

ODE TO SPARKY

Few there are who braved the day
When cowards shied and turned away
From duty only the few defined.

They mounted steeds of brown and gray
And crossed the Red and there to play
With tailless dragons, fire behind.

They flew where few would freely go.
They flew when most would answer, "No!"
And flew as brave and unafraid.

Each his morality realized
When wingmen suddenly fragmentized
In a gray cloud where once they played.

We listened to the assuring voice
Of one who'd freely made the choice
To take up his two-saddled steed.

He came out last, having gone in first
Calling threats out to the force
This guy, Barracuda Lead.

SAMs and guns, Kep, Bac Giang Bridge
Cross the Red and down the ridge
Tease 'em up and "Shrike's away!"

No threats this time, let's take it round
A valid launch, "Shark's take it down!"
That's two sites down today.

Back at the bar, the day winds down
Tomorrow again we'll head downtown
If the crowd's too slow, we'll ring the bell.

Twenty-one aces, you can't get hurt
In a big game, shit! Just lost my shirt

In Sparky's day we sang the songs
Of Sammy Small, all sang along
Of Mary Ann Burns and Adeline Schmidt
And spoke the words; spoke "Fuck!" spoke "Shit!"

One night he wore his party suit
And Colonna mustache quite hirsute.
A colonel, much irate, of course
Spake "Are we in the same Air Force?"

The Weasel, with a studious frown
Looked the colonel up and down,
Across, behind, and wide and low,
Then brusquely answered, tersely, "No!"

With that remembrance, I'll close with a few more
words::

We proudly served in the **"same Air Force"** with
Sparky and not with that lieutenant colonel. And though
there was and will be only one Billy Reid Sparks—
Sparky—Barracuda Lead, few today, in our emasculated,
PC force will have the opportunity to serve with anyone
like him.

It is said that events make the man. In very great
measure it was Billy Reid Sparks—Sparky—Barracuda
Lead—the father of Reid and Piglet—the husband to
"Old What's Her Name—who himself defined the signal
events of our time.

Sparky, here's my nickel on the grass.

Fifteen drinks, but what the hell.

Middleton, Basel, grab your guitar
A band just set up in the bar
We'll do Bob's Doumer Blues.

Joan Harvey's Four Ways is the band
Came up here from New Zealand
We'll play tonight; tomorrow we'll pay our dues.

Did we want to see the day
When with death we need not play?
War isn't funny; but, it's fun.

It's tag, a game of hide-and-seeK,
For the strong of heart, sure not the weak,
With MiGs and SAMs and guns

Some days we might lose one or two
The next loss might be me or you
Ending thus our airborne lark.

But we felt all safe and secure
Against all harm held inured
Covered safe by Olds and Sparks.

And now with both our heroes gone
We'd faint again to go Downtown
Brave though we were back then.

Sparky rode the Thunder many years
Suppressed the guns, suppressed our fears
He need not go again.

John Piowaty, LtCol USAF (Ret)
May 2013

BONUS !

Where and when few dared, dared he.
"Whom shall I send?" "Send me."

Stupid losses sixty-five.
So many dead, so few alive.

But he returned a Weasel brave
To risk both crew; to others save.

He rode the thunder, six hundred plus,
To tease the SAMs, "Come shoot at us!"

Hang in the air, Phuc Yen, Downtown.
"Shrike's away! A valid launch! Let's take 'er down!"

Our war wasn't funny

But, God! It was fun!