

From: Richard Guild [SMTP:rguild@ida.org]

War story ... the USAF Personnel Lowering Device (PLD) ... what was the "improvised" PLD fabricated from? ... What did Navy aviators use? I believe I was the first F-105 pilot to have a "tree lowering device" fashioned into the back-cushion of the parachute. By the fall of 1966, I and a number of other F-105 pilots at Takhli were carrying one or two 75ft rolls of $\frac{1}{2}$ or $\frac{3}{4}$ inch nylon tape in a g-suit pocket. It was a poor solution for numerous reasons, especially a high-speed ejection. We needed more rope and to package it about our waist or chest. The Weidman-Guild improved "improvised" back-cushion tree lowering device was fabricated about April 1967 by the 347th TFW Parachute Shop at Yokota AB. The device used $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch tubular nylon from the drag chute of the RB-47 aircraft. It was packed like a fire hose into the parachute back cushion. A leader-line came through a hole at the top and was tacked with thread to the front of the shoulder harness. The F-105 drag chute used a $\frac{1}{2}$ inch tape, which was too thick for the parachute back cushion and uncomfortable. The original device had a belay brake. The way it worked it was to wind a loop through the parachute chest snap ring (for friction) and then through the risers and tie a bowline knot.

Feed out the tape, release the parachute riser clips, and lower away. I think my original device had 150 feet of tape. I tested it using risers hung from a hanger at Yokota. Others wanted to have one, so more were fabricated and a training program was set-up. Climb up a 15-foot stepladder, hook-up, remove the ladder, and get down by using the device. Denny Boyle, the 35th Squadron Commander, ended the training when, from too much use, the tape broke at riser release and Ken Edwards broke his ankle falling to the hanger floor. I was TDY to Takhli at the time. I took the device to Takhli in May 1967, while TDY to the 333 TFS. Other pilots and the life support people were interested. I submitted the design with photos in a suggestion form (Form 3000 as I recall) claiming some exorbitant amount of money the Air Force could save by incorporating the device. I was secretly hoping to get some cash for a future R&R at the Siam Inter-Continental in Bangkok (grins). I never got anything back from the formal suggestion. Later, paperwork for a Commendation Medal was submitted, but the citation got lost. I eventually received a set of Orders for a Commendation Medal, but no citation. Over the years, I have noted a number of people lay claim to have designed the original "personnel lowering device" used in SEA, including the life support people at W-P AFB. The person who generated the

idea I used for my original backpack cushion was Don Weidman in March 1967.

In the same time-period, while riding "ol Shaky" back to Yokota after another week of nuc-alert in the Green House at Osan-by-the-Sea, he gave me another idea. We each had a window seat and were looking out the window. He leaned back and asked me what I saw. I said, "flashes from an arc welder," ... but the "strobe-light" in the welding shop is another story.

The other question was what about the Navy? I have read the comments about the Navy not having a PLD. Thinking back, the reason they might not have had an "improvised" PLD is because they didn't need one. As I recall, there are no giant jungle trees within 0.5 nm of the Tonkin Gulf shoreline where they spent most of their time bombing. Ok, 5.0 nm. (smiling, quickly ducking behind bar, hollering Lurch (AF) set em up, Hippo set em up) Keep a good Mach. Dickie G. <:)