

Collection #
P 0900

**MARK A. AND KAREN B. KURTZ COLLECTION,
CA. 1959–2024; BULK 1965–1966**

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 Photograph box; 1 half-size OVA photograph box; 3 OVC folders
Cold Storage: 1 Polaroid photograph; 1 folder of color slides, 3 bins of black-and-white negatives; 1 bin of color negatives and transparencies

COLLECTION DATES: Ca. 1959–2024; Bulk 1965–1966

PROVENANCE: Gift from Mark A. and Karen B. Kurtz of Goshen, Ind., December 2024

RESTRICTIONS: Any materials listed as being in Cold Storage must be requested at least 4 hours in advance.

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS:

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2024.0198

NOTES:

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mark A. Kurtz, of Goshen, Indiana, served as Airman First Class in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War. He distinguished himself as Photo Interpreter, 13th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, earning the Air Force Commendation Medal for meritorious service. Throughout his life, he has had a dual career in aviation and photography.

Mark Allen Kurtz was born on 13 June 1942 in Goshen to Ezra and Anna Grace Bollinger Kurtz, the third of their four sons. His interest in airplanes and photography began in childhood. At Goshen High School he took photographs for the student newspaper and yearbook until he graduated in 1960. In 1961 he took his first flying lesson.

Early employment opportunities for Mark included: fingerprint clerk with the FBI's Identification Division in Washington, DC; photographer apprentice at Herring Studio in Elkhart, Indiana; staff photographer-lithographer at the Church of the Brethren General Board in Elgin, Illinois, where responsibilities included photo processing, nationwide annual conference photo coverage, and creative art photography for seminars.

Mark's active duty in the U.S. Air Force was from 1963 to 1967, followed by two years of reserve duty. He served at Lackland Air Force Base (AFB) in Texas; Lowry AFB in Denver; Shaw AFB in South Carolina; Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon (now officially known as Ho Chi Minh City); and Nellis AFB in Las Vegas. In Vietnam, Mark was a photo intelligence technician, with the responsibility of interpreting details in aerial photographs, radar images, and infrared images. He also taught photography classes to other airmen.

Mark was in Vietnam from November 1965 through November 1966. Most of the photographs he took there were taken with a Mamiya C-3 twin lens reflex camera, using black-and-white 120 film. He developed the film and made prints at the Base Photo Hobby Shop, where he eventually became manager. The photo darkroom conditions were less than ideal, as the heat made it difficult to manage process temperatures. He had also taken the photographs without benefit of a light meter, so all exposure calculations were estimates, resulting in inconsistencies among the photos.

In 1968, after his military service, Mark became a flight instructor at Airgo, Inc., the Fixed Base Operator (FBO) at Goshen. From 1968 to 1972, he worked as the staff photographer for *The Goshen News*. From 1972 to 1975, Mark worked at the FBOs in Goshen, Valparaiso, and Plymouth, Indiana, as flight instructor, charter pilot, and manager. From 1975 to 1979, he was FBO manager at Skystream Goshen.

In 1977, Mark married Karen B. Swartzendruber. In 1980, they established Kurtz Lens and Pen, Inc., a writing-photography business. The Kurtz Team specialized in portraiture, aerial, editorial, and commercial photography. Karen left teaching to work full-time in the business while Mark continued his full-time aviation career. The Kurtz Team, which still exists as of 2025, has written and published articles for readers of all ages in books and magazines, as well as for businesses, advertising, and publicity. Mark's aviation experience led to publishing articles and photographs on that topic in various regional and national magazines.

Mark was the pilot for Goshen Rubber Company, Inc., from 1979 to 2000. He earned his Airline Transport Pilot certificate.

Mark was an active member of the Goshen Aero Club, serving as an officer and producing the club's monthly newsletter. He was appointed general manager and president of Airport Celebration '88, Inc., a committee that implemented Goshen Airport's fiftieth anniversary celebration.

