

LAST FLIGHT

Skyhawk Association charter member Robert O. "Bob" Rahn, the first individual to fly the Douglas A-4 *Skyhawk*, passed away on Thursday, May 21, 1998, at age 77. One of his last public appearances was for a Skyhawk Association function, the West Coast signing of the lithograph reproductions of the Roy Grinnell painting "Skyhawk Tribute," which took place in San Diego on 15 November 1997.

Born in Harvey, Illinois, on December 29, 1920, Bob attended the University of Cincinnati in the late 1930s and, while working toward a degree in aeronautical engineering, he learned to fly in the Civilian Pilot Training Program.

Bob enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in early 1941 and, on completion of Air Corps flight training, he was assigned to the 309th Fighter Squadron and flew the Supermarine *Spitfire* while deployed to England.

On his return to the United States, Bob wrangled an assignment to Wright Field in Ohio and was a member of the second class to graduate from the United States Air Force Test Pilot School. Included among his TPS classmates were Major Dick Bong, Captain Don Gentile, and Captain Glenn Edwards. In early August 1945, Bob left the Air Force and accepted employment with the Douglas Aircraft Company where, between 1946 and 1956, he made first flights as pilot of 18 experimental aircraft. During his aviation career, he amassed more than 10,000 hours of flight time in 86 different aircraft.



Robert O. Rahn, 1920-1998

In the Flight Test Department at the Douglas Aircraft Company, Bob Rahn had the reputation as a cool and thorough pilot. His unflappable demeanor during emergency situations in the flight testing of the AD *Skyraider*, the F4D *Skyray*, and the A4D *Skyhawk* literally saved those programs. While with Douglas, Bob also participated in testing of the F3D *Skyknight* and F5D *Skylancer*, piloting the latter aircraft at supersonic speed during its first flight.

Well known as the pilot who first took our beloved *Skyhawk* into the air, Bob received many honors during his flying career. Included were his induction to the Navy Test Pilots Hall of Honor, the setting of a world speed record at the controls of the F4D *Skyray*, participation as a founding member of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, and induction as a Charter Member of the Aviation Hall of Fame. Bob was among that group of World War II-experienced pilots who bridged the gap between the "seat-of-the-pants" school flying and the precise, scientific engineering that is characteristic of modern aircraft flight test. Bob possessed a unique ability to thoroughly understand what was going on in the cockpit from a pilot's perspective and to communicate circumstances and problems encountered to engineers in their terms and language. In 1957, Bob joined the Rockwell Company as a research pilot on the Apollo Space Capsule simulator.

Bob retired from active aerospace industry involvement in 1984, but not from aviation. Until the summer of 1997, he flew his own *Navion* and, among other things, spent time with other owners of that aircraft in speed enhancement and point-to-point flight competition. He also spent as much time as possible in non-aviation pastimes – skiing and swimming.

Bob is survived by his wife, Feppy, and two children.

(Our thanks to SA Historian Harry Gann for assistance with biographical data.)

SUMMER
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A TRIBUTE

"Bob Rahn was the one who took the training wheels off our little lady and piloted her first flight. A good friend, he was one of the original members when we formed the Skyhawk Association in San Diego in 1993. And he was always there for us. He will remain alive in our memories as long as there are Scooter tales to tell and ears to hear them. God's speed, Bob Rahn. A-4's FOREVER!"

- Dave "Whizzer" White, Founder, Skyhawk Association



On 12 June 1952, while the Korean War was still in progress, the U.S. Navy entered into a contract with Douglas Aircraft Company for design and construction of a light jet attack aircraft prototype, the XA4D-1. Four months later, the Navy was so impressed with the design of the proposed bantam bomber that 19 additional airframes were ordered. The first *Skyhawk*, BuNo 137812, was fabricated and assembled at the Douglas plant in El Segundo, near Los Angeles, then trucked 100 miles north to Edwards AFB in the California high desert. There, almost two years to the day from the signing of its contract, the first *Skyhawk* flight took place on 22 June 1954, with test pilot Bob Rahn at the controls. In the oft-published photo above, 137812 is shown during its first flight. (Photo from the Harry Gann Collection)



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Otto Krueger
E-Mail: OKA494@aol.com

It's summer! That's hardly an earthshaking pronouncement, particularly for the folks in the southern climes who have been sweltering since last March. But it's of note, since by the time you read this, the Skyhawk AOM in Reno will be only two months away!

