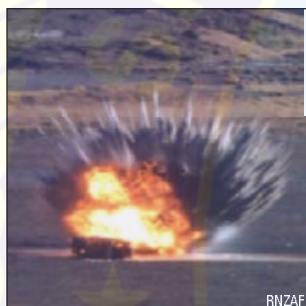


New Zealand skies fall silent as Skyhawk squadrons are disbanded



RNZAF



RNZAF



RNZAF

High Court dismisses legal challenge. SOS plans appeal

The New Zealand High Court has dismissed a suit challenging the legality of the government's decision to eliminate the Air Force's air combat squadrons.

Save Our Squadrons (SOS), a citizen organization with no political or military ties, claimed that Government violated the Defence Act because the Air Force would be stripped of its ability to defend New Zealand's air space.

SOS spokesman Clive Bradbury said they would appeal the Court's dismissal on grounds that the decision was too narrowly based and did not properly consider the Defence Minister's responsibility under the Defence Act. The appeal was scheduled to be heard February 12.

Details and updates on SOS's efforts are on their web site: www.soscampaign.co.nz



Don Simms

Ohakea, New Zealand
13 December 2001

Jet noise, the sound of freedom, can no longer be heard over New Zealand.

In a day heavy with emotion, the Royal New Zealand Air Force ended more than 80 years of air defense history. Claiming it could no longer afford its Skyhawks and Aermacchi jets, the New Zealand government officially disestablished Number 2, 24, and 75 combat squadrons.

Six RNZAF Skyhawks and four Aermacchi jets put on a dazzling display for crowds at Ohakea Air Force Base, roaring through New Zealand skies for the last time. Squadron Leader Jason Easthope capped off the display with a deafening flyby just 50 feet off the deck before hundreds of past and present members of the Air Force, many blinking back tears.

An elderly man alone in a hangar savored one last look at a pile of Skyhawk parts. "We're going to need these planes again. The world isn't getting any nicer."

Following speeches by various dignitaries, the end for the squadrons came when their squadron standards were paraded to a nearby chapel. All members of the Air Force saluted as the flags were retired for the last time.

Former Skyhawk pilot Ross Ewing said this was the last time combat aircraft would be seen in NZ. "Ours, that is."

For articles and editorials detailing the demise of NZ Skyhawks, enter search word "Skyhawk" at the New Zealand Herald web site: www.nzherald.co.nz

Top and Center: Kiwi Skyhawks perform their last live ordnance practice June 25 at at the Kaipara weapons range near Auckland.

Above: Low pass during farewell ceremony at Nowra, Australia.

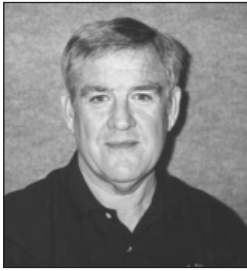
Above right: Dirty pass a Ohakea.

Right: Crash crew salutes Skyhawks at Nowra, Australia.



Don Simms





On the 1MC

President James "Jim-Bob" Moriarty

prisoners, have been handled. Perhaps to pacify the disgruntled few we ought to do a reverse Cuban trick and just let the holy warriors out the gates at Guantanamo. It's hard to decide, though - would that be screwing the Cubans, or the members of Al Qaeda? Sounds like a toss-up to me.

Like many of you, I frequently receive emails reporting from the folks on the front lines, emails that tell of one mission or another. With each message I receive, my pride in our forces, Navy and Marine, goes up. I particularly enjoyed seeing the shots of the Taliban troop carrier being invited to heaven on the wings of a pair of matched Mk 82s. I just wish I could buy a beer for the pilot who sent that particular group on their way to meet their 77 virgins. (Frankly, I suspect the 77 virgins story is one of those myths arising out of the fogs of war. Somebody probably asked for the number of Al Qaeda virgins above the age of 10, and after the country was surveyed, they only found 77.)

