

NAVY SKYHAWKS TO RETIRE



Mark your calendars, and start making travel, hotel reservation, and fun-time plans.

The beloved *Skyhawk*, assigned to VT-7 at NAS Meridian, MS, the last remaining A-4 squadron in the U.S. Navy, will be formally retired from active duty in a ceremony at **NAS Pensacola on the weekend of 25-27 June 1999.**

And, you should be there!

VT-7 has been flying the TA-4J (shown above) since October 1971 – a respectable 28 years – and graduated its first *Skyhawk*-trained Naval Aviator in April 1972. VT-7's final class of nugget aviators trained in the venerable A-4 will receive their wings in early June 1999 at NAS Meridian.

SKYHAWK VENUE & ANNUAL MEETING

A block of Skyhawk Association rooms has been set aside at the Pensacola Grand Hotel, with a room rate of \$75.00, and there will be a separate Association "Ready Room" at the hotel. A large turn-out is expected for the *Skyhawk* retirement weekend festivities and an early booking of rooms is strongly recommended. Room reservations must be made directly with the hotel by calling 1-800-348-3336, between 0800 and 1700, Monday-Friday, CST. Availability of Grand Hotel rooms and the Skyhawk room rate are guaranteed until 25 May.

In conjunction with the Navy *Skyhawk* retirement ceremonies, the 1999 Skyhawk Association AOM (Annual Organization Meeting) will be held during a luncheon on Saturday, 26 June 1999. The luncheon will be held at NAS Pensacola, in either the National Museum of Naval Aviation or the Mustin Beach Club. A bit of Association business (annual election of directors) will be conducted during the AOM and the luncheon program will include Association presentation of a Roy Grinnell "Skyhawk Tribute" lithograph for display at the Museum. Luncheon cost will be \$18.50 per person, with advance reservations required. Luncheon payment checks should be mailed to reach Les Jackson, 9 Arapaho Drive, Pensacola, FL 32507-8736 no later than Friday, 11 June 1999.

RETIREMENT FESTIVITIES

The 25-27 June *Skyhawk* retirement festivities will begin with a reception-flight suit mixer at the NAS Mustin Beach Club on Friday evening, 25 June. For golfers, a Saturday morning shotgun start outing is scheduled at the NAS golf course. The formal A-4 *Skyhawk* retirement ceremony will take place in the Blue Angel Atrium of the National Museum of Naval Aviation, at NAS Pensacola, beginning about 1500 on Saturday afternoon. The uniform for the ceremony will be full dress for military personnel, and coat and tie for civilian dress. The honcho-organizer of the *Skyhawk* retirement weekend, CDR Jody "Jeffro" Richardson, former CO of VT-7, promises that the retirement ceremony guest speaker will be "CNO or higher," and, "Before the ceremony is over, I expect grown men to be crying." (Now, who could pass up an invitation like that?) An open-bar, heavy hors d'oeuvres reception at the Museum will follow shortly after the retirement ceremony. A Sunday brunch at the Mustin Beach Club and a TA-4J fly-by will round out the weekend activities. Individual costs and other details of the retirement weekend events will be available separately.

Hope to see you all in Pensacola for a fab *Skyhawk* weekend.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

T.F. "Tom" Brown
(tfblil@webtv.net)

Just returned from the semi-annual Skyhawk Association board meeting and am pleased to report that all remains well. Following are highlights of the meeting:

✓ We now have a Vice President for Marine Matters, Col. John J. Caldas, USMC, (Ret). Here's John's vitae: Mustang, 35 years active duty, 2500+ A-4 hours with 200 traps, C.O. of VMA-311, two Vietnam War tours, retired in 1983. We are indeed fortunate to have this distinguished Marine Aviator on our team! Look for John to be nominated for election to the Board of Directors at our annual meeting in Pensacola.