From 2000 to 2003, Mark flew with Raytheon Travel Aire, and after that company's merger with Flight Options, LLC, he continued flying with that company until his retirement on 30 July 2005. Throughout a forty-year aviation career, Mark flew a total of 13,251.6 hours and an estimated 2,438,592 miles.

Sources:

Materials in the collection

Ancestrylibrary.com (Accessed 28 February 2025):

Find a Grave
Indiana, U.S., Birth Certificates, 1907–1944
United States Federal Census, 1950

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection contains a variety of materials pertaining to Mark A. Kurtz's time in Vietnam in 1965–1966 while in the Air Force but consists primarily of photographs he took there. The photographs depict the Tan Son Nhut Air Base where he was stationed near Saigon, as well as photographs taken of street scenes, people, temples, the zoo, the riverfront, and other sights of Saigon (now also known as Ho Chi Minh City). There are five photographs taken by an unknown GI of performers, including Bob Hope, entertaining the troops at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. There are also a few photographs of Mark Kurtz at Air Force bases in the United States (1963–1966) and some of him in Vietnam.

Other materials include the Air Force Commendation Medal awarded to Mark A. Kurtz for meritorious service as Photo Interpreter, 13th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, and its accompanying citation; manuscripts written by him including biographical information and an essay about his time in Vietnam as well as some notes about his photographs; a couple of letters he wrote to his family while he was in the Air Force; photocopies of newspaper clippings about his career moves and other accomplishments; and a small paperback Vietnamese phrase book for speakers of English.

The collection includes two series:

Series 1, Manuscripts, Printed Materials, and Artifact: This is composed Mark Kurtz's biographical essay, his account of his time in Vietnam, and notes about his photographs; correspondence; photocopies of newspaper clippings; the Air Force Commendation Medal and citation; and the Vietnamese phrase book.

Series 2, Photographs: This includes prints of various sizes (mostly black-and-white), contact sheets, black-and-white negatives, color slides and transparencies, color negatives, and one Polaroid print.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Manuscripts, Printed Materials, and Artifacts

CONTENTS

CONTAINER

Biography of Mark A. Kurtz – six typed pages with information about Kurtz’s early life, education, career, military service, business established by him and his wife Karen, awards, and publications.
Dated 3 December 2024

Box 1, Folder 1

“Saigon Revisited, 1965 to 1966” – essay by Mark A. Kurtz, 21 typed pages, gives information about his early life, his military service, and his time in Vietnam.

Box 1, Folder 2

Correspondence written by Mark A. Kurtz:
Four-page handwritten letter to his family, dated 13 April 1966, in which he writes about an attack by the Viet Cong on the Tan Son Nhut Air Base about a mile from the 13th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron.
Two-page typed letter to his father, dated 7 March 1967, regarding his father being in the hospital and about his own cross-country flight toward getting a commercial rating as a pilot.

Box 1, Folder 3

Photocopies of newspaper clippings:
“Goshen Student Wins Award At I. U.” tells about an award Mark Kurtz won at the High School Journalism Institute at Indiana University [unknown newspaper, ca. 1959].
“First Impressions Of Viet War Are Reported In Letter From Mark Kurtz,” which presents an excerpt of a letter to Melvin Troyer of *The Goshen News*, giving Kurtz’s account from Vietnam (*The Goshen News*, 30 November 1965).
“Airman Mark Kurtz Home From Viet Nam After Keeping Eye On Charlie” (first part of article by Bill Sheffer, *The Goshen News*, 11 November 1966).
“New Goshen Instructor and Plane” shows a photo of Mark Kurtz standing by a Cessna 150 commuter plane (*The Goshen News*, 25 March 1968).
“Photographer Kurtz Joins News Staff” (*The Goshen News*, 28 August 1968). [*continued on next page*]

Box 1, Folder 4

Photocopies of newspaper clippings [continued from previous page]:

“Photographer Kurtz Resigns News Post” tells of Kurtz accepting position with Skystream Inc. as a flight instructor (23 March 1972).