During this battle, our country, our military, and even our politicians have come together in ways that have surprised even the most jaded of us. The great asset of this nation has always been its people, and with the freedoms granted us by the Constitution, our future continues to brighten. Even the levels of corporate corruption exposed at Enron, and at other companies where similar tales are now being uncovered, cannot darken the country's spirits. I've been bringing lawsuits against financial and business cheats for 15 years, and I wondered when we would finally grow tired enough of the sleaze to do something about it. Hopefully, the Enron affair may shed not only new light, but generate enough new heat to get us to place needed limits on greed run amuck.

At Enron, too little concern was given to the future of the average worker, the troops needed to keep the company strong. As a nation, we shouldn't make the same mistake. Each day I think about the young men and women who have chosen to serve our country by placing their lives on the line, or by directly supporting and assisting those who do, and I ask myself, "Have I done something to show them how much they mean to us?" And, "Have I tried to do something to show them how much we respect and honor their service to our country?" Not every day, but often, I can truthfully say the answer is yes.

If you were to ask yourself those questions, what would be your answer?

Spring is coming. It's mid-February and already I can feel the change of seasons in the air. I can smell the odor of new grass, and feel the trees beginning to shake out of their winter's sleep. Of course, since I live in Houston, it's easy to predict spring; it usually arrives sometime between Christmas and New Year's.

I can also feel other things in the air, much of it related to the "war" in Afghanistan. That continues to go well, much better than many pundits predicted. Yes, some smart folks are complaining about how the Al Qaeda captives are being treated, as if blind-side attacks on women and children, stockbrokers, even, somehow entitles them to better care than that given to real warriors. But as the polls show, most of us are satisfied with the way the conflict, and the resulting



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Bird watching

I am a reservist at McGuire AFB. This weekend at the base I saw a Skyhawk on the ramp. To say it was out of place is an understatement. It was an ex IAF bird being ferried from Israel to Mesa, AZ. It belonged to ATSI government contractors. The camo and the bird itself stopped me in my tracks. I had to go over and check it out. I talked to the rep, Mr. Bob Foxx and he told me about his group. I asked to take some pictures and he said yes, so I now have some interesting pictures

Ron Dobrzelecki



Above: An ex-Israel Air Force A-4 made a stop at McGuire Air Force Base on its way to ATSI in Mesa, Arizona. Reservist Ron Dobrzelecki poses with his unexpected guest.

Left: Note modified tailpipe

Info sought on 1LT Ronald Layton, USMC

I'm looking for people who served with my brother, 1LT Ronald Dean Layton, USMC, during the years of 1966 through April 4, 1969 when he was killed.

He was commissioned on September 1, 1966 after completing OCS at Quantico and was stationed in Pensacola for flight school. In March 1967 (probably) he went to Meridian, MS for jet training, then on to Beeville, TX and El Toro, CA possibly in early 1968. He shipped out to Viet Nam in September 1968 and was stationed at Chu Lai. He flew the A-4 with VMA-211 in Chu Lai. I am looking for information pertaining to all of his duty stations (exact dates, what he was doing, copies of records, etc.), personal stories from friends, and pictures.

