

The heading photograph on opposite page shows an AD-5 Skyraider of the type flown by Major Bernard Fisher with the in line seating layout. Note the exhaust stains on fuselage.



At right, an AD-7 Skyraider with wing tanks, empty rocket racks, and looking remarkably clean. Note, the different cockpit canopy shape to the AD-5 opposite.

This was SpAD country. Fisher and his five colleagues flew slowly up and down until they found a tiny hole in the cloud, dived through it, rolled out just above the ground and proceeded to knock daylight out of the enemy with their bombs and guns.

It was by no means one-sided. Tracer bullets from .50 calibre machine-guns on the ground came up so thickly that the pilots seemed to be flying through a firework display. Bigger guns on the hillside fired down at the twisting, turning aircraft. One of the Skyraiders soon began to trail smoke and flame. Unable to bale out, because of a fire outside his cockpit canopy, the pilot made a heavy wheels-up landing on the battered steel planking that had once been A Shau's airstrip, and then dived quickly out of the cockpit and into the cover of a ditch.

Fisher watched all this happening, with enemy bullets criss-crossing around his aircraft. He radioed to the jets circling out of sight above, asking them to call up a rescue helicopter, then joined the other SpAD pilots who were continuing to shoot up the enemy.

"Where are the helicopters?"

"Still 20 minutes away," came the answer.

Clearly, the crashed pilot could not remain undetected and safe for that long, even if he were not already burned or wounded. So Fisher made up his mind to perform the pick-up himself. Throttling back, he settled slowly towards the metal airstrip, but it was so short that he couldn't possibly get down safely. Opening up the engine with a roar, he climbed away and circled for another attempt. He almost wished he

hadn't seen the jagged holes in the planking, surrounded by steel prongs, and the empty 55 gallon fuel drums and rocket pods that littered the strip!

At the second attempt he made it, with the old Skyraider almost stalling as he plonked it down and steered a crazy path between the debris. Not until the downed pilot crawled out of the ditch, dashed through a hail of bullets towards him and had been yanked head-first into the cockpit did he realise that it was his friend, Colonel "Jump" Myers.

That, briefly, is how Major Bernard Fisher became the first U.S.A.F. pilot to earn a Congressional Medal of Honor—the United States' V.C.—in Vietnam.

#### Russian hot-rod

Round about the time that Douglas Aircraft were designing the Skyraider, Russian pilots in Lavochkin La-7 fighter-planes were giving the *Luftwaffe* a rough time on the Eastern Front. With a top speed of 413 m.p.h. and armament of three 20 mm. cannons, bombs and rockets, the sturdy-looking La-7s must have seemed the most wonderful aircraft in the world to air-minded Soviet schoolboys.

I was reminded of this when I received from Moscow a picture of a tiny all-metal single-seat aerobatic aircraft named the Quant which has been designed and built by students of the Moscow Aviation Institute. No details are available except that its 300 h.p. Ivchenko AI-14RF engine gives it a top speed of 275 m.p.h.—but it was clearly inspired by those La-7s of more than 20 years ago.

At left, on opposite page, a Skyraider takes off from a carrier with its 18 cylinder Cyclone engine on full power for this critical moment. Right, an AD-6 of Attack Squadron 85 in flight over the Mediterranean while operating from the U.S.S. Forestal aircraft carrier.

The 300 h.p. powered Quant monoplane designed and built by students of Moscow Aviation Institute is seen below.

