closed knife which fell to the deck, along with the offending creature, who scuttled off. My legs came up and stopped only when my knees on a level with my ears. I was too busy protecting my private parts to notice What evasive maneuvers the first officer was taking. After the initial chaos, I finally came to my senses and got control of the aircraft, still in orbit. Full lights on, we couldn't find him anywhere, and there was still a mission to fly.

I still couldn't see the runway, had no idea where it was but told Jack that we would assume we were over the Initial Point and take up our heading and fly time and distance to the target. I had the crew put their pants legs inside their boots to prevent any more sneak- attacks. After flying in weather the entire distance with no navigation aids, no wind information, pitch dark, I told Jack we would extend our time two minutes and then head for home base. About one minute later we broke out of the clouds and what do you know, dead ahead was the blue strobe. That's not luck, son, that's just good flying! We made the drop on target, which was later confirmed by radio. After landing back at base,. I grounded the aircraft until maintenance could assure us that all hands, or feet I guess in this instance had either abandoned the aircraft or expired. They kept the aircraft sealed for seven days and we never saw it again.