✓ That leads in to the BIG news! We changed the date of this year's annual meeting from November, as previously announced, to the weekend of 25-27 June 1999. This coincides with the A-4 retirement ceremony now planned by the Navy for that weekend at NAS Pensacola. It will be 45 years to the month since the first flight of the first A4D-1 *Skyhawk*. Regret any inconvenience this change in plans has caused, but the Board was of the unanimous opinion that we could not pass up this truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Additional details are contained on page one. Whizzer's got the lead and Les Jackson is the on-scene Commander, assisted by Board members Ernie "Grecian Ern" Laib and Tom "Auggie" Wondergem, with Director "Bear" Langworthy manning the spare. Are we in good hands or what? Get your reservations in early!

✓ Membership. We finished 1998 with 561 paid members, and a total of 602 members, the difference being mostly the 36 non-paying 1-year comp memberships awarded to newly winged aviators trained at VT-7 in the TA-4J *Skyhawk*. We increased our membership by about 20%, and a lot of credit goes to Otto Krueger and the Membership Committee. Our recruiting goal for calendar year 1999 is 700 paid members. To attain

this goal, after accounting for an average of 15% who don't re-up, I estimate we need to sign up about 18 new members per month to achieve the 1999 goal.. We need your help here! My challenge to each of you is to sign up at least one new member in '99. Nuff said!

✓ On the financial side, we ended the year with about \$12,000 in the bank and all bills paid. For your cognizance, I have asked Treasurer "Boom" Powell to prepare a 1998 Summary Financial Report for publication in the April issue of this newsletter. And, thanks to Boom and Secretary Wynn Foster, we have our second annual budget and I think it's right on the mark.

✓ The Board decided it's past time for us to have a *Skyhawk* patch, and we are now in the process of producing one. The prototype was designed by Board member Jim "JayCee" and we think you will be pleased with the result. By our April newsletter issue, I expect to have good news for you in this department. I hope we will have patches available for sale at the annual membership meeting in Pensacola.

✓ We have decided to purchase an 800 number to enable convenient, credit-card signing-up of new members, and renewing existing memberships. The 800 number will be located at Tailhook Association headquarters in San Diego, and we extend many thanks to Tailhook Association Executive Director J.R. Davis for the courtesy. The 800 number will be available only for membership applications and renewals, and will not be used for other Skyhawk business.

Finally, I extend kudos to Bud Southworth for the fantastic job he continues to do with our Skyhawk internet web site (www.skyhawk.org); to Wynn Foster for performing the thankless task of Secretary, as well as serving as our Newsletter editor; and to Vice President Jack "Puresome" Woodul for performance above and beyond the call in backing up Otto, and then me, during the past year. Bravo Zulu to you three super-stars!

God bless and A-4s forever!

Tom



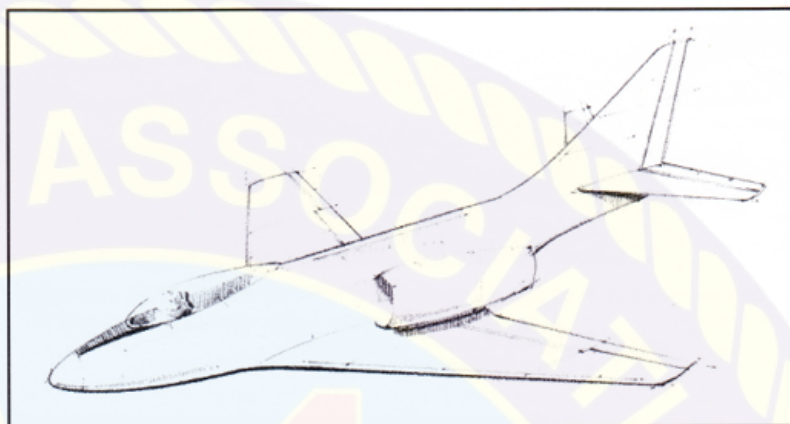
SKYHAWK: THE FIGHTER (BRIEFLY)

by Harry Gann, Association Historian

The A-4 *Skyhawk* has made a mighty, world-renowned mark as an attack aircraft. A little known fact, however, is that it did not begin its evolution as an attack aircraft.

