



The Skyhawk Association Quarterly



*USMC Captain John Garretson in VMA-324 A-4E
over Mount Rainier on September 26, 1970.*

THE A-4 EVER

Fall 2006

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 12 • NUMBER 4

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The Prez Sez • Size Does Matter

*All-Marine Skyhawk Reunion
26-29 April '07
Hilton Head/Beaufort, SC*



www.skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• Raven's Report •

By Bob "Raven" Hickerson

The dust is settling after Tailhook 06, and by all accounts, it was a good one. I wasn't able to attend, but *Skyhawk* Association Board members report a great time was had by all. We're indebted to Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul for coordinating the Attack Hospitality Suite again this year. In the second year of our collaboration with the other attack aircraft associations, the word got out and more people were seen loitering in the suite. This year's visitors included Senator John McCain. Since he's a prominent politician, I'm sure he didn't resort to embellishing his sea stories like the rest of us, but his dropping by is a sure sign that Puresome was on his best behavior. Plans are already underway for improvements to next year's operation, so be sure to look for us in September 2007.

Speaking of next year at Hook, the *Skyhawk* Luncheon will return. We had questions this year about why the luncheon wasn't scheduled, which means we need to do a better job of communicating our plans. We scheduled this year's Annual Meeting and Luncheon of *Skyhawk* Association to coincide with the Marine Corps Aviation Association Symposium in the Washington, D.C. area on October 27, 2006. This event will return to Tailhook in the fall of 2007, so watch for information in future issues.

Annual Meeting

Some members may receive this edition of the Journal prior to the annual meeting luncheon to be held at the Washington Dulles Marriott at 11:30 a.m. on Friday, October 27th. If you wish to attend and haven't made your reservation, just show up, and we'll make sure you get something to eat. We've got some great speakers for the luncheon, and group tours of the National Air and Space Museum Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles, are scheduled for the afternoon. (See sidebar for complete information.)

History of Carrier Air Wing 16's Vietnam Experience

In the *Letters to the Editor* section of this issue, you'll see an email trail concerning a research paper written

by LCDR Peter Fey, an EA-6B ECMO, while he was a Master's Degree candidate at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Ft. Leavenworth last year. Peter corresponded with me and Wynn Foster concerning the paper, and *Skyhawk* Association provided what support we could. I'm mentioning this because the resulting thesis is very well written and should be of interest to many of our members. A link to the paper is provided in the *Letters*, and we'll post that link in the squadron histories of VA-163 and VA-164 found at www.skyhawk.org.

Service Ceiling

We recently received an email asking what the service ceiling of the TA-4F is (was), and that prompted some serious head-scratching. Jim Walthers researched one of our TA-4 NATOPS and found that the TA-4F manual doesn't list a service ceiling. It has a graph for "Combat Ceiling" and "Optimum Cruise Altitude." Some of the other models have service ceilings listed in their NATOPS. For instance, the A-4F with P-8 engine lists 42,250 ft. as the service ceiling. Not to take away from Boom Powell's Puzzlers:

Q. What is the definition of "service ceiling?"

A. According to one source found by Director Mark Williams:

"In aeronautics, the service ceiling is the density altitude where the flying in a clean configuration, at the best rate of climb airspeed for that altitude, and with all engines operating and producing maximum continuous power will produce a 100 feet per minute climb. Margin to stall at service ceiling is 1.5g."

Here's a challenge for you. If you think you hold the "Known World Record" for altitude in a certain model of the A-4, write to let us know. Include the model, configuration, engine, weight, etc. (at least as much as you remember), and as many details as possible that might be used by the prosecution at your somewhat belated courts-martial. We'll publish the "record holders" in a subsequent issue. Send your responses to newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org.

New SDO for Argentina

We're pleased to welcome aboard Rico "Tala" Angerman as the SDO for Argentina. It's been a goal of *Skyhawk* Association for a long time to provide better support for and interaction with *Skyhawk* enthusiasts from other countries which operated (or still operate) the A-4. Rico is our first success in recruiting an international SDO, and we're hoping his interest will lead to more international members and recruiting of SDOs from more countries. Rico's email address is dacari@planet.nl, should you wish to correspond with him.

Website Hosting

Once again we owe a great debt to David "Twidget" Weber for his hard work on the association website. David has been having trouble with our hosting service for some time (see *Twidget's Corner* in this issue), and has been hard at work for the last month migrating our site to a new service. He has many plans for improvements to the website, and he has decided to focus on the features most used by our members. If you don't regularly access the site, you're missing out on a great benefit of membership. The Photo Gallery alone justifies the visit, and that gallery is changing all the time as David and the technical team upload thousands of images to the site.

Nominating Committee Report

As required by our bylaws, the Nominating Committee has presented its recommendations to the Secretary for replacing those *Skyhawk* Association directors with terms expiring this year. Four terms expire in 2006: Hickerson, Powell, Weber and Williams. Directors Powell, Weber and Williams have been nominated for another three-year term. To replace outgoing Director Hickerson, the committee has nominated member Bill Gilchrist of San Diego. Bill is very active in the *USS Midway* Association and has taken the lead on restoring *Midway's* Attack Ready Room. He has a great background appropriate to *Skyhawk* Association programs, so we're excited about his nomination.

The Nominating Committee will present a new slate of officers at the Annual Meeting as well, and the board will vote on that slate at a special meeting following the luncheon. When elected, the officers will serve during 2007 and 2008.

Hope to see you in D.C.

A-4s Forever.

Raven.

continued on page 4



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BOMBS AWAY!

• Fall 2006 •



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Published by the Skyhawk Association © 2006

Contributions

We actively seek contributions from members, including news, photos, historical documents, anecdotes and other items of interest. Submissions may be edited due to space limitations in the newsletter. Contributions may be emailed to the Newsletter Editor at newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org or mailed to Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624.

Stephanie Davis, graphics. Printed by NCCOAST Communications, Morehead City, NC.

Cover: Then USMC Captain John Garretson (now retired Navy Captain and M.D.) in VMA-324 A-4E over Mount Rainier on September 26, 1970. (Photographer was Skyhawk Association Director Mark Williams, at time of photo a Marine captain assigned to VMA-324 in Beaufort, S.C.)

THE PREZ SAYS MORE...



Not Too Late!

Skyhawk Association 2006 Annual Meeting and Symposium

October 27, 2006

Washington, D.C.

The 2006 Annual Meeting of Skyhawk Association will be held in conjunction with the Marine Corps Aviation Association (MCAA) Symposium on October, 27, 2006 in Northern Virginia. All Association members are urged to make plans to attend.

Skyhawk Association events have been planned to fit into the MCAA schedule on Friday, October 27th. For MCAA Symposium information, see www.flymcaa.org.

Time

Event

8:30 a.m. – 11:00 p.m.

Skyhawk Association Board Meeting (all members invited to attend). Meeting will be held at the National Air & Space Museum, Udvar-Hazy Center (Dulles International Airport)

11:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Skyhawk Association luncheon, Washington -Dulles Marriott. Guest Speakers will be: LtGen Tom Miller, USMC(ret) & RADM Whitey Feightner, USN(ret).

1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Special tour of NASM Udvar-Hazy Center with Museum Director MajGen Joe Anderson, USMC(ret)

LATE BREAKING NEWS

The Association is working with Collings Foundation to have their flying TA-4 make an appearance at the museum. Check the website for up-to-date information: (www.skyhawk.org).

5:00 p.m. - ???

Flight Jacket Happy Hour at MCAA (Sheraton Premiere, Tysons Corner, VA.)

Last minute reservation may be made by calling 806-543-3926.

Long-Range Schedule of Events

Mark Your Long-Range Calendar

The Board of Directors has approved:

- 2006 Symposium and Annual Meeting of Members: October 27, 2006, Udvar-Hazy Center, Washington, DC, in conjunction with MCAA Symposium 2006. See information in this issue or check www.skyhawk.org.
- Skyhawk Association Mid-winter Board Meeting and Mini-symposium: February 2-3, 2007 – Frontiers of Flight Museum, Dallas, Texas.
- All-Marine Skyhawk Reunion, sponsored by Skyhawk Association: April 26-29, 2007, Beaufort/Hilton Head, SC. This event is back on for next year. Stay tuned for more information (www.skyhawk.org).

R.G.'s ART

• A-4 Flight •



R. G. Smith, (1914-2001)
Named Honorary Naval
Aviator Number 10.

R.G. Smith painting of early A-4M flight loaded for bear. Titled "A-4Ms Under the SA-2s."



TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •

newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Ed. Note: In response to his request for information on his father, Major R.L. Snyder, Mark Snyder received the reply from Soupy Campbell published below. I asked Mark for permission to publish the letter, and he replied: "It's perfectly fine with me. I have heard from about a half dozen Marines that flew with my dad. Unfortunately, no one knew him closely. I appreciate the e-mails from everyone, and the Skyhawk Association for printing my request. On a side note, my father's namesake (my son) has just been awarded the Bronze Star for action in Iraq. Semper Fi, Mark"

To the Editor:

Dear Mark,

I saw your letter in the A4ever Skyhawk Association magazine. I was at Chu Lai at the time of your father's death and I'm pretty sure I was the last pilot to hear his voice. I didn't know him well but worked with him occasionally.