Have you made your hotel reservations? If not, do so soon and take advantage of the Tailhook convention room rate (1-800-648-1177). And be sure to sign up in advance for the Skyhawk AOM-luncheon (see sign-up form, p.7). Whizzer has set up a program about those extraordinary people whose magnificent efforts helped keep a lot of guys from becoming POWs.

It's pleasing to note that the Tailhook Association has seen the light, i.e., a Scooter Driver – Dick Stratton, ex-POW and Skyhawk Association member, will be the honored guest speaker at the Saturday night Tailhook banquet! Dick will also be with us at the AOM on Friday. Also at the Friday AOM, some new Directors will be elected.

For more than five years, Dave "Whizzer" White has dedicated himself to Skyhawk Association as it's founder, first President, and member of the Board of Directors. Whizzer's term as a Board member expires this year, and he has asked not to be nominated for another term. All of us in the Association owe The Whiz a debt we can't fully repay for his boundless enthusiasm, energy, and inexhaustible supply of new ideas to make the organization better. Fortunately, we won't lose the Whizzer talent. He'll be heading up a special events committee and will continue to work with the Board.

Likewise, "Captain Hook" (Wynn Foster) will complete his current term as a member of the Board of Directors this year and will step aside to make room for another member to serve in that capacity. Wynn was also active in the formation of our Association and his work as Secretary and Newsletter Editor has been a major contribution. He has agreed to continue in those important capacities and it goes without saying that we are glad to have him do so.

While on the topic of directors, we need a few good Marines! There won't be a Marine on the Board

next year, but Scooter lovers of the Marine persuasion ought to be represented. So, please let me know if you would like to be considered for nomination as a Director (or know of a good Director candidate) for the next time around (i.e., year 2000 election – a new millennium!)

As of copy deadline for this issue, the Association has 517 members and the number continues to increase. However, we still are having to move too many member names to the suspense list because dues aren't current. Captain Hook notifies all of dues-due dates, via postcards, about 30 days in advance, and each member's "dues month" is shown in the lower right hand corner of the Skyhawk Association membership card. Member dues are paid through the last day of that month. Additionally, if a member is tardy in dues payment, a "Did You Forget?" postcard reminder is sent about 30 days after the end of the dues month. Non-payer names are moved to the suspense list after 60 days. We don't want to lose anyone, especially from overlooking the measly membership fee. So please, check your dues-due date and send in your twenty bucks on time. If you prefer, make it easy on yourself by taking advantage of the multi-year option, paying your dues up to five years in advance. Keep the Skyhawk Association alive in your life!

Finally, since our last Newsletter, we have suffered the loss not only of Bob Rahn, Scooter Driver Number One, but of two others also have "slipped the surly bonds of earth." Bob Herrman of Vacaville, CA, was killed on 24 April when his plane, one he had built and flown many hours, crashed near Lake Berryessa, north of Vacaville. And, in the wee hours of 10 May, a heart attack took former Skyhawk Association member Jim "Eight-Mile" Pirie. A former POW of five years and eight months after being shot down over North Vietnam on June 22, 1967, Jim had just returned home from a trip to Pensacola where he attended a mini-reunion of former "Ravens" of VA-93. Jim had expressed to his wife, Barb, how happy he was to have seen his old pals and how much he looked forward to future meetings. "Eight-Mile" died that night.

I know the condolences and best wishes of all Skyhawkers go out to three ladies - Feppie Rahn, Kaye Herrman, and Barb Pirie. With their husbands, they shared all of the joys, sorrows, trials, and accomplishments. We salute each of them!

GBU and

A-4s Forever!

Otto



MODEL "T" PRODUCTION

Numerous TA-4J (and two A-4Fs – *can you spot them?*) are shown in this photo of the Douglas Aircraft Company Palmdale, California, production line in the hey-day of two-seat *Skyhawk* production, circa 1969. The two-place version of the *Skyhawk*, a "combat trainer" initially identified as the



A4D-5T, was ordered into production in 1964 as a tag-end part of the A-4E contract.