The trend in military tactical aircraft in the early 1950s showed a spiraling rise in both technical complexity and weight, accompanied by ever increasing costs. In 1952, Ed Heinemann, the father of the *Skyhawk*, envisioned a design for a lightweight, highly agile fighter aircraft. Heinemann had earlier approached the design of the AD *Skyraider* with a design philosophy of simplicity and innovation. The result was a highly successful medium attack aircraft, and he reasoned that there was room for a similar approach to the design of the new generation of turbine-powered fighter aircraft. Heinemann told his team at Douglas Aircraft Company to prepare a proposal for a fighter design that would reverse the disturbing complexity-weight-cost trend. Then, he made a trip to Washington to sell the proposal to the Navy.

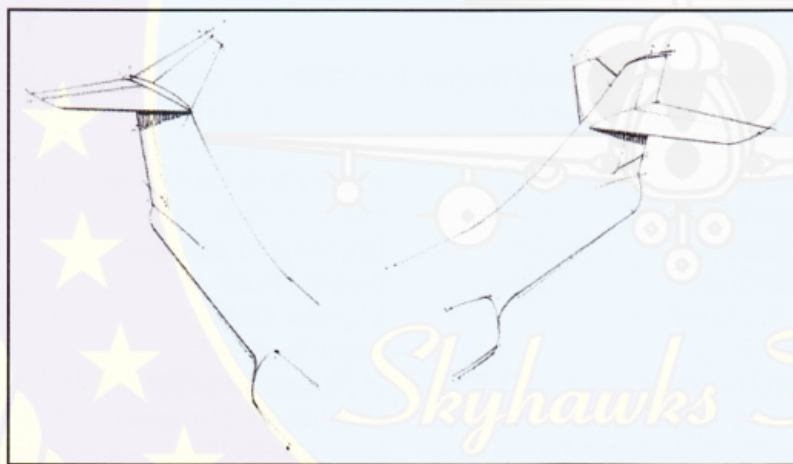
The Bureau of Aeronautics looked upon Heinemann's design submission with interest, but told the man from Douglas the immediate requirement was for an attack aircraft, not a fighter. The new attack aircraft had to be capable of making a low level dash



Preliminary Skyhawk Fighter Design, circa 1952, envisioned swept wings and tail, and pod-mounted twin engines.

(Original sketch from Harry Gann Collection)

from a carrier to a target four hundred miles inland, deliver a nuclear weapon, and, hopefully, return to its launch point. The BuAer engineers estimated that an aircraft capable of meeting such requirements would gross-out at about 30,000 pounds. Heinemann returned to his California office and presented his team with a unique challenge. The design of a new Douglas attack aircraft would not only meet the Navy requirements, but would do so at half of the gross weight requirement specified by BuAer.



Various Empennage Configurations were envisioned in the initial Skyhawk design phase. (Original sketches from Harry Gann Collection)

names as Gene Root, Kermit Van Avery, A.M.O. Smith, and R.B. Smith. The group came up with a configuration that met the Heinemann requirements. Initially, a low-aspect ratio, swept wing design was considered – a basic, one-piece wing with weight-saving as a primary objective. The one-piece design eliminated the attachment fittings and beefing-up necessary to assemble an outer wing to a center section or

The Douglas El Segundo aerodynamic design group was staffed by a competent, well-rounded cadre of engineers, including such prominent





(continued from page 3) the fuselage. And, it eliminated the complexities necessary in wing-folding mechanisms. Another Smith, R.G., who later became better known as an aviation artist, was given the assignment of gathering all the various design disciplines into a final shape.