“Kurtz Named Manager At Valpo Airport” tells of Kurtz becoming manager of the Skystream facility at the Porter County Airport in Valparaiso (27 March 1974).

“Mark Kurtz Is Named Goshen Airport Manager” tells of Kurtz becoming manager of Skystream’s operation at Goshen Municipal Airport (7 October 1975).

Box 1, Folder 4

Citation with official gold seal and certificate to accompany the Air Force Commendation Medal awarded to Mark A. Kurtz for meritorious service as Photo Interpreter, 13th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, presented on 28 January 1967. Also, three copies of a list of Air Force Commendation Medal recipients, dated 25 January 1967.

OVA Box 1, Folder 1

Air Force Commendation Medal awarded to Mark A. Kurtz for meritorious service as Photo Interpreter, 13th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, from 20 November 1965 through 5 November 1966. In the same case as the set of medals is a name tag with “Kurtz,” designed to be worn on dress uniforms.

Box 1, Folder 20

Eleven pages of handwritten and photocopied notes about slides and transparencies. [Some of these notes appear to match the 2.25-inch color transparencies (120 film).]

Box 1, Folder 16

Thirty-six typed pages of notes about black-and-white negatives and color transparencies taken by Mark A. Kurtz in Vietnam, 1965–1966. [These notes match the negatives labeled Viet-65 through Viet-112 and the color slides listed below.]

Box 1, Folder 17

Say It In Vietnamese, by Nguyen Dinh Hoa, Ph.D. (Saigon, Vietnam: Hoan-Vu Publishing House, 1965) – small paperback Vietnamese phrase book for speakers of English.

Box 1, Folder 19

Series 2: Photographs

CONTENTS

Photographs of Mark A. Kurtz:

Air Force portrait, December 1963.

Air Force portrait, Lowry AFB, Colorado, March 1964.

Snapshot in uniform, Shaw AFB, South Carolina, 1964.

Color snapshot in uniform, the day he left for Vietnam – 14 November 1965.

Contact print of Mark seated at a table in the Base Photo Hobby Shop at Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon, Vietnam, April 1966.

Snapshot of Mark by some plant life in Vietnam.

Mark at a temple in Saigon [October 1966?].

Snapshot of Mark standing by a vehicle at Nellis AFB, Nevada, 27 December 1966.

CONTAINER

Box 1, Folder 5

Photographs of Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon:

One photo of a sign at the entrance, November 1965.

Four photos of Vietnamese civilian workers at construction site of new barracks, December 1965.

One photo of a damaged C-47 aircraft with nose blown off, [13 April] 1966.

Box 1, Folder 6

Three photographs of an unidentified American GI with a camera and Vietnamese children.

Box 1, Folder 7

Four photographs of Vietnamese children, 1965–1966.

Box 1, Folder 8

Three photographs of people worshipping in a Buddhist temple in Saigon, 1965: two photos show two women and a boy seated on a marble floor; one shows a woman from behind, facing a large statue of Buddha. Also, one page of handwritten notes from ca. 1986–1987, when Kurtz entered one of the photos, titled “I Am,” in a contest.

Box 1, Folder 9

Enlarged photograph (11x14) of two women and a boy worshipping at Buddhist temple in Saigon, 1965 (with handwritten printing instructions on photo, signed by M. Kurtz).