The last two "E" production models, BuNos 152102 and 152103, were earmarked for conversion, the main visual features of which were the 28-inch "stretched" fuselage, to accommodate a second seat, associated controls and instruments, and the long "clam shell" canopy. Other improvements included the P&W J-52-P-8A 9,300-lb thrust engine, Escapac 1C-3 rocket-powered "zero-zero" ejection seats, nose wheel steering, and wing lift spoilers. The first flight of the TA-4E took place 30 June 1965 and the aircraft was re-designated TA-4F shortly thereafter. The "F" model became operational in May 1966. A total of 241 TA-4Fs (including the two converted A-4Es) were produced.

The TA-4J, designed for student training, was a follow-on to the TA-4F. Essential design changes were deletion of tactical

weapons system components and equipment, and removal of the airborne tanker capability. The resulting weight reduction permitted use of the lower thrust J-52-P-6 engine in the TA-4J. Most of the TA-4Fs were eventually re-designated as TA-4Js.

A total of 555 two-seat *Skyhawks* (241 TA-4F, 277 TA-4J, 37 foreign delivery) were produced. Today (mid-1998), the TA-4J is still operational in the U.S. Navy (VT-7 at NAS Meridian, MS) and with several foreign armed forces. (Photo from Harry Gann Collection)



MISCELLANY

ATTABOY! With well deserved pride, CDR Jeffro Richardson, Skipper of VT-7 at NAS Meridian, MS, recently informed us that his all-*Skyhawk* squadron has been designated as the winner of the Vice Admiral Goldthwaite Award for overall operational excellence in 1997. The Goldthwaite Award is the training command equivalent of the fleet's Battle "E". TraRon Seven was commended for excellence in all areas of competition, sustained performance, superb efficiency, and innovative training improvements. A grand accomplishment for the guys and gals flying the 29-year-old "T." Our congratulations to Jeffro and the *Eagles* of VT-7. A-4s Forever!

SKYHAWK TRIVIA. The first combat use of a land-based catapult capable of launching a fully-loaded tactical aircraft from a runway less than 3,000 feet in length occurred on 11 May 1966. The outfit was MAG-12. The aircraft, of course, was a *Skyhawk*.

AND, NOW, FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT. Spend long hours in the office with your rear end in a conventional swivel chair? SA member Mike McDougall offers an intriguing diversion. Doing business as "Major Art," Mike converts gen-u-wine *Skyhawk* Escapac-1 ejection seats into class-act pieces of office furniture. Anyone interested in adding a nostalgic touch of the "old office" to the current corporate environment should contact Mike at (909) 947-2290 for further information.

FAME. The Skyhawk Association "Blue Ribbon Panel" (i.e., Bud Southworth, SA Webmaster) selection of Darwin Award winners received full page of coverage in the May 1998 issue of the "Flight Schedule," a publication of the Hampton Roads Squadron of the Association of Naval Aviation. The Darwin Awards go to people who, by their own stupid self-elimination actions and antics, provide a significant benefit to the human gene pool. Did coverage of the Darwin Award program signal big time stuff for the SA? Or, was the Hampton Roads ANA squadron just hard-up for news? Hard to say.

HELP WANTED. SA member Wayne Alexander of Holiday, FL, is restoring two TA-4Js to flyable condition, one at a time, and is looking for help in locating parts. Anyone who can help is encouraged to contact Wayne by e-mail (jagsrus@gte.net), by telephone (813) 934-8968, or Fax (813) 943-7457.

SINGAPORE SKYHAWKS. The following e-mail from French *Skyhawk* enthusiast Yves Fauconnier of Chalons en Champagne, France: "About 40 A4 from Singapour Air Force are in France since the beginning of June 1998. They were shipped to the harbour of Bordeaux and then they were transferred by road to the air base of Cazaux. More informations in the next future."