The Initial Mock-Up of the Skyhawk featured an empennage extending beyond the tail pipe. The aft fuselage was later modified to avoid tail buffeting. (Photo from Harry Gann Collection)

During the configuration assembly phase, R.G. could not fit landing gear into the wing and, at the same time, maintain the desired eight percent wing root ratio. Thus, Smith proposed that the initial swept wing design be changed to a delta wing, which would lengthen the wing chord and provide the necessary wing space to house the landing gear. In spite of the lack of wind tunnel data on the redesigned wing configuration, to save time Heinemann acted on instinct and decided a risk was worth taking. He OK'd the delta wing design without wind tunnel testing and, as usual, his instincts proved to be correct.

Following the design practices of the day, the *Skyhawk* initially had a shortened tail pipe with the tail section extending beyond of the fuselage, similar to the design of the then first line fighter, the Grumman F9F *Panther*. Aerodynamic tail buffet was considered, however, and the design team consensus was to lengthen the fuselage to eliminate the "overhang." Later, some buffet still occurred during the initial test flight, but placing a small scoop shaped metal fairing around the exhaust exit solved the problem and the *Skyhawk*, truly a legend in its own time, was born.

WELCOME ABOARD!

(New Skyhawk Association members since 01 October 1998)

Hendrik A. Angerman
Richard E. Baker
Rockne T. Baker
William R. Barber
James A. Barbosa
John H. Batto
Walter A. Beattie
Michael L. Bosshard
Daniel M. Brannon
Harold L. Brewer
Frank A. Buethe
William A. Burns
Donald E. Cathcart
Anthony G. Coleman
Marc Descarpentries
William (III) S. Donaldson
Aude Espourteille
James M. Fitzgerald

Jim D. Fletcher
Dean Fournier
J. Thomas Garner
Erick Gerdes
Jesse R. Greer
David R. Hazelton
Patrick Healy
William D. Houser
Michael G. Hritz
William Pickens Jones
Kirk A. Kalstad
Curtis L. Karr
Steven G. Kelsey
Shawn M. Kern
Carlos A. Marcondes
S. V. Massimini
Greg Mavor
Daniel G. McCoy

Robert J. McKernon
Robert H. Melville
Chris Mihok
Christopher B. Ognak
Paul A. Peck
Marvin Quaid
Dean W. Sando
F. Roland Schmidt
Clayton M. Simmons
Lester E. Stillwell
Douglas B. Story
Leon H. (III) Wade
Michael K. Walker
Michael A. Weakley
William D. Wright
Glenn M. Zeigler



MISCELLANY

ASSOCIATION ROSTER. The Skyhawk Association membership roster, published annually, will be mailed with the next (Spring 1999) issue of this newsletter. Snail-mail address corrections should be sent to Skyhawk Association, P.O. Box 182166, Coronado, CA 92178-2166, or by e-mail (skyhawkasn@aol.com). If you have not provided your e-mail address for the Association data base, or if you're not sure, please send an e-mail message to skyhawkasn@aol.com, with the word "ADD" and your name as the message text. Skyhawk member addresses are used only for individual or "shotgun" communications to members in matters pertaining to the Association. The Association does not sell or otherwise make the membership roster available for commercial solicitations, and members are discouraged from using the roster for that purpose.

SMOKE! In research mode for some writing he's doing, SA member Dick Upchurch is seeking the rules for the old ready room card game "Smoke." Anyone who can help is encouraged to contact Dick by email (RPUSMC@aol.com) or by telephone, (334) 990-0830.

REUNION. A VA/VFA-125 "Hard Core" reunion (instructor pilots and other personnel permanently assigned to that squadron from 1958 to 1999) will be held at the Nugget Hotel in Sparks (Reno), NV, 19-22 August 1999, in conjunction with Tailhook '99. Further information may be obtained via e-mail from Bob Taylor (rtaylor@jps.net), Janet Palmer (janjerp@lemoorenet.com), or the Tailhook Association (thookassn@aol.com); by snail mail to P.O. Box 745, Lemoore, CA 93245; or by telephone at 1-800-322-HOOK.