Barbara Scheibel
3364 Palm Circle
Kennesaw, GA 30144

770-975-4570 Scheibel711@aol.com

Fall, 2001

VA-66 pix

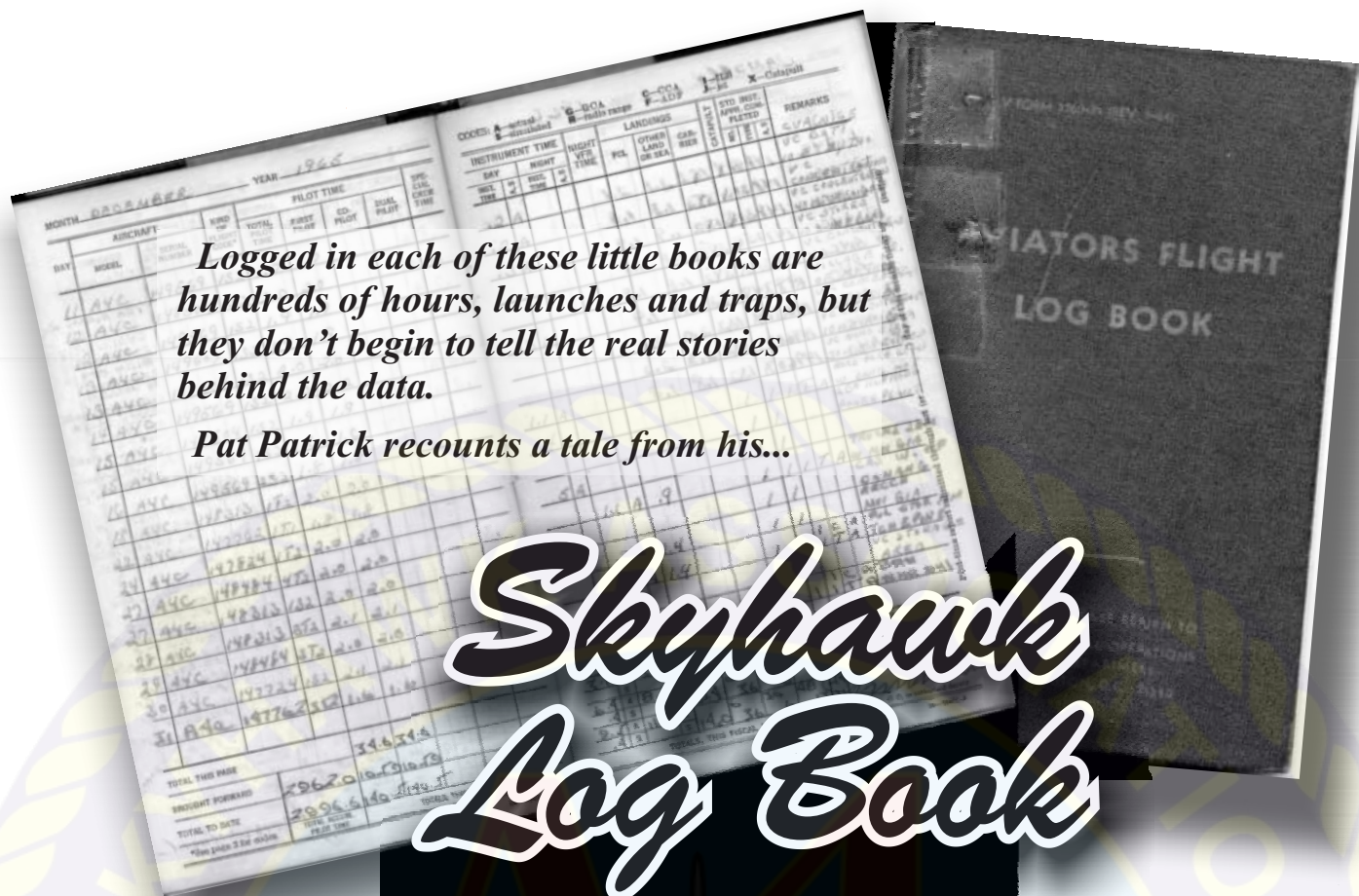
Thought I would share a couple of pictures with you. The first is me taking a cat shot in March of 1966 aboard USS America (CVA-66). You can see the hold back has just broken and the slats are not fully retracted. Al Thompson was the cat officer on the America and he always gave us lots of end speed. The ship was so new and big that cat shots were not a problem. The other picture is a squadron picture from April of 1966. Skipper Bagwell is in the middle of the bottom row (forth from the left, with very little hair). To his left is Wayne Smith who took over the Squadron in June 1966. I am fourth from the left on the top row. Second from the right on the bottom row is Arv Chauncey, who transferred to VA 212. He was shot down in Viet Nam and spent seven years in the Hilton. Great person.