DID YOU KNOW? The easily recognized "humpback" (aft avionics package) version of the single-seat *Skyhawk* is sometimes assumed to be either an A-4F or an A-4M. Alas, the humpback is not a fool proof recognition feature in the *Skyhawk* visual ID game. A good number of A-4Es were retrofitted with the aft avionics package during their service lives, and 100 A-4Cs were converted to the humpback configuration and re-designated as A-4L, for use by the Navy and Marine Corps Reserves. Some of the A-4Ls were eventually reworked and sold to Malaysia with the A-4PTM designation.

MEMBER NUMBER. We appreciate hearing from SA members via e-mail. Occasionally, however, it's a challenge to identify the member if no name is given and we don't have the e-mail address recorded in our data base. If you have an e-mail address and haven't already done so, please fire off an e-mail (skyhawkasn@aol.com) and include your full name or SA member number.

**WELCOME ABOARD!** (Roster additions, 06 April through 30 June 1998)

Wayne Alexander	2623 Grand Blvd.	Holiday	FL	34690-3000	jagsrus@gte.net
O. F. Baldwin	110 Puuhale Street	Honolulu	HI	96819-2231	
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John Binford	556 Maple Street	Warminster	PA	18974-4612	
David V. Blair	1229 N. Highway 71	Blountstown	FL	32424-0000	
John D. Burleson	P.O. Box 365	Cross Plains	TX	76443-0365	
John S. (Sr.) Buzby	1205 Black Baron Dr.	Cherry Hill	NJ	08034-3052	buzby@waterw.com
John C. (Jr) Cain	024 Sunnyside Avenue	Clovis	CA	93611-0510	pookie4@ix.netcom.com
Jack H. Carnefix	Route 4, Box 688	Stillwater	OK	74074-9615	
Nicholas A. Castruccio	P.O. Box 24380, Gallows Bay	St. Croix	VI	00824-0380	
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Keith D. Humphrey	219 Thin Edge Road	Santa Cruz	CA	95065-9740	
Joel E. Johnson	P.O. Box 1952	Ridgecrest	CA	93556-1952	
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Corey Lazare	2220 "C" Street, #313	San Diego	CA	92102-1979	font0man@aol.com
H. Neil Levin	573 S. Sierra Ave., #8	Solana Beach	CA	92075-2207	nlevin@home.com
Stephen A. MacAulay	4703 - 18th Avenue	Meridian	MS	39305-0000	gotama68@aol.com
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L. G. Pearson	P.O. Box 6359	Mesa	AZ	85216-6359	
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James H. Quinn	1444 S Street NW	Washington	DC	20009-3854	jquinn@mail.wdn
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Carlton W. Rogers	894 Glenwood Dr.	Gainesville	GA	30501-2312	cdubb6@aol.com
Thomas A. Samuelson	Intl. TA Mail, 1 River Rd., Bldg.5	Schenectady	NY	12345-0000	samuelth@psasia.ps.ge.com
John C. Shanko	404 Meadow Road	Glenshaw	PA	15116-2043	va55pa@aol.com
George W. Shattuck	1000 Kimbrough Hill Loop	Greensboro	GA	30642-4851	
Scott A. Sitterle	3754 Lake Shore Dr.	Lauderdale	MS	39335-9426	ssitterle@aol.com
Andrew J. Sperling	1850 Fifth Avenue	San Diego	CA	92101-2713	
Robert H. Swanson	19305 Crisp Avenue	Saratoga	CA	95070-6132	
Matthew Taylor	11058 Hwy 39N	Daleville	MS	39326-9647	mayutt@aol.com
Louis H. Vegas	140 Uwapo Rd., 6-201	Kihei	HI	96753-7411	vegas@maui.net
G. William Weiler	2640 NW 107th Ave.	Coral Springs	FL	33065-3619	
Steve Wilson	P.O. Box 2592	Glenwood Springs	CO	81602-2592	swilson@rof.net
T. Rumsey (Jr.) Young	91 Mathewson Road	Barrington	RI	02806-4428	rumsey@efortress.com

And our apologies to the following members whose names were inadvertently omitted from the 5 April 1998 roster:

John R. DaCosta	26/167 Brougham Street	Woolloomooloo, NSW	2011	Australia	jdacosta@ozemail.com.au
James W. Firth	2 Nattai Street	Loftus, NSW	2232	Australia	
James Hooper	2 St. Mary's Cottage, North Lane	Buriton, Hampshire	GU31 5RS	England	113362.1417@compuserve.com
Frederick T. Lane	30/14 Fullerton Street	Woollahra, NSW	2025	Australia	flane@sydpcug.org.au
Enrique Miguel Varea	Yrigoyen 683.7-E, 5800 Rio Cuarto	Cordoba		Argentina	



ANNUAL MEETING NOTIFICATION

As required in Association bylaws, the annual membership meeting will be held at 1200 on Friday, 11 September 1998, at the Nugget Hotel, Sparks (Reno), NV.

Required business to be conducted at the annual meeting is the election of Directors. The bylaws provide for at least five Directors and, if more, always an even number. Nine Directors are currently authorized. Directors serve three year terms, with terms staggered so that approximately one-third of the directors are elected each year. Three directors will be elected in 1998. The terms of incumbent Directors Wynn Foster, Jim Ritchie, and Dave White expire at the end of 1998. Foster and White have chosen not to run for re-election. A nominating committee, appointed in accordance with the bylaws, has nominated the following members as candidates for election as Skyhawk Association Directors for three year terms beginning 1 January 1999:

Ernest E. "Grecian Ern" Laib, Stone Mountain, GA
Ted F. "Bear" Langworthy, Kingsland, TX
James C. "Jim" Ritchie (*Incumbent*), Westland, MI

Nominations from the floor will be accepted at the annual meeting.

A buffet luncheon will be served in connection with the annual meeting and advance reservations are necessary. The luncheon cost, including tax and gratuity, is \$20.00 per person. A luncheon reservation cut-out form is provided below for your convenience. Prompt submission will be appreciated.

The AOM luncheon program will be honor those Vietnam era pilots and aircrew who stood guard for others who went "Feet dry" over bad guy territory. Whether known as "Big Mother," "Jolly Green Giant," or by some other handle (even if you never had need of their services), it was reassuring to know there was a dedicated rescue effort out there waiting. Attend the AOM luncheon, listen to tapes, and rub elbows with those to whom very few rescue challenges were considered impossible.



YES! I/we will attend the Skyhawk Association AOM-Luncheon
at the Nugget Hotel in Sparks (Reno) on Friday, 11 September 1998.

Please make reservations, as follows:

Name _____

Number of reservations _____
at \$20.00 each

Phone or E-mail _____

Amount enclosed: \$ _____

Mail this form and check payable to "Skyhawk Association" to reach Jack Woodul, Luncheon Chairman, 1008 Portofino Drive, Arlington, TX 76012-2748, no later than 1 September 1998.

SKYHAWK DISPLAY DEDICATION

Another "Skyhawk-on-a-stick" is now proudly displayed, replete in Blue Angel color scheme, this one at Grenada High School in Grenada, Mississippi. A project of the high school NJROTC unit, A-4M BuNo 160255, was formally dedicated on a chilly Saturday morning, 4 April 1998. The dedication was the culmination of a five year fund-raising effort, some good, old-fashioned politikin', and a one-year refurbishment project that saw widespread community involvement. The airframe, located in Millington, TN (former NAS Memphis), was transported to Grenada by an Army helo. Painting stencils were provided by the Blue Angels, and restoration and cosmetic repair work was donated or provided at cost by local businessmen, artisans, and mechanics.

The Skyhawk Association was well represented at the dedication ceremony by member-veteran *Skyhawk* drivers George "Moose" Lundy of Collierville, TN, and John L.

"Bear" of Hildebrandt of Cordova, YN. Also, the presence of Matt Mathews (shown in photo), a recent addition to the SA roster, provided a unique twist to the event. A former Marine Corps major now residing in Fuquay Varina, NC, and flying with American Airlines, Mathews is a native son, born and raised in Grenada, and he flew A-4M 160255 a number of times while on active duty with VMA-223 out of Cherry Point, NC. (Photo courtesy of Sharon Stuvee, Grenada, MS.)



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