OA-4M EXPERIENCE? Major Mark Dillard, USMC, callsign "Conan," is currently a student at the Army Command and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, KS, working on a Master's Degree in Military Arts and Sciences. Dillard's topic is better integration of the F/A-18D into the Marine Air Command and Control System as the replacement for the OA-4M and the OV-10. Conan is seeking specific information on the employment of the OA-4M *Skyhawk* in the airborne forward air controller mission. Anyone experienced in that platform is encouraged to contact Major Dillard via e-mail (CONANFA18@aol.com).

ARBS. Skyhawk Association member John Nelson of Spokane, WA, was a 19-year-old AN plane captain with the *Ghostriders* of VA-164 during the squadron's WestPac tour on board USS Hancock (CVA-19), October 1970 to June 1971. Nelson recalls his aircraft, A-4F 155022, was one of two aircraft assigned to VA-164 equipped with an "experimental" Angle Rate Bombing System (ARBS). Nelson says the ARBS had been evaluated NWS, China Lake, during Summer 1970, and believes that four other A-4s, assigned to 1st MAF in South Vietnam, were so configured. Can anyone provide additional info on the ARBS? If so, please point it in the direction of YeEd's (skyhawkasn@aol.com, or newsletter return address).

RESTORATION OPPORTUNITY. Skyhawk Association member Louis Vegas has possession of A-4E, BuNo 151046, and hopes to restore the bird as a static display. Vegas is looking for any available help and advice – parts, manuals, elbow grease, storage space, etc. – for his project. Anyone who can help is invited to contact Louis, by snail-mail at 140 Uwapo Rd. 6-201, Kihei, HI 96753, by e-mail (Vegas@maui.net), or by telephone, (808) 874-8417.

IT'S BEEN FUN, BUT... Ye Ed, Captain Hook (aka Wynn Foster), has decided to step down as Editor of the Skyhawk Newsletter when the final (Fall) 1999 issue hits the street. Any SA member with a secret desire for instant fame in four-times-a-year volunteer journalism is encouraged to write or call Captain Hook, by e-mail (skyhawkasn@aol.com) or by telephone (619) 435-2335, to learn what the Editor job entails.



ARGENTINE FIGHTINGHAWK

The first flight of BuNo 158161, the A-4AR prototype for the Argentine Air Force, took place on 17 July 1997 over the Mojave Desert in California (right), with Skyhawk Association member Kirk Kalstad at the controls.

Under a \$208 million contract inked in 1994, Argentina purchased 36 surplus U.S. Skyhawks (32 A-4Ms and 4 OA-4Ms) which have been re-named "Fightinghawks." by the new owner.

Conversion work, which includes extensive avionics and engine refurbishments, began in 1995. The first nine of the 36 aircraft were upgraded at the Lockheed-Martin facilities in Ontario and Palmdale, CA, with first delivery to Argentina made on 12 December 1997. The remaining 27, six of which have been delivered as of 4 December 1998, are being upgraded at a Lockheed-Martin facility at Cordoba, Argentina, about 400 miles northwest of Buenos Aires.

The *Fightinghawks* are delivered to the Argentine Air Force equipped for basic navigation functions. Testing for all Nav-Attack functions, currently being conducted, is scheduled for completion in July 1999.

(Photo by Jeffrey Knowles)



I AM SKYHAWK (HEAR ME ROAR)

by Barrett Tillman, Skyhawk Poet Laureate

"Attack" was designed into me
from Heinemann's drafting board.
Dauntless, Havoc, and Skyraider
were all part of my record.

"Bantam Bomber" or "Scooter"
among the names I had then;
From "A4D" to "Edward's Hotrod,"
the worst of all was "PTM"!

Flew with the Saints, Snakes, and Blacksheep
and world-famous Golden Worms.
Both TraCom and adversaries
plus Blue Angels had their turn.

Flew from Tico and from O-Boat,
Hancock and Coral Maru,
Flew from Enterprise and Midway
and Down Under's Melbourne, too.

"Special weapons" were my forte'
hence my long and spindly gear,
When nukes came in greater sizes
to give tyrants cause to fear.