I checked my logbooks and the date of death you have may be wrong. According to my log book and alas, now fading memory, the missions were flown on May 3, 1967. That may be because your dad was shot down at night or actually early morning and was declared missing at first, and as I recall, wasn't declared as KIA until a couple of days later.

The mission was a night TPQ or radar-guided bombing mission with the target north of the demilitarized zone 30 miles or more. It was far enough north that my controller's radar kept breaking radar lock-on due to the extreme distance, and I had to fly five or six runs. As I recall it was a very dark moonless night with a lot of haze which caused Saint Elmo's Fire to form a large circle of blue electric light around the refueling probe as well as sparks dancing across the aircraft windscreen. I had flown my last run when I heard your dad check in with the TPQ controller. I flew back to base and didn't learn until the next morning that your dad had been shot down.

The mission was against a SAM site and I suspect that what happened was

that the site was being hastily assembled when I and any others before me attacked it. By the time your dad got there it was ready to launch. I flew another mission on the same site the next evening, and as far as I know we never had any problem with it after that.

As I said, I didn't know your dad well but recall him as a nice guy who was well liked by all. If you have any other questions or need more info, please contact me.

Semper Fi,
James R. "Soupy" Campbell
Major, USMC Ret.



To the Editor:

Mark:

You'll probably get a bunch of answers to your question about who is in the picture with your Dad, but I wanted to reply. Top left is the late Jack Fennel who was the Ops O of MARTD Willow Grove before me in the late 1960s. Vic Steele is standing right. Ken Langford is on the lower left. I don't know the circumstances of your Dad's death although I was in Vietnam flying F8s out of Danang at that time.

Semper Fidelis,
Bruce Martin
Colonel, USMC (Ret)
York, ME
bmartin6@maine.rr.com

(Ed. Note: this response to a request from Mark Snyder who was looking for information on his father, R.L. Snyder. The letter was published in the A-4Ever, Summer 2006.)



To the Editor:

Hi, Marines:

I would appreciate some direction as to where I might get some serious answers to this question. As well as one can from Australia, I have been looking at the Khe Sanh action in 1967-68. Gerry Carroll's book, *Ghostrider One*, states that a TA-4F Fast FAC, call sign not specified, actually saw and located the NVA 130 and 152 mm guns at Co Roc. Subsequently, a partially successful strike was laid on. (I have since been advised that the Marine FastFac call sign was Playboy).

I am well aware that Carroll's books are fact mixed with fiction. I recently obtained a copy of John Prados, *Valley of Decision*. This book seems to be the best reference for the Khe Sanh actions, but is Marine infantry based, and is not very aviation oriented. I can find no specific reference to any ground or air actions against the NVA long range artillery based at Co Roc.

I cannot find any other references as to whether we were able to suppress these guns. I would be most pleased if you could point me in the right direction here.

Thanking You,
Glen Duus Possum 24
SVN Sept 67 - Sept 68
duus@powerup.com.au

(Ed. Note: Playboy historian and member Larry Adkinson replied.)

Glen:

Playboy began its life as a consolidated Fast FAC in late January 1969 -- during the siege of Khe Sanh, Feb. 1968, each of the three fixed wing air groups, (MAG-11 at Danang, MAG-12 and MAG 13 at Chu Lai) had their own Det of TA-4s. So if you are talking about the siege -- when I was not yet back in RVN, I cannot help.

However, I vividly remember our Playboys (still using the old call sign "Manual" FAC) finding and hammering the arty at Co Roc during Operation Dewey Canyon in Feb. of 1969 -- this was when the 9th Marines really kicked some butt at the top of the Ashau Valley -- led by Col Bob Barrow, who eventually became CMC. I'm pretty sure that Capts Roy Moore and Steve Sewell initially found the guns (holes in the face

LETTERS

Continued...

of the cliffs) and then our A-4 buddies from Chu Lai (and the Playboys) had a field day chucking Zuni rockets in there for the next several days. That ended the career of those guns for the rest of the time we operated in that area (early 1970).

I hope this helps.

Semper Fi,

Larry Adkinson

(Ed. Note: Members may not be aware that Texas Tech University's Vietnam Center maintains the most comprehensive online research library of Vietnam material in the world. The archive is available to anyone, at no cost. Among many other documents, you can actually research the official USMC command chronologies for units that served in Vietnam. The site can be found at: (<http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/>). I have successfully pulled up copies of flight schedules from days I flew with the H&MS-11 Playboys in Da Nang. From the homepage, select "Research the Archive" and you will be given options to research the material by unit name, dates, type material and key word.)

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To the Editor:

Bob, I don't know if *The A-4Ever* has ever published this "quasi-sonnet" as it was originally authored by some members of VMA-224 while flying A4D-1s at NAS Iwakuni, Japan, circa 1957-58 (which later become a MCAS in 1958(+)). As the Navy was primarily flying patrol aircraft (P5M) from there, the Marines were there, also, flying in addition to A4s, ADs, F9F-8Ps, F3D-2Qs and R4Q-2s plus some wing/station support transport, i.e., R4D, R5D and SNB aircraft.

Needless to say, the Marines were often rowdy at the Navy O'Club having been stationed there on 15(+)-month unaccompanied tours while the Navy crews were there for the most part on accompanied tours with their families living on and off base. Friday and Saturday nights (not to exclude some other festive days and nights) were not

always met with friendly acceptance by those of the Marines' sister service---the Navy! On many occasions, the Marine pilots and related ground personnel were often "ushered" out of the club for what the Navy heirarchy and owners of the station considered conduct of a questionable nature for doing things like were written in the Commandments below. A 3' x 5' wooden plaque was erected at the front door of the O'Club which remained now and then but often was missing by those of unknown character. When I got there in 1959-1960 while in VMA-332 flying A4D-2s, the plaque vanished and no one seemed to know of its final demise. I, for one, never knew whether a Navy, Marine, Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) or DoD member disposed of it in any imaginable or unimaginable way. Anyway, I'm passing this along to you.

S/F, Joe "Toad" Homer

From VMA 224 (Circa 1957-1958)

Ten Commandments of a Far East Marine

Thou shalt not sing evil songs.

Thou shalt not eyeball the
Navy wives.

Thou shalt not inspect the kitchen.

Thou shalt not surrender
thy I.D. card.

Thou shalt not appear in
colored shirts.

Honor thy Navy brother,
seedy though he may be.

Thou shalt not march on Fridays.

Thou shalt not throw hand grenades.

Thou shalt not say
"Hello to the Navy."

Thou shalt not malign
Navy dependents.
Give them instead your pity.

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Bob: I have just read the latest *The A-4 Ever*. I am a *Skyhawk* pilot. I am a VA-163 Saint. I was John McCain's replacement from the RAG when he was shot down. I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN BARTLESVILLE, OK.

I am seriously conflicted over all the A-4 events scheduled in October in the magazine. I am certainly going to the Saints Reunion, Oct 6-8. I am looking forward to attending the annual meeting Oct. 27, as I live in the D.C. area. But how am I supposed to squeeze in the Bartlesville dedication, 26 or 28 Oct.? Obviously some will be able to fit in the dedication enroute to or from the board meeting, but that is not too practical for me, and I'll wager I am one of a handful of sons of Bartlesville who would like to attend. I am not suggesting that it be re-scheduled, but if there is a chance that it will slide any, I would like to know and can make an effort to attend. See you at the BOD meeting.

Scott Mitchell

ccsm249@comcast.net

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To the Editor:

For the past 7 or 8 years I have been trying to locate Lt. John B. Bain, as I knew him while training at the Ft. Lauderdale NAS during the period March 1945 - June 1945 during which we had some experiences that I would like to ask him about. He was commander of VA 15 in 1954. Would appreciate any help or direction you could give me.

Thanks John Cummings

Lawrence, KS.

MrCwithDQ@aol.com

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(Ed. Note: following is an email trail concerning an original work on the history of CVW-16 during the Rolling Thunder campaigns in Vietnam. The paper is excellent and should be of interest to many of our members.)

To the Editor:

September 07, 2005

Bob,

My name is Peter Fey. I'm an EA-6B ECMO currently attending the Command and General Staff College here in Leavenworth KS. I'm working on a master's while here and am writing

about Air Wing 16 and their experiences while flying off the *Oriskany*.

I've talked a bit w/ CAPT Foster, and he mentioned that you are running a story in *Skyhawk Quarterly* that he'd done about the Saints for *Hook*. Is there any chance I could get a copy? I don't know if you'll have it digitally or not. If snail mail is the preferred method, I can send funds as required for postage etc... Thank you for your time.

v/r

Peter Fey, LCDR USN

Monday, June 19, 2006

Sir,

Just wanted to let you know that we just finished up the school year here at Leavenworth. I really appreciate your help w/ the VA-163 info. I caused a bit of a ruckus here in the history dept--they liked my thesis enough to give me the top history honors. Anyway, I just mailed a copy of the thesis to the Vietnam Archives there at Texas Tech. Would you like a copy too?