Doug Harrison

Hmmm...VA-66, CVA-66, in 1966, and you were flying BuNo 148466. Was that some sort of omen, Doug? - Ed.

Mail Call





Logged in each of these little books are hundreds of hours, launches and traps, but they don't begin to tell the real stories behind the data.

Pat Patrick recounts a tale from his...

Skyhawk Log Book

16 December 1958

By Meredith W. "Pat" Patrick

The flight of 16 December 1958 was my sixth hop in the A-4A (A4D-1). The aircraft was still very new and had the familiar new-car smell when I manned it. All of our A4D-1s were fresh out of the Douglas Aircraft factory within the past several months. On familiarization hop number five (FAM 5) we had dropped six Mk-76 practice bombs and fired four 2.75" folding fin aircraft rockets (FFAR) on "Switzerland Target" just south of NAS Jacksonville across the St. Johns River from the small town of Green Cove Springs, Florida. Consequently this was my second bomb and rocket hop in the A-4. We took off mid-morning on 16 December 1958, rendezvoused a four-plane formation led by the executive officer (XO) of VA-44 (the East Coast A-4 RAG at that time) and proceeded to the same target. We made a low-altitude, 500-knot pass over the target to set the trim tabs for release conditions and broke up the formation to establish a safe interval between aircraft. As the junior ensign, I flew the number four position. We fired the rockets first with a release from a 30-degree dive angle at about 1,200 feet above ground level (AGL) and 500 knots true air speed (TAS).

On my third firing pass I pulled up in a four-G climb and pushed the throttle forward. Instead of the usual acceleration, I felt the aircraft decelerate rapidly. My body leaned forward into the shoulder straps and I heard the engine begin to unwind. I glanced at the engine gauge and saw the RPM and tail pipe tem-

perature (TPT) falling rapidly. The oil pressure and fuel boost flip-flop gauges went to OFF. I said the usual OH NO, with "no" as a four-letter word, then keyed the mike and broadcast, "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, Baker Boy 325, flamed out, pulling off the target." I then told the XO, our flight leader, that I would trade airspeed for altitude and try a relight going over the top when I reached the optimum relight speed of 220 knots. He "rogered" and told me he had me in sight. As I went over the top of the arc at 5,500 feet and 210 knots, I pushed the nose over slightly and adjusted airspeed to 220 indicated air speed (IAS). I went through the relight procedure and waited for the TPT to start to rise. It never did. We had no fuel flow gage in the A-4A; nor did we have any other diagnostic instruments like those available in current Navy jets, so I held the airspeed at 220 and tried one more relight procedure. As I completed each of the four simple steps for a re-light I read it off to the flight leader and asked him if I was forgetting anything. He told me, "no, you are doing all you can."

I really didn't want to eject and explain why I had just destroyed a \$425,000 aircraft. During the second attempt, I saw the altimeter descend through 3,000 feet and heard the XO say, "Quit fooling with it and get out. Eject now." I glanced up and

Continued on next page

Continued from page 6

saw that I was headed toward a small crossroads village, so I turned right toward a swampy area. I had been holding the nose up to stop the descent because the ejection seat was only good to altitudes above 1,000 feet and 125 knots IAS, straight and level. When I pulled the face curtain the airspeed was 125, altitude 1,800 foot and rate of descent about 2,000 feet per minute. The canopy separated and I was blasted out of the aircraft.

So far so good, but I quickly found out that I was still in real trouble. In between my sophomore and junior years at the University of Florida, I had spent three years in the Army, during the Korean War. I had gone through parachute training as an enlisted troop in December 1952, and had 22 static-line parachute jumps while serving with the 10th Special Forces Group in 1953 and 1954. In the early stages of training we had to climb up into a tower about 20 to 30 feet high wearing a parachute harness, hook up to a cable that descended at about a 10 or 15 degree angle, jump out and slide down to the ground. The training taught us to exit the airplane in the right

position and then to make a proper parachute-landing fall when we contacted the ground. There was always a grizzled old sergeant at the bottom of the slide. (He was probably about 30 years old.) As soon as you jumped out of the tower he would

scream at you, "You had betta open yo eyes, look around, and see what you can do fo yo sef." (All paratrooper sergeants had southern accents.) That translated to: "Don't expect everything to work as advertised; as soon as you clear the aircraft open your eyes and take care of any malfunctions."