Through the Cold War decades
dreaded, motto for the SIOP day
When Armageddon raised its head:
"One man, one bomb, one way!"

Left scores of Douglas brothers
there in Tonkin's humid clime;
C-A-S as well as Alfas
fully occupied my time.

Argie Navy use was righteous
while their air force drew no blood.
But at cold San Carlos Water
the British learned to fear me good!

So many shipmates are gone now:
Vige, Intruder, Corsair II.
Only I still keep their mem'ry,
Trusty tailhook warriors true.

Then, we stood down VT-7
in the year of ninety-nine,
But the Argies, Brazil, and Singapore
still carry on the Skyhawk line!

MEMBERSHIP REPORT. The Association began 1998 with 469 active (paid) members and ended the year with 561 members, a growth of 20 %. An additional 35 complimentary one-year memberships were accepted by newly-winged Naval Aviator graduates of VT-7 at NAS Meridian (the sole remaining USN A-4 squadron). Several membership recruiting avenues have been explored but, to date, the most effective has been word-of-mouth recruiting by existing members. A growing secondary source of new members is the Association web site (www.skyhawk.org). **YOU CAN HELP.** If you have a prospective member in mind, take the time to do a recruiting number. Cut off (or photo copy) the below membership application and put it to good use.

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION, Inc.

P.O. Box 182166

Coronado, CA 92178-2166

E-mail: skyhawkasn@aol.com

The **Skyhawk Association** is a fraternal, non-political, all-volunteer membership organization composed of (1) those who have flown the A-4 *Skyhawk*, (2) those who supported and maintained that venerable bird (so that all those in the first category could have "up" machines to fly), (3) those who WISH they had flown or worked on that venerable bird, and (4) those who just like the idea of being identified with an organization built around admiration for the greatest little attack aircraft ever produced. The purpose of the Association is **Fun and Camaraderie**, and the **perpetuation of the history, legend, and tradition of the Skyhawk**. Your application and dues check will place your name on the mailing list for receipt of the quarterly **Skyhawk Association Newsletter**, announcements of Association activities, a current **membership roster**, a class act **membership card**, a **bumper sticker**, and whatever else seems important from time to time. Association membership entitles you to participate in all Skyhawk Association activities, supports the Skyhawk Association internet web site (www.skyhawk.org), and provides funding for special projects related to the *Skyhawk*.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____ - _____ Home Phone () _____ - _____
E-mail Address _____ Nickname/Callsign _____
A-4 Hours _____ A-4 Traps _____ A-4 Squadrons Served _____
Remarks, Sea Stories, Sierra Hotel Skyhawk Accomplishments, or other myths. _____

Skyhawk association dues are **\$20.00 per calendar year**. Mail this completed application, along with your check for first year dues, to the above letterhead address.

IF YOU KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF OTHER FORMER SCOOTER TYPES (Drivers or Workers, prospective members all), please write their NAMES AND ADDRESSES (or full names and cities of residence) ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS SHEET. We'll do RECRUITING NUMBERS on them.

Don't forget to visit our web site: www.skyhawk.org

"THANKS"

The following was received on 11 December 1998 from CDR Joady "Jeffro" Richardson, USN, outgoing Commanding Officer of VT-7, NAS Meridian:

"A big "Thank You" to the entire Skyhawk Association for all the support you gave me and VT-7 for the past 13 months. Y'all definitely added a dimension to my Command Tour that made it that much more enjoyable. Even more importantly, you brought a sense of heritage to the newly-winged aviators that is invaluable. One of my primary objectives when I took command was that the aviators VT-7 produced would have a clear understanding of the tradition that they were being handed and of the absolute necessity that it be passed on to the next generation of warriors. I think we succeeded. Thanks, also, for the great plaque that y'all gave me in recognition of my first trap so many years ago as a young Ensign. Where has the time gone?"

(Ed. Note: Jeffro presently is the Officer in Charge of arrangements for the Skyhawk retirement activities in Pensacola, 25-27 June.)

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION, Inc.

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