Thanks again for your help. If you have any questions, please let me know. (And as a Navy guy, my Army email account will expire this week, so I've cc'd my home email if you need it).

v/r

Peter Fey, LCDR USN

Wed 8/9/2006

Sir,

The school just put the link (to my thesis) up: <http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/>

cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/p4013coll2&CISOPTR=560&REC=2

This will get people to the abstract, and they can click on the link for the PDF version of the paper. I'm sure anyone from the Saints or Ghostriders would appreciate it. Got a call from the director of the Naval Aviation Museum a few weeks ago--he was interested in it to say the least. Hopefully, folks can put it to good use.

Thanks again for all your help w/ it.

v/r

Peter Fey mustang_pedro@yahoo.com

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To the Editor:

Do you have information on the whereabouts of Ken Cameron's family? Ken was my roommate on USS *Saratoga* while deployed with VA-36 Roadrunners (*Skyhawks*) in '59-'61 era, with Air Group Three. He was XO in VA-76 when shot down over Vinh, 18 May '67. Was POW until he succumbed to poor treatment in prison; his remains were returned to CONUS, 6 March '74. Ken and I carpooled together, our wives were friends, our kids played together. I have never been able to make contact with Ken's wife and/or family. Any help will be much appreciated.

Jim Roth

badfrog999@aol.com

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Send your letter to
newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org

(Ed. Note: I received this email from member Bob Schneider concerning the picture of the A-4M flying formation with the F-4U, which was published in the A-4Ever, Summer 2006. Bob sent the photo shown here.



It seems that an arriving P-51 saw the gaggle and decided to join up. I asked Bob if he was involved in the show. His reply follows.)

To the Editor:

Yes, I was. On Friday I flew the A-26 and Sat/Sun both the *Corsair* and the A-26. If I remember, we had two *Corsairs* that weekend, and Howard Pardue was in his and lost his engine and had to have an overhauled unit shipped in from Breckenridge a couple of months later, as it was the end of the air show season in October.

Bob Schneider (snakbar)
snakbar@classicnet.net

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SKYHAWK

Contacts & Information Resources



Need

Skyhawk Association Website
For General Information
(Check this page first)
Membership Information
Newsletter Submissions
Research Skyhawk Information
To Locate a Squadron SDO
(complete list of SDOs)
To Access the Ready Room (Members Only)
Information on Corporate Affiliations
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Stan Martin

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Dan Brannon, Skyhawk Association Director

Margaret Bone, Managing Editor
Joe Turpin
Steve Richmond, Skyhawk Association Treasurer
Tom "Auggie" Wondergem

TESTING THE X AND YA-4D

By MajGen Hal W. Vincent, USMC (ret)



The history of the A4 development is interesting from the first X and Y models in 1955 through the final project, the A4M, some 20 years later. I flew the first YA4D in test work starting in November 1955, followed by VX-5 in weapons development, and at each level of command for 26 years until separation in 1981.

Test flights discussed here include Navy Preliminary Evaluations (NPE) at Edwards AFB; early flight tests in the Flying Qualities and Performance Branch of Flight Test at Patuxent River, Maryland, and work with Douglas Aircraft Company (DAC) test pilots Bob Rahn, Cal Shoemaker and Drury Wood at Edwards AFB. The majority of the test flights were flown out of the Flight Test branch at Patuxent River in 1955-1958, following my graduation from Test Pilot School training.

I was assigned to the Flight Test Branch in July 1955, after completion of six months training at the Test Pilot School. Test Pilot School curriculum was evenly split between flying and class work, with test flights usually scheduled in the afternoons. After each flight the student was required to write a detailed paper on flight results, including graphs. Each pilot was issued an

Ames Gauge to measure stick forces, a stopwatch, and given specific requirements to observe and record.

My first flight was a "time and data to climb to altitude" exercise. All information, such as time, RPM, temps, airspeed, fuel flow, etc., had to be recorded. I quickly found that the secret to being a good test pilot was to be left-handed, i.e., able fly the plane with the right hand while writing and taking data with the left hand. I rushed to get my first flight report in with a really smooth curve graph and lots of data, detailing the climb to altitude in an F9F-8. My performance instructor was LT Jim Stockdale (later Vice Admiral and a POW), and he gave me a *C plus* due to two misspelled words, in spite of excellent data. It was his first paper and my first submission. In spite of this lousy start, I managed to be sent to Flight Test in July 1955.

There were ten pilots in the branch, including Al Shepard (later astronaut); Tom Hayward (later CNO); Don Engen (later FAA head); Lynn Helms (a Marine, later head of Piper Aircraft and the FAA); Gordo Gray (later a 3k world record holder in the A4); George Watkins (2nd tour and first Navy pilot with 1000 CV landings); Bill Lawrence (later Vice Admiral and POW); Hank Hancock (Annapolis classmate and TPS classmate), and branch head CDR Larry Flint, who had previous tour with VX-3.

Upon arrival in Flight Test as the "new boy," I was given prime responsibility for the F7U3M and the S2F, and assigned as assistant on the new YA4, YF8, and YA3D. In Flight Test it was the policy for each of us to fly *ALL* the airplanes so we could better evaluate new planes on NPEs, etc., when they became available. However, each pilot was given specific responsibilities for certain aircraft.

Some of the pilots, including Gordo Gray, had gone to Edwards before my arrival in early 1955 to fly the first NPE on the A4. Mr. Ed Heinemann, Chief Engineer at Douglas Aircraft, had convinced his company that there was a requirement for a simple plane that could carry a special weapon on the centerline with wing tanks on the two outboard stations. Douglas built the prototype with its own money, and we were to evaluate it.

The first YA4, 137816, arrived at Flight Test in the fall of 1955 and was assigned exclusively to the Carrier Suitability Branch of Flight Test, a separate branch from the Flying Qualities and Performance Branch to which I was assigned. They received this plane to do field CV suitability on it, because gear problems required that the gear remain down at all times. They flew many field carrier passes, and the project officer was Maj Jim Felliton, USMC.

(Ed. Note: Gen Vincent believes that Maj Felliton was the first Marine to fly the A-4. In a previous issue, we attributed that first to then-Maj Tom Miller. LtGen Miller was actually the first Marine to fly the production A4D-1.)

Later, they let me and the other A4 project pilot fly it. My first flight was in November 1955. I made some eight landings, after performing slow flight and stalls. During this same period,



A4D-1 137812 at Edwards returning from first flight June 22, 1954. Douglas test pilot Robert O. Rahn at controls.

company pilots were busy expanding the envelope. Douglas pilot Jimmy Verdin was doing stick force per g (Fe/G) near the Salton Sea, which required increased g up to the stall when he encountered one of the serious problems with the early A4, which was that one slat would hang up during accelerated stalls. He snap-rolled the plane and hit his head on the side of the canopy rail so hard, it was rumored that eye tissue was found on the side steel canopy frame. The plane crashed, and he was killed. In any case, the test planes we received had the standard heavy, green padded covering on the frame that you are all familiar with.

The first YA4 plane assigned to our branch was 137818, which arrived in early 1956 for the Bureau of Inspection and Survey tests (BIS). Guidance from BIS was to evaluate airplanes during an accelerated 60-day period, in order to discover major discrepancies before further testing and final determination of configuration. Gordo and I, and others in the Flying Qualities and Performance Branch, flew the plane a lot, exploring stick force per g, minimum distance take-offs and landings, flying qualities, fuel specifics and maximum performance runs. For the maximum speeds, the pilot would fly at 2000 feet and the engineers would reduce the data to sea level and standard conditions. A photo panel with selected flight and test instruments was installed in the "hell hole" of the test airplane. The pilot would only have to record frame numbers when he recorded data, and the engineer would read and reduce the data upon landing. This was far easier than the methods used during Test Pilot training.

Later that summer, the Fleet Introduction program (FIP) was conducted at Service Test, and I believe that Maj Tom Miller (later LtGen) was the first Marine to fly a "production" model, although this plane still didn't have many of the fixes we had recommended. These first four aircraft were really challenging. They weighed some 9800 pounds empty, and everything seemed to go wrong on test flights. During these early flights we discovered that the speed brakes cracked in a high speed dive, that the metal flange alongside the vertical tail peeled back in high



Douglas technician works on YA4D-1 137812 at El Segundo in early 1954.

speed runs and that the slats tended to hang up, resulting in terrible accelerated stalls. In addition, the oil pressure gage was only a simple flip gage, with barber poles being the only indication of pump/oil failure.