OVA Box 1, Folder 2

Saigon street scenes, December 1965: ten photos showing people near the main gate to Tan Son Nhut Air Base; people in downtown Saigon; black-market merchant; woman in a park; USO Saigon / British Council; Vietnamese policeman; children.	Box 1, Folder 10
“Saigon Beggar” – photo of a man seated on the ground with his hands out, 1965. Also, one sheet of paper with handwritten printing instructions.	Box 1, Folder 11
“Saigon Beggar” – photo of a man seated on the ground with his hands out, 1965 – mounted and matted print.	OVC Folder 1
Saigon Zoo, December 1965: two photos of a young man feeding elephants; one photo of young man feeding a bear.	Box 1, Folder 12
“Mother and Daughter” selling lottery tickets on the black market on a Saigon sidewalk [ca. 1966]. Also, one sheet of handwritten notes about the photo [ca. 1987]. (possibly grandmother and granddaughter)	OVA Box 1, Folder 3
“Mother and Daughter” selling lottery tickets on the black market on a Saigon sidewalk [ca. 1966] (possibly grandmother and granddaughter) – mounted and matted print.	OVC Folder 2
“Sidewalk Merchant – Saigon,” 1966. Three prints showing a young woman with a basket seated on a low stool on the sidewalk. Two prints are 11x14 on two different types of Ilford brand paper; the third is a cropped version of the photo. Also, one sheet of handwritten notes about the photo [ca. 1987].	OVA Box 1, Folder 4
“Sidewalk Merchant – Saigon,” 1966, shows a young woman with a basket seated on a low stool on the sidewalk – mounted and matted print.	OVC Folder 3
Three enlarged prints of Vietnamese people on the streets of Saigon: man resting next to sidewalk; boy carrying a metal container; boy selling hats.	OVA Box 1, Folder 5
Two enlarged prints of Saigon buildings: exterior of a museum at the Saigon Zoo; people going past a Buddhist temple.	OVA Box 1, Folder 6

Color Polaroid photo of Mark A. Kurtz in the 13 th Reconnaissance Technical Squadron barracks, Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, with Akai tape recorder, 11 April 1966.	Cold Storage: Polaroid Photographs, envelope 1 of 1
Saigon rooftops: seven photographs of cityscapes.	Box 1, Folder 13
Saigon people and street scenes: twenty photographs showing children, women, men, people on bicycles, street vendors, an American GI having his boots shined by a Vietnamese boy, a bridge over a river, and fishing in the Saigon River.	Box 1, Folder 14
Contact sheets: thirty-six pages of contact prints of photos taken by Mark A. Kurtz in Vietnam. These were removed from a 3-ring binder and the order in which they appeared in the binder has been written on the back of each sheet. Many of these photos appear as larger prints in other folders in this collection.	Box 1, Folder 15
Two color slides of Mark A. Kurtz in uniform at Lowry AFB in Denver, Colorado, in 1964 [work uniform and dress uniform].	Cold Storage: Color Slides, Folder 1 of 1
Color slides: sixty slides taken by Mark A. Kurtz of the Tan Son Nhut Air Base and buildings, people, street scenes, and ships in Vietnam. [See pages 30–35 in folder 17 for descriptions of these images. However, the numbers listed on these pages have been crossed out on the slide mounts. These slides are housed as received.]	Cold Storage: Color Slides, Folder 1 of 1
Black-and-white negatives – many of these correspond to prints in the collection, depicting Mark Kurtz in Vietnam, the Tan Son Nhut Air Base, street scenes in Saigon, temples, the zoo, people, the riverfront, etc.	Cold Storage: 120 Film negatives, Bins 1–3
Color negatives of Mark Kurtz in uniform the day he left for Vietnam – 14 November 1965 (two 2.5 x 1.75-inch negatives).	Cold Storage: 120 Film negatives, Bin 4
Color transparencies (120 film) – twenty-three 2.25-inch color transparencies showing a temple, Vietnamese students at school, street scenes, and the Bob Hope show.	Cold Storage: 120 Film negatives, Bin 4

Five black-and-white photos taken of performers entertaining the troops at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, including Bob Hope, Joey Heatherton, Connie Stevens, Carol Baker, and Anita Bryant (1966).

*These photos were **not** taken by Mark A. Kurtz, but by an unknown GI, and the Indiana Historical Society does not hold the copyright for these five photos.*

Box 1, Folder 18