I reached up, grasped the face curtain firmly and pulled hard with both hands. When the curtain pulled out about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way, I heard a loud, "BOOM", felt a sharp pain in the small of my back, and was blown clear of the aircraft. As soon as I was out in the air-stream, I could picture the instructor, who used to be at the bottom of the cable slide training device. I could hear him shouting in that pronounced southern accent, "You had betta open yo eyes, look around, and see what you can do fo yo sef." Consequently, as I cleared the aircraft I threw the face curtain back out of the way and looked around to see what I could do for myself. It made the life or death difference, because I was still attached to the seat by the para-raft lanyard. The lanyard was a yellow nylon ribbon that connected the survival raft located under the aircraft seat to the pilot's flotation gear.

The bright yellow-colored lanyard was wrapped around the shoulder harness locking handle on the left side of the ejection seat holding the seat snug up against my right hip. I quickly reached out with my right hand and pulled the seat in toward me to get some slack. I then unwrapped the para-raft lanyard with my left hand, and threw the seat forcefully away from me.

Next, I felt for and found the D-ring for manually opening the parachute. I pulled it hard to try and beat the automatic actuator. It was like pulling on a well-anchored cable; it would not budge. I was plunging, head first, toward the tops of pine trees near the edge of the swamp I had aimed the aircraft at. My first thought was, "you are a dead man." I tilted my head back, looked toward the ground, and saw a huge dark red-to-orange fireball exploding out from among the trees as the aircraft hit the ground near the edge of the swamp. I then looked down at the nearest pine tree and could see individual pine needles. My

heart nearly stopped because I knew that if the parachute were not on its way out by now, I really was dead. It was eerily quiet falling through the air and I could hear a whirring noise. It was the familiar sound of rubber bands popping as the parachute was deploying. Rubber bands are used to hold the shroud lines, risers, and panels in place when the parachute is packed. They make a whirring sound when they pop in sequence as the parachute opens. The automatic actuator had fired when I threw the seat away and had kinked the steel cable leading to the D ring, which was why I could not pull it.

I was falling headfirst, face down toward the trees. My heart started to race again as I looked at the pine needles and tried to tell whether the chute was going to open in time. I shifted away from the thought that I was a dead man, and said to myself, "Oh, S--t, man this is going to be close. This is *really* going to be close." When the chute opened I felt a hard jerk at my shoulders and my feet and legs swung down and straightened me out.

I had no time to enjoy the feeling because I was probably less than a hundred feet off the ground. I could see to my right front (about 2:30), a Y shaped intersection where three dirt roads

joined. I then grabbed the two risers in that direction and pulled down hard on them to take a slip toward the little opening formed by that Y intersection. I had to lift my legs up to clear the last pine tree, but I made it into the small clearing and smashed into the Florida sand. I tried to do a parachute-

landing fall to cushion the impact, but my timing was a little off and the impact stunned my whole body.

There was almost no wind so the parachute just collapsed around me. It was a good thing because all I could do was lie there for a few seconds. Almost immediately, however, I could feel a big grin growing inside my oxygen mask as a tremendous sense of elation welled up inside me. I stood up, popped the oxygen mask off, took my helmet off and looked up at the beautiful blue sky with puffy white, fair weather cumulus clouds drifting by. Life was good. The pine needles smelled like expensive perfume and my whole body unwound as I looked up at that beautiful sky and shed a few tears of elation and relief. I hurt all over, but it didn't matter. I was alive with no broken bones or other serious injury.

By the way, the A-4A parachute was only 26 feet in diameter and was designed for survival, not for a comfortable landing. My back hurt like hell from the ejection because the older seats were fired by a 37-millimeter cannon shell and were not as friendly as the rocket motors used today. The hard impact with the ground didn't help. (Many of my contemporary pilot friends have had serious, long-term, back problems stemming from their ejections. I have been extremely fortunate and have had no long term effect at all.) We had no survival radios, so I popped an orange smoke signal device in the intersection of the dirt roads where I had landed. I then spread my 'chute out, and stood in the middle of it to make myself more visible for rescue.

In less than ten minutes a reconnaissance version of the F9F-8 flew overhead and rocked his wings to let me know he had me in sight. He circled my position and guided the helicopter in. Roughly ten minutes later, still, I could hear the helicopter approaching and popped another orange smoke. I rolled up the parachute, held on to it to prevent it from getting sucked up into the blades and got out of the way. The helicopter landed in my little clearing and we exchanged big smiles and enthusiastic

***I was plunging headfirst
toward the tops of pine trees.
My first thought was, "you
are a dead man."***

See Flameout on page 6

Flameout (Continued from page 5)

thumbs up signals. They loaded my parachute and me aboard and flew me over to the helicopter pad next to the hospital at NAS Jacksonville. The flight surgeons checked me over, gave me three fingers of rot gut brandy and a bottle of aspirin, then released me in time for happy hour.

The accident investigation

The accident board had asked me for a detailed statement of what happened and I gave them probably more detail than they wanted. They did not let me read their draft report, however, until it was essentially complete. At that time the Operations Officer, Commander Jim Homyak, called me in and let me read the, almost smooth, draft. The story the report told was that the aircraft, side number 325, had flown a field carrier landing practice hop the night before and when it was returned to the line the ground crew failed to refuel it. I manned the aircraft the next morning and failed to complete the checklist including the push-to-test of the fuel gauge and check of fuel quantity. The aircraft would have had only about 2,500 pounds of fuel, which was exactly the amount that I would have needed to take off, rendezvous, get to the target, and make three rocket passes. Consequently, I had run the aircraft out of fuel and would have had no symptoms prior to flame-out. We had no low-fuel warning light in the A-4D-1. The mishap board said it was 100 percent pilot error.

While I was reading this I was picturing the huge orange-red fireball I saw while falling face down toward the pine trees, waiting for the parachute to open. I thought, "no way!" I described the fireball to Commander Homyak and he agreed to go back out in the helicopter and take another look. He found that the swampy area had been

severely burned for 25 yards around the impact point. It was clear that the aircraft had not run out of fuel. He also noted that there was a substantial amount of JP-4 still floating on the water in the hole formed by the crash. The cause was changed to "undetermined." I have been very suspicious of mishap boards ever since.

After four working days and a weekend off, recovering from the soreness, I was back in the cockpit.

This was one of about nine aircraft that the A-4 community lost in a matter of just a few months. The flame-outs were occurring without any prior symptom and several were at an altitude too low to eject, so we also lost about four pilots.

We would learn on 21 February 1959 the probable cause of most of the large number of flame-outs we had during the fall and winter of 1958-1959.

Meredith W. "Pat" Patrick retired from the U. S. Navy in 1985 after 28 years of service. He continues to work part time at the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) in Washington, D. C. as a research analyst.

Pat's description of the events of 21 February 1959 will appear in an upcoming issue of Skyhawk News - Ed.

Do you have a Skyhawk tale with a high "pucker quotient"?
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NZ Skyhawk squadrons disestablished



After serving more than 30 years, Skyhawks of No. 75 Squadron no longer patrol and defend New Zealand airspace. The government disestablished all three of its combat squadrons, No 2, 24, and 75, on 13 December 2001. The country is now without air defense capability. RNZAF's four remaining squadrons provide air transport, recon, and SAR. The air fleet consists of five P-3K Orion, five C-130H Hercules, two Boeing 727, three Beech Kingair B200, fourteen UH-1H Iroquois, five Bell 47 Sioux, and thirteen PACL CT-4E Airtrainer



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