As the failures were encountered, the failed part was removed, put on an airline flight to Douglas and returned quickly to be re-installed by one of the many Douglas techs for further tests. The plane had been built very close to the "structural margin," so there were many parts that failed. We worked closely with the company test pilots, and sometimes on NPEs they would give us "back door" info on discrepancies that the company was not taking

care of. For example, on one NPE, a company pilot briefed us on the conditions which would result in Pilot Induced Oscillation (PIO) in the plane. The company would not acknowledge the problem, and it wasn't until we military test pilots duplicated the condition that it was fixed. This back door info, which we kept confidential, helped immensely on NPEs as we military pilots normally got only a maximum of three flights each to determine discrepancies.

Back in Flight Test, we continued with the testing to include minimum distance takeoff and landing performance, climb performance, speed at altitudes and carrier suitability. We received another plane, *continued...*



A4D-1 137820 in flight on October 14, 1955.

X AND YA-4D

Continued...

137826, for further data accumulation, and in September 1956, we received 137819 for fuel testing and specifics. We continued to find fault with many features of that early A4, most of them structural failures and low g availability. Two of us were dispatched to Edwards AFB to evaluate two X models. One had a "potato chip washed out wing" (WOW) that stopped some span-wise air flow and gave us 0.5 more g. We also evaluated another aircraft with a cambered leading edge, similar to that installed on the FJ-4. Unfortunately, neither modification helped much. While there, we also tested the first YA4D-2, 142082. It was a great improvement over the first YA4D-1, both structurally and from a flying-qualities standpoint.

During the testing, enough unfavorable comments were written about the A4D-1 to cause CNO and BUAER to send Lt Hank Hancock and me to North American Aviation at Columbus, Ohio, to evaluate the FJ-4 with a Mk 28 Special Weapon on the right wing as a possible replacement for the poor-performing A4. As it turned out, in the FJ-4 we had to attain 156 KIAS with the stick/aileron full to the left side to have enough control effectiveness to raise the wing on takeoff-- then, in a steep dive with speed brakes out, the plane went supersonic due to little speed brake effectiveness. The plane, designed as a fighter, had only about three pounds per g versus some seven-eight pounds

per g required in an attack plane. At approximately 560 KIAS, the FJ-4 had little or no aileron control. One could see the vapor on the wings as the ailerons attempted to turn the plane, but it rolled about 3 deg/sec opposite to the control input. There was just not enough pressure available in the aileron when deflected to produce a rate of roll under those conditions.

North American responded quickly to put an additional set of speed brakes on the FJ-4, to fix the control system and to put spoilers on the plane (which gave a reasonable rate of roll of 40 deg/sec at high speed with the asymmetric Mk 28 on the right wing). After all of this, Ed Heinemann saw that we were seriously considering termination of his plane. Douglas finally worked really hard to fix the problems demonstrated by the A4 during testing, and it was chosen as the plane to buy in numbers.

My tour in Flight Test concluded when I left to go to the first USMC West Coast F8 squadron in 1958; however, in 1960 my involvement with the A4 continued with my assignment as Conventional Weapons Development Officer and Test Pilot at Air Development Squadron 5 (VX-5) at China Lake. At VX-5, I relieved Bill Fitch (later LtGen Fitch) who had invented the Multiple Carriage Bomb Rack (MCBR). I was given the CNO Conventional Weapons Project O/V5.

A change in National Strategy happened soon thereafter, when President



A4D-1 137816 participating in carrier suitability trails on September 19, 1956.

Kennedy read Maxwell Taylor's book, *Uncertain Trumpet*, which concluded that the U.S. needed a conventional weapons capability rather than relying solely on the Eisenhower strategy of nuclear weapons only. Overnight, VX-5 expanded my project, and we tested all the new conventional weapons and developed the Conventional Weapons Delivery Supplement (CWDS) so familiar to pilots. We also developed delivery tactics for all the weapons, including sight settings and procedures. It wasn't long before President Kennedy came to China Lake for demonstrations of all our tactics and weapons, so he could see what his money had accomplished.

At various commands, I later flew all models of the A4 through the M, including #2960, the last production A4 (Easter Egg) which is now on static display at the Flying Leatherneck Museum, Miramar, CA. All in all, it was a great 26 years with the A4. *What a plane – FINALLY.*

(Ed. Note: In a future issue, General Vincent will report on his work at VX-5, China Lake.)

MajGen Vincent retired from the Marine Corps in 1981, following a 31-year career in which he commanded aviation units from squadron (VMFA-314) to wing (2nd MAW). A 1946 graduate of the Naval Academy, General Vincent was associated with the A-4 from the mid-50s to the early 80s, encompassing flights in the X and YA4D-1s to the last production A-4M in 2nd MAW. He has agreed to provide a sequel relating his experiences in early weapons testing for the A-4 at China Lake.



A4D-1 137822 on test flight July 20, 1956.

THE AIR BARONS

• The Other Navy Flight Demonstration Team •

By Richard Shipman



Mention U.S. Navy flight demonstration teams and one name comes to mind: the Blue Angels. For years, the “Blues” have been thrilling crowds with their aerial exhibitions in a variety of fleet aircraft, including the A-4F. But there was another Navy flight demonstration team – flying the A-4, no less – that performed for thousands of people and brought credit to the U.S. Navy, Naval Aviation and the A-4.

That team was the “Air Barons,” a group of Naval Air reservists based at NAS Glenview, Chicago, Illinois. Flying early model A-4Bs (later converted to A-4Ls), the Air Barons performed shows for more than 10 million people during their five years of existence.

The Air Barons started informally. In 1967, NAS Glenview had several Naval Air Reserve squadrons flying A-4B *Skyhawks*. One weekend, the Chief of Naval Air Reserve training staff received a request from officials

at Toronto, Canada, to participate in an upcoming air show. The staff forwarded the request to one of the squadrons, VA-725, and its skipper, CDR Jim Mahoney, agreed to participate.

“We went up to Toronto for the show, and the first thing we did was to attend the briefing,” CDR Mahoney recalled. “This air show was a big deal. The Blues, T Birds and several international flight demonstration teams were performing. Each team had a representative who stood up to brief the others

on their show. The first briefer was from the Royal Air Force, and he was the epitome of what you would expect. He was decked out in a tweed suit, sported a handle-bar moustache and puffed on a white Meerschaum pipe. He gave a detailed brief that covered times, locations, rendezvous points, etc., all in his crisp British accent. Very professional, very impressive. Then the guy we picked to do the briefing gets up and starts drawling ‘Well, if we can get all these oily sons of bitches started at the same time...’ I vowed then and there that if we were going to do this air show business, we were going to start doing it right!”

The briefing may not have been impressive at Toronto, but the flying was. Propelled by this success, the team continued to do air shows, funded to a great extent “out of the rear pocket” of Admiral Greer, the Chief of Naval Air Reserve. The Air Barons proved to be in high demand. And why not? They put on a great show, and were dirt cheap for the show sponsors. While the Blues and Thunderbirds required considerable sums of money to support their performances, the Air Barons asked for only \$25 a day per diem for *continued...*



1971 Air Barons team pictured left to right: Narrator/Officer-in-Charge CDR Jim Mahoney, Baron One/Flight Leader LCDR Phil Lockard, Baron Two/Right Wing LT C.D. Ewell, Baron Three/Left Wing LT Dick Brent, Baron Four/Slot CDR Terry Denton, Baron Five/Delta Left LCDR Don Wells, Baron Six/Delta Right LT Bill Underdown.

AIR BARONS

Continued...

each of the 14 team members. All team members, with the exception of the senior officer and enlisted man, shared hotel rooms, with a \$16 ceiling on the cost of the double rooms! This meant that a military jet flight demonstration team had become affordable for many smaller cities that otherwise could never dream of hosting such a popular event. For the Navy and Naval Air Reserve, it meant that its recruiting and public affairs efforts could be extended to many middle America locations that would never see the Blue Angels.

Another appeal of the Air Barons was their civilian/military status that helped them relate to the civilian audiences. The pilots that comprised the Air Barons were a typical mix of personalities and professions found throughout the Naval Air Reserve. The leader, CDR Jim Mahoney, was a self employed executive in insurance and finance. Other members of the team were airline pilots, bankers and businessmen. The right wingman, Phil Lockard, was the promotion art director for Playboy Magazine, a position that earned the Air Barons a lot of favors, recalled CDR Mahoney.

All shared attributes typical of Naval Air Reservists: talent, experience and a desire to remain affiliated with naval aviation.

The Air Barons continued to improve their performance as they did more shows. They discovered a plot of land in Wisconsin that was designed to be a major airfield, known as Bong Field. The airstrip had been laid out, but was never developed. It proved to be an ideal practice area where the team could fly low and fast to practice its maneuvers.

"The team first flew A-4Bs, straight off the flight line."

The team received another big boost with the addition of LCDR Dan McIntyre to the team. Dan had spent fifteen years on active duty and had been a member of the Blue Angels. When he joined the team, he recommended that they fly the shows at 250- 275 knots instead of the 425 – 450 they had been flying before. ("I knew my arm came back awfully tired after an air show," recalled Jim Mahoney.) Dan also directed the formation from the slot position, improving aircraft position and symmetry. Eventually, Jim Mahoney became team officer in charge, and Dan McIntyre took over as the lead.

Fielding a flight demonstration team required more than just airplanes and pilots. With a combination of ingenuity, hard work and good fortune, the Air Barons gradually acquired the trappings that polished their image. Their slick red brochure, for example, was funded by Douglas Aircraft. In the late sixties, McDonnell Aircraft Corporation had not yet merged with Douglas, and the other flight demonstration teams were flying F-4s. Zeke Cormeier, a former Blue Angel who was working at Douglas, saw an opportunity for some mutually favorable publicity through the Air Barons. Douglas offered to produce the brochure in exchange for a section devoted to their aircraft. The rest of the brochure described the maneuvers the team flew and the mission of the Naval Air Reserve.

CDR Mahoney also wanted to jazz up the appearance of the pilots. Initially, he purchased some industrial grade overalls and dyed them red. As time progressed, however, he wanted something better. They found what they were looking for on the West Coast from the same supplier that outfitted the Blue Angels. CDR Mahoney recalled paying an outrageous sum of money for the flight suits which were satin, beautiful – and totally unusable in the aircraft. CDR Mahoney threatened bodily injury





The U.S. Naval Air Reserve Tactical Flight Demonstration Team

AIR BARONS

to anyone who so much as climbed into the cockpit in these beautiful, but fragile flight suits, so the team members would do a quick change behind their aircraft after fulfilling their public relations duties in their sierra hotel flight suits.

The team first flew A-4Bs, straight off the flight line. When the Blue Angels transitioned to the A-4 later on, their aircraft were significantly modified. These modifications included flight control alterations to increase available nose-down trim, addition of inverted flight oil tanks, bolted up slats and a smoke system. (The Air Barons "smoke" system was a model of simplicity – the fuel dump switch.) The Air Barons, on the other hand, flew stock – and old – A-4s. In a way, this was an advantage. If an aircraft went down for mechanical problems, the team simply called Glenview and another aircraft flew out to join the show. ("We left aircraft all over the country," recalled CDR Mahoney.)

As it performed more shows, the team continued to gain respect and recognition. In 1969, the team gained a new respectability when it was officially recognized by the Department of Defense. This meant that the team had official sanction and could be more out in the open than before. For the Navy, it meant they had another valuable recruiting and public relations asset that could be used to meet the never ending demand for air show performances.

The Air Barons performed a show that highlighted many tactical maneuvers flown in fighter/attack squadrons. High angle dive bombing, roll-ahead weapons delivery, opposed half-Cuban eights and aerial refueling were maneu-

vers incorporated into the show, along with the six plane delta and four plane diamond formations. In many respects, the Air Barons show demonstrated maneuvers more typical to Naval Aviation than the Blue Angels.

The Air Barons were disestablished in December 1971 for a variety of reasons, none of which related to a lack of demand for their services or any problem with their performance. For years NAS Glenview had been fighting noise problems with the neighborhoods bordering the airport, and the jet aircraft squadrons were being phased out. The Air Barons were the last jet squadron based at Glenview and it became obvious to everyone that their days were numbered.

The second nail in the Air Barons' coffin was one of the periodic budget crunches that hit the Naval Air Reserve in the early '70s, and forced it to cut bases, personnel and equipment. The Air Barons seemed a luxury in those austere times. Finally, Admiral Greer, the strong supporter of the Air Barons, was transferred from his job as Chief of Naval Air Reserve Training.



The Air Barons flew a total of five years, three as an officially sanctioned Navy flight demonstration team. Their performances took the message of the Naval Air Reserve and naval aviation to millions of Americans. Despite the demands of precision formation and aerobatic flight, the Air Barons' history was unmarred by accident or fatality. The Air Barons' history was short, but its legacy was long. For the Skyhawk, it was one more chapter in the illustrious history of this versatile and capable aircraft.

THE LAST (AND FIRST) A-4 OUT OF KHE SAHN

By Gerald "Cobra" Ellis, USMC (Ret).



At 0630 on a bright, sunny morning in June 1968, as I arrived at the VMA-211 squadron area in Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam, the squadron Commanding Officer, LtCol Leo Leblanc (The Lion) met me at the hangar door and said, "I have been looking for you. There is a CH-53 helo inbound, I want you to take some troops and equipment and go to Khe Sahn and get our bird out of there." My initial reply was, "You've got to be kidding me, Skipper. We do not have any planes at Khe Sahn." He replied, "Well we do now. Lt Corbit (Arnold Bruce Corbit) on the dawn patrol just landed there".

As the skipper brought me up to speed, I learned that Corbit had turned downwind after being cleared for a bombing run, and with no further communications had landed uphill into a twelve knot wind on the three thousand foot metal runway at Khe Sahn. The little information that we had at the time sounded like a complete electrical failure, or maybe a DC rectifier failure.

After landing, Corbit said that he was convinced he had been hit, since the fuel gauge was going down and he had lost all of his instruments, interior and external lights and the radio. Believing that he was running out of fuel, he dropped the gear and landed, much to the surprise of his flight leader and everyone on the ground.

As the squadron maintenance officer, I was nominated to go fix the bird and bring it home. I gathered up a team of five technicians, ordnance, electrical, and flight line, along with a GTC-85 starting unit, three tires, a generator, a constant speed drive, a DC rectifier and two JATO bottles since we were convinced that it would require JATO to get the plane off of the short runway. Within the hour, the helo arrived and we were on our way to Khe Sahn.

When we arrived, the field was taking sporadic mortar fire and the helo spiraled down as if it were making an autorotation approach. We landed, got our gear off the helo and dove into a nearby

bunker. The helo was loaded with some med-evacs, and Lt Corbit and was off and away in less than ten minutes.

When the mortar fire eased up, we got to the bird and began to assess the situation. There were five or six revetments east of the runway, and airfield personnel had already had the plane in and out of three of them. They would move the plane every time that the mortars started getting close. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the plane was in very good shape, but unbelievably, it was still fully loaded with twelve Snake-Eye bombs and two napalm tanks. Not only that, there was still fuel remaining in the center line tank. The electrician quickly determined that the problem was the DC rectifier, and by the time that he had that changed the rest of us had changed, all three tires and down-loaded the ordnance, the center line tank and the multiple ejector bomb racks.

The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) personnel at Khe Sahn were delighted to get the bombs and napalm from us and were instantly busy making booby traps for that night. Convinced that I would be taking off in less than an hour, I told the ordnance NCO to load and check out the JATO, and I left to find all of us some chow.

I had been greeted upon arrival by the Air Base OIC, Maj John Havlik. John and I had been in a squadron the year before on a Med cruise, so it was good to see him again. He stayed around the bird while we were working on it and saw to it that we had lots of help and assistance. He took all the troops to the air base mess hall, which was in a bunker about twenty feet under ground, and then he and I ate in his office. The entire base was an underground honeycomb of tunnels and bunkers, like nothing that I had ever seen or experienced.

Returning to the plane a little after noon, I was informed that the JATO was loaded, but they had not been able to get any power to the firing circuit. We spent the next four hours trying to fix the problem. About 4:00 p.m., Maj Havlik informed me that I had about twenty minutes to get the plane out of there, or I would have to spend the night. He explained that they gave the south end of the runway to the Gooks at night by stretching barbed wire across the run-



An aerial view of Khe Sahn RVN showing A-4E 151045 in revetment.

way about 1000 feet from the end.

I knew that I had to take off to the south because of the mountains to the north. The winds had been constant all day at ten to twelve knots from the north. The south end of the runway dropped off sharply into a deep valley which was about three miles across and under control of the Viet Cong. So I was faced with a down hill, downwind, take off from a very short runway. We got in Havlik's Jeep and drove up the runway to the north end, where there was a dirt road which went up the hill another 1000 feet or so, to a 105 artillery position. The road appeared to be solid enough to support the A-4, so my plan was to use it and the runway for take off.

Back at the plane, we down loaded the JATO. I mounted up and started the engine, taxied to the end of the runway, onto the dirt road and up the hill to the artillery pit. The artillery troops had to move out of the gun pit because of the jet blast. Adding full power, I roared down the road, bounced onto the runway, and the plane lifted off just as I ran out of runway. Once airborne, I just had to say goodbye with a high speed pass down the runway.

There were a lot of mixed emotions in the squadron, the group and the wing about Corbit's decision to land at Khe Sahn. Had Lt Corbit known the true condition of the aircraft, we all knew



Major Gerald "Cobra" Ellis, Chu Lai, 1968.

that he would not have opted to land on such a short strip. However, he was convinced that he had been hit and was in immediate danger of flaming out over enemy territory. He said later that he had his ordnance switches on, and that he tried to drop the ordnance, but it would not come off. This would be true. With a DC rectifier failure, the only way to get the external stores off was the emergency bomb release. The bottom line is that once he made up his mind to land,

he did a great job of landing on a short strip without blowing a tire or doing any further damage to the airplane.

The maintenance troops returned the next day, after spending the night at Khe Sahn. One Marine had been wounded in the foot by mortar fragments and another had a sore foot from falling while moving the airplane from one revetment to another. To a man they agreed that we had it pretty good at Chu Lai.

Later investigation revealed the JATO problem. We had received that aircraft from the Navy about three months before. The Navy squadron had installed some new missile warning gear in their aircraft during the cruise. During the installation someone had decided to use the electrical connection to the JATO circuit for power for the missile warning system since the Navy seldom used JATO. We discovered that the only way to get power to the JATO circuit was to turn on both the JATO and the missile warning systems. We had three other birds with the same problem and immediately notified all A-4 squadrons.

Semper Fi!

Cobra

Ed. Note: this article originally appeared in the Marine Corps Aviation Association quarterly publication, The Yellow Sheet. Reprinted with permission. Colonel Ellis is retired from the Marine Corps and lives in San Antonio, Texas.



VMA-211 A-4E 151045 is prepared for departure from Khe Sahn, 9 June 1968.

ANATOMY OF A RESTORATION

By Joe Turpen and Mark Williams

When your mission is to inspire individuals and encourage them to believe in their own abilities and dreams by linking aviation's past to the future, what better project than to restore an airplane of historical significance and tie it to the story of a Viet Nam prisoner of war? The Virginia Aviation Foundation recently did just that when it funded the restoration of an A-4 *Skyhawk* to be displayed in the Virginia Aviation Museum.

The story begins with the discovery of an A-4C that was located at the airfield at the Navy Surface Warfare Center, Dahlgren, VA. The aircraft had been used for antenna tests and was in very bad shape – destined for burial at sea in Chesapeake Bay. The initial plan was for an Army helicopter to airlift that *Skyhawk* to Byrd Field/Richmond International Airport, the home of the Virginia Aviation Museum; however, for a variety of reasons, the procurement of that particular A-4 fell through. At that point, Col. Mike Boehme, USAF (Ret), Director of the Virginia Aviation Museum, and Curator David Hahn located several A-4Cs at the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, FL.

Once the Museum of Naval Aviation was persuaded to turn one over to the Virginia Aviation Museum, A-4C Bu. No. 148543 was disassembled and transported to Richmond International

Airport by Worldwide Aircraft Recovery. The aircraft arrived on 28 November 2005, and assembly began at once. It was then moved for safekeeping and painting to the hangar of the 192nd Fighter Wing of the Virginia Air National Guard at the airport.

The museum wanted to restore the aircraft and give it a new identity by painting it in the markings of VA-216, the squadron in which then LT Paul Galanti flew when he was shot down over North Viet Nam in 1966. CDR Galanti is a former chairman of the Virginia Aviation Foundation.

The museum director, curator, and CDR Galanti met with LTCDR John Wood and LTJG Greg Dorion of VFA-106, concerning the restoration of the *Skyhawk*. These officers presented the idea to then Commanding Officer CAPT Steve Brennan who gave his approval for the project. Five aviation structural mechanics (AM) who volunteered to conduct the restoration were AM2 Trevor Davidson, AM2 Brian Pittman, AM2 Jason Poole, AM3 Francisco Beltran and AM3 Robert Mayette.

On 5 March 2006, these men traveled to Richmond to refurbish and paint the airplane in the hangar of the 192nd Fighter Wing. They accomplished this feat in seven days with willing assistance from the maintenance personnel of



CDR Lew Chatham with airplane he flew in combat with his name and that of LCDR Paul Galanti.

the 192nd Fighter Wing. Local aviation enthusiasts and benefactors covered the metalsmiths' expenses. The maintenance personnel of the 192nd Maintenance Group fabricated dummy Mk12 cannons, several missing panels, as well as the display plaque. The plaque, located on the nose-wheel door, lists the names of the Navy aviation metalsmiths and the Air National Guard personnel who performed the restoration, as well as the names of the officers who participated in the 1965-1966 Westpac Cruise of VA-216.

The restored *Skyhawk* is now painted as NP-694, Bu. No. 148442. LTJG Galanti's name is painted on the left side of the aircraft. Interestingly, there is a name painted on the right side of the aircraft, LCDR Lew Chatham. LCDR Lew Chatham was LTJG Galanti's role model and mentor in VA-216. He was leading the flight on 17 June 1966, when



148543 arrives at the Virginia Aviation Museum



Aviation Metalsmiths who painted airplane (L-R): AM2(AW) Poole; AM2 Davidson; AM3 Mayette; AM2(AW) Pittman, & AM2(AW) Beltran.

then LT Galanti was shot down and was present at Clark AFB, Philippines, on 12 February 1973, when the first group of POWs returned. LCDR Chatham carried the inscription "LCDR Paul Galanti POW" under his name on all his aircraft until LCDR Galanti came home.

The restored *Skyhawk* made its debut as the centerpiece of the "Festival of Wings" Event/VA-216 reunion held April 27-30, 2006, at the Virginia Air National Guard facility. Most of the living members of VA-216 from the 1965-66 USS *Hancock* cruise attended. Among the four hundred people in attendance at the dinner were the AMs of Strike Fighter Squadron 106 who accomplished the restoration, their Commanding Officer CDR Andy Lewis, maintenance officer, aircraft division officer and maintenance chief.

The aircraft is now located at the Virginia Aviation Museum at Richmond International Airport. Two *Skyhawk* models built by A-4 *Skyhawk* Association member Nick Monopoli are located in a glass case as part of the display. They are NP 693, the aircraft Lt. Galanti was shot down in, and NP 694, which had his name on the canopy rail and is the one now displayed in the museum.

Thanks to the following people for their assistance in the preparation of this article: Paul Galanti, CDR USN (Ret); LT Robert Roy, PAO VFA-106; Jack Parry, CAPT USNR (Ret), Executive Director Belmont Bay Science Center; Col. Carl Bess, Commander 192nd Maintenance Group, Virginia Air National Guard.



Lew Chatham, RADM USN (Ret), at side of restored airplane painted as NP694.



Paul Galanti in front of restored airplane painted as NP694 with his name on left side.



Plaque on nosewheel door showing Navy and Air National Guard personnel who restored airplane and the pilots who participated in the 1965-1966 Westpac Cruise of VA-216.

HOW TO JOIN YOUR "NEW" SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION READY ROOM

One of the great benefits of membership is being able to access the **members only** features found in the **Skyhawk Association Ready Room**. If you will follow the steps below to gain access, using the Ready Room will be straightforward after that. You will be able browse the extensive gallery of A-4 images, research the history of aircraft by bureau number, view the membership roster, participate in a private forum and more.

TAKE TIME TO JOIN TODAY!

Existing members contact the RR Coordinator.

Follow these easy steps:

1. Go to <http://www.saprivate.a4skyhawk.org/> (Not advertised to the public)
2. Read the instructions before continuing!
3. Click on one of the "Ready Room Coordinator" links on the page.
4. Your email client will open a window addressed to the Coordinator.
5. In the email send your preferred login name, your full name, and your preferred password to the RR Coordinator.
6. The Coordinator will set up your account and notify you when it is ready. readyroomcoor@a4skyhawk.org.



PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul

Flarelight

There was no horizon. Clouds were everywhere, and it was as dark as only it can be at sea. "Real good--perfect vertigo weather," queased Puresome, whose A-4 Skyhawk was sitting on the number one catapult of the USS Independence at the inconvenient hour of 0315.

He had come to be there due to the whims of Norman the Fink, the beloved schedules officer, and the fact the ship had just taken over the midnight to noon schedule from the USS *Oriskany*, the other boat on Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin. Since the Gomers had learned that it was not real smart to move during the daylight, trucks, barges, and rice ball laden bicycles streamed south down the various parts of the Ho Chi Minh Trail at

night, sometimes, you couldn't see a gol-darn thing. Night road recce missions produced almost as much quease as a Naval Aviator's primary mission of getting back aboard the boat in the dark without a prang.

The Snake Squadron's spiffy new A4Es had a couple of toys that helped some. A navigation computer, which was kind of a Divine Clock that whirred and clicked, offered up a needle that pointed

"The big advantage of the A4E over earlier models was that it had two more under wing weapon stations, so it could carry enough external gas, along with things that went boom, that most missions did not require airborne tanking, which could be problematic in dark, bouncy weather."

in the proper direction and a distance read-out to targets. But, being a Divine Clock, the yanking and banking of tactical aviation and smacking the deck during carrier landings ensured that the thing was usually *Tango Uniform*. The Scooter also had a mapping radar, which was good for finding things like continents and blivets like big iron boats. The big advantage of the A4E over earlier models was that it had two more under wing weapon stations, so it could carry enough external gas, along with things that went boom, that most missions did not require airborne tanking, which could be problematic in dark, bouncy weather.

Encapsulated in his tiny, red-lit cockpit, Puresome saw the Catapult Shooter's lighted yellow wands appear in the gloom. One pointed at him, and the other twirled above the dim figure's head. Puresome ran his throttle forward and watched the engine instruments spool up to full power. He had already turned on his

goose-necked flashlight that was stuck in the front of his torso harness so it would shine on the instrument panel in case of electrical failure during the cat shot, and he had set his radar altimeter bug to alert him if he settled toward the water after launch. "*Last chance to chickenshit out!*" Puresome thought as he checked his instruments. Unfortunately, everything was tickedy-boo, so he wiped out the cockpit with the control stick, braced his left hand against the throttle, and flicked the switch on it to turn on his external lights, the night-time salute to the Catapult Officer. With the Scooter trembling against the holdback fitting at full power, Puresome locked his head against the headrest, focused on the Abbajabba all-attitude indicator, and put his right elbow against his belly with his hand open. Yellow wands twirled, pointed, and swooped down to the deck. The catapult fired, forcing Puresome back in the seat and bringing the control stick back to his hand. He held it there and was hurled into the black.

When his eyes cleared from the force of the shot, Puresome found that everything had gone all right, and he was flying. He concentrated on flying instruments, retracted his gear, and climbed away from the water. Unlike his pal, Worm, who felt that being close to the ocean lead to the dreaded bust-your-hiney syndrome, so he immediately climbed to the lower troposphere as fast as his Scooter would take him, Puresome dutifully climbed to a thousand feet, cleaned up his airplane, and pooted out to ten miles before arcing over to the TACAN radial that had been assigned to the Snakes for departure and climbing up for rendezvous. Fortunately, the rendezvous point was in the clear above the cloud deck, and Puresome started a lazy circle. While he waited for his wingman, Pee-nut, to come up and join; he started thinking about the upcoming night carrier landing. It would never stray from the corner of his mind.

But, while the A-6 pilot followed his Highway In The Sky display to the target, assisted by a bombardier/navigator typing a thousand words a minute into the Digital Inertial Attack and Navigation computer with one hand and tuning-in Rangoon on various radars with the other, the Tinker Toy A-4s, widely known to be powered by rubber band and launched by hand, were mostly dependent on the ironically named Dead-Reckoning navigation method of compass heading and stop-watch. Given the fact that North Viet Nam had surface-to-air missile sites and lots of flak concentrations that it would be nice to bypass, as well as some tall rocks that you could smack, it was not

Puresome saw his wingie's anti-collision light pop out of the clouds and called "Ralph Two, lead's at your nine o'clock. Pee called "Talley!" and Puresome concentrated on keeping his altitude and angle of bank steady while glancing at the progress of Pee's running rendezvous. As his wingman advanced up his wing's line of bearing, Puresome could tell that Pee had it under control and probably wouldn't smack him during the join up.

Night rendezvous in the dark and the goo in a heavily laden airplane could be hairy things. After Pee slid under his starboard wing and took position, Puresome pushed up the power and they climbed and headed toward Guntrain's TACAN radial that would take them *Up North*.

At altitude, Puresome turned on his radar and played with the antennae tilt and gain control, more for something to do than for the generalized picture of the contrast between the Gulf water and the landmass. His ECM gear sounded the occasional "Gawwwp!" in his headset as North Vietnamese long range early warning radar swept by them. Since he was carrying flares, he set up his armament switches to drop from an outer wing station first, knowing that he would rapidly have to locate his selector switches and find the center one of five by feel, in order to drop bombs on anything he lit up. He turned on his gunsight, watched the reticule light bloom brightly, and turned it down until it was barely visible. Since he had already set the bomb delivery mil setting on the deck, the weapons setup was complete except for turning on his master armament switch.

"Puresome had a Phantom pal who had a bit of wind-up one night, got too fast and tore off a flare, which ignited and scared the beejeezus out of him until he realized it wasn't doing any chasing."

As they approached abeam the city of Vinh, the clouds thinned out, and the Gomers dutifully shined searchlights in their general direction. Since he figured he would be able to see the surf on the beach as he went feet dry, Puresome turned off his radar and turned his cockpit lights down to where they were barely visible. He stuck his nose down and turned toward Gomerland.

Although it was very dark, Puresome was real glad they were not in the clag. He always remembered another night mission on Skip's wing when they found out where they were, over Vinh, when the clouds around them lit up in an impressive light show that had nothing to do with lightning. Besides, dodging Mr. SAM meant seeing him, unless you absolutely trusted the new ALQ gear to goof him, which was like trusting CATCC not to put your holding radial in a thunderstorm.

Puresome checked "Feet Dry" with the controlling Fudd, and he and Pee switched tactical frequency. All their external lights were out except the top anti-collision light, and they had gone to Air-to-Air setting on their TACANS, which would give them a distance from each other. Puresome had hacked his stop clock when he crossed the beach, and he held a base heading to their first turn point. They had pushed the airspeed up, and Pee had moved out into a spread formation. Both he and Pee were moving the airplane around, varying the heading and altitude in what was hopefully an unpredictable flight path. While Puresome was navigating and looking, Pee was mostly concerned with keeping Lead in sight and watching for nasty light shows. Intermittent flashes in the darkness indicated only musket fire so far.

"Turn point number one!" called Puresome, who rolled into a heading to parallel the coast, and he hacked his canopy stop clock. "Two, roge!" answered Pee. Puresome eased down towards the ground, carefully watching his altimeter and the radar altimeter. He was very busy staying away from the ground and looking for the hoped-for gleam of dimmed-out

truck lights. But, as the stop clock clicked away toward the turn point, Gomer was nowhere to be seen.

"Turning port to turn point two, you got a talley, Pee?"

"Roge, still have you. Did you see that bunch of flares someone kicked out back there?"

"Negats." The ECM gear had been relatively quite, with no buzzing FIRE-CAN radar sounds or scrote-freezing doodle-doodle SAM launch sounds in the headsets. Since SAM boosters made for lots of light during the first part of their launch, and the fearsome telephone pole itself had a torch at the back, sudden light at night got reflexive attention. Puresome had a *Phantom* pal who had a bit of wind-up one night, got too fast and tore off a flare, which ignited and scared the beejeezus out of him until he realized it wasn't doing any chasing.

Puresome hacked his clock and called "Turn point, coming port." He soon

found a glint of water that looked like a major waterway. He moved off a bit to see it better, and dark shapes started to emerge.....barges!

"Two from Lead, we've got barges in the canal below! I'm popping up port for a flare drop!"

"Two's going high!"

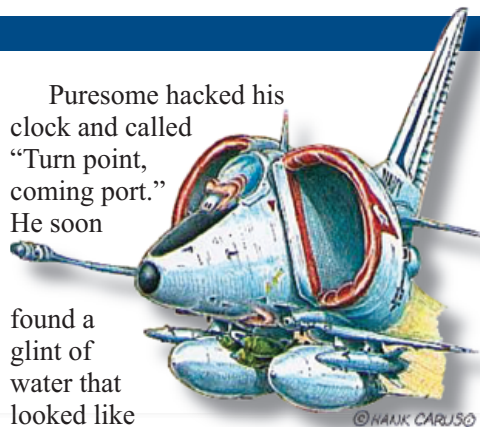
Puresome pulled up to four thousand feet, slowed to a grape-like 250 knots, and pickled off three flares as he came over the canal. As soon as the last one left the plane, he crammed on the power and started climbing. "Lead's going for a port perch!"

Almost as soon as the first flare lit, snaking lines of red fireballs started up into the dark from both sides of the canal. Pee had positioned himself to be at the roll-in point for his bomb run when the flares went off, called "They're shooting at us! I see the barges!"

"Roger! Drop three bombs and pull off starboard!"

Puresome was climbing and cranking around to position himself to roll in on the barges. As he was climbing, he reached down to his armament panel and by feel turned off the station selector for the flares and counted over to the third switch inboard to select the bombs on his centerline station. As he reached nine thousand feet, he checked his speed and set his throttle as he rolled over into what his hemorrhoids told him was about a forty-five degree dive.

Looking out of the dark into the swaying bright light of the flares, Puresome had enough time to see a line of barges by a small bridge when Pee's bombs went off, straddling the bridge among the barges. "Two's off starboard!" Puresome concentrated on putting his gun sight pipper on the barges short of the explosions as red golf balls snaked around the sky. Thousand-mile-an-hour-eyeballs checked the dive angle, airspeed, and the unwinding altimeter as the pipper moved up to the first barge. Pickle! *continued...*



PURESOME

Continued...

Pickle! Pickle! Puresome hit the bomb release button three times and stuck his head inside the cockpit and pulled up to thirty degrees on the Abbajabba as he crammed on full power, and the airplane zoomed back up into the dark.

When the nose was well and truly up, Puresome rolled over in a starboard turn and looked back to quickly spot his hits. On an early night mission, he had found himself in very close proximity to the ground and buying a rice patty when he had not gotten his nose up enough before banking to check out what he had blown up, and he had resolved not to do that anymore. *Kaboom!* His three bombs walked up the line of barges.

Puresome was up and away from the light show quickly. "Lead's off, heading zero nine zero, you got me, two?"

"Roge, talley, I'm coming back around port, I'm at your twelve o'clock, high, niner thousand."

"Okay, I'll keep my heading. We'll displace east, then come around and approach them from the north and drop the rest of our bombs. We've got time for another run. Fuel check?"

Puresome had been keeping track of the relentless clicking of the clock and the shrinking amount of kerosene in his tanks. The recovery time back at the boat was a carved in stone requirement, and

the demon that lurked around the ship's spudlocker often showed up on the darkest and claggiest nights, and tanker packages were known to not work. It was prudent to show up with as much gas as possible in case some chaps were having themselves a bad night, and Pee, like all wingpersons, had less gas than his leader.

"Two, I think we got most of the barges, so use the rest of your bombs to try and get the bridge. I'll try and get what's left. We'll pull off starboard just to be different, then come on around and head for the beach. That a roge?" "Two, roge."

Puresome found the canal and followed it toward their target. The flares had long since gone out, but there were small fires burning that helped him locate his flare drop. As soon as the Gomers heard the noise of the airplanes, they started hosing the sky. The slowly snaking red balls gained incredible speed as they came closer, and Puresome thanked the Big Guy that there was not a Fire Can radar directing the shooters. Just short of the bridge, he started pickling off his last three flares and crammed on the power and climbed. The flares illuminated a smoky, shadowy hell.

Puresome was down into his dive when Pee's five bombs disappeared the bridge, and he adjusted the pipper to hit the remaining guts and feathers. *Yee-haw!* Puresome pulled up and away and watched his bombs explode among the remaining rat-eaters. They could tell the Air Intelligence pukes they dropped on something more than "possible land," and,

like Winny Churchill said, there was little as exhilarating as being shot at without effect.

The section exited toward the Gulf at high speed. When they went "feet wet," Puresome checked in with the Fudd and climbed to a fuel-saving altitude for the trip back to marshall for the Carrier Controlled Approach to Guntrain. The exhilaration had worn off and was replaced with the quease caused by the realization that the really hard part of the mission was coming up. Fortunately, the Air Wing was having a good night. No *Phantom* pukes, who were first down the chute, or the Blue Hawks, who preceded the Snakes, did much boltering. Both he and Pee got aboard acceptably on the first pass. "I'm aboard, pull up the anchor!" he called, as he scooted across the foul line into the loving care of a taxi director's yellow wands.

So it went. On this particular night, they had overcome the dread of the dark and had not flown into a mountain or the deck, or gotten hosed. They had found and biffed the Gomer. The tiny, confined space of the Scooter cockpit was a very private place, where a case of the chick-enshits absolutely had kept in its box.

It was lovely that Puresome had been able to do so and come back to bug juice, sliders, and to draw a little black bomb on the bulkhead by his rack. But Puresome never again enjoyed fireworks displays, and it took a long time to quit flinching and remember to make a wish on friendly shooting stars.

Some **NEW** website addresses and changes.

Click on and have a tour through *Skyhawk Country!*

Want Ads, Contribute Information/images on Displayed & Foreign A-4s = chookskyhawk@aol.com
Webmaster - contribute images/information other than above = webmaster@a4skyhawk.org
Secretary: Membership new & renewals / email & address changes = skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com
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Marine Coordinator (General Marine Unit matters) = jjcaldas@cox.net
POW Coordinator (POW/MIA specific matters) = pgalanti@comcast.net
Research Team for public/member inquiries = sa-research@a4skyhawk.org
Modeling the Skyhawk = modelers@a4skyhawk.org
See web site "Contact List" for full listing of SDOs.
www.a4skyhawk.org & www.skyhawk.org = Main web site
www.saprivate.a4skyhawk.org = Ready Room (Not published on public web site)
www.sashare.a4skyhawk.org = SDO's Photo Galleries (Not published on public web site)





BOOM-BOOM ROOM

• Powell's Puzzlers •



OK, Scooter fans,
here's a memory test:

CV	USS	Callsign	Nickname(s)
9	Essex.....	?	?
10	Yorktown.....	?	?
11	Intrepid.....	?	The (Fighting) I
12	Hornet.....	?	?
14	Ticonderoga.....	?	?
15	Randolph.....	?	?
16	Lexington.....	?	Lady Lex
18	Wasp.....	?	?
19	Hancock.....	Rampage.....	Hanna
20	Bennington.....	?	?
31	Bon Homme Richard.....	?	Bonnie Dick
33	Kearsarge.....	?	?
34	Oriskany.....	?	Big O, O-boat
36	Antietam.....	?	?
38	Shangri La.....	?	Shang
41	Midway.....	?	?
42	Franklin D Roosevelt.....	?	Rosie
43	Coral Sea.....	?	Cora, or Coral, Maru
59	Forrestal.....	Handbook.....	FIDLIP, Forest Fire
60	Saratoga.....	?	Sara
61	Ranger.....	Top Gun.....	?
62	Independence.....	Guntrain.....	Indy
63	Kitty Hawk.....	Pawtucket.....	?
64	Constellation.....	?	Connie
65	Enterprise.....	Climax.....	Big E
66	America.....	?	?
67	John F Kennedy.....	Eagle Cliff.....	JFK

Your association is trying to work up a list of the official callsigns for US aircraft carriers the A-4 operated from. Can you help fill in the blanks?

Nimitz and later may have had TA-4Js grace their decks, but by then it was a training command operation only. We do not think we missed any, but are willing to be surprised.

For nicknames, we would like the ones that were really used, lasted over several years and were not merely derogatory (send those in too, we'll print the better ones.)

Send your updates to
newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org.



TWIDGET GOES CYBER

• www.skyhawk.org •

By David "Twidget" Weber, Skyhawk Association Webmaster

Hopefully no one has noticed the movement of the Association web site to a new hosting service. Our old service was lacking - well - service. Portions of the site were sometimes not accessible, and response to trouble tickets was very poor. But that is now behind us.

Our web site is now on a LINUX Server with a new provider, providing better reliability and security. During the move I evaluated the current configuration of the web site. The public viewers will see little change, but the "members only" area will be different. The current Ready Room Forum, Photo Gallery, and Chat Room were receiving virtually no use other than as a means to access the "private pages" where members could

browse through the site's image galleries and view the Aircraft History Database Tables. My intention is to change the access method for the "members only" private pages so that members can more easily access it without having to log in to a forum. Hopefully this will all be accomplished before you ready this in the Newsletter.

With no real current requirement for "inter-active" applications, these services will be dropped unless I hear encouragement to keep them from the membership. The "read only" information, histories, etc. will continue to be available.

Twidget

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ATTIC ATTACKS

• Mailbag •

Dig out those saved photos, artifacts and articles that are gathering dust in your attic, and send them in to the A-4Ever.

Skyhawk Association Board member Boom Powell forwarded this inquiry:

Oct '80 issue of NavNews had a letter from Capt T.V. Golder pointing out that in the early '60s the Naval Torpedo Unit at NAS Quonset Point, RI, operated mixed types, including a P2V *Neptune*, S-2 *Stoof*, HSS-1 helo and an A-4. "We had a torpedo range in Narragansett Bay where we conducted R&D on airborne torpedo accessories. Our flight pattern for drops would nowadays take us under the Jamestown-Newport Bridge!" A Scooter carrying a torpedo?!?



NATU Torpedo Unit 1960-62

The photo—not very good although interesting—with A4 flaps down and even the *Stoof* and P2 nose high while the helo dives at redline.

Item also in the interesting, but what to do with? category. Trivia? Did the A-4 ever carry torpedoes?

Ace Skyhawk researcher Gary Verver replied:

Boom,

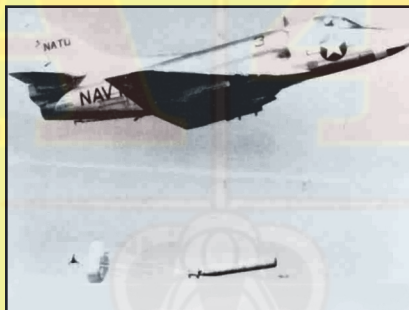
The RUR-5 ASROC (rocket propelled torpedo) was being tested on the *Skyhawk* when I was at China Lake, as was UUM-44 SUBROC which was the sub-launched (underwater) version. RAT (Rocket Assisted Torpedo) also was a China Lake project and evolved into ASROC.

Don't recall seeing a *Skyhawk* with a conventional torpedo. Most of the torpedo testing was done at the Morris Dam facility using the variable angle launcher which could replicate any altitude and angle normally used for an aerial torpedo drop.

I don't think ASROC was intended to be fired from a *Skyhawk* in the fleet, just served as a launch test platform at China Lake. As I recall something went amiss with an ASROC test near San Clemente Island (operated by China Lake when I was there) and ripped a pretty big hole in the underside.

Will look around and see if I have any photos of a *Skyhawk* with a torpedo, after all they were assigned to NATU which was in the business of testing torpedoes. I do have a photo somewhere of a *Skyhawk* with an aerial mine if that would ever be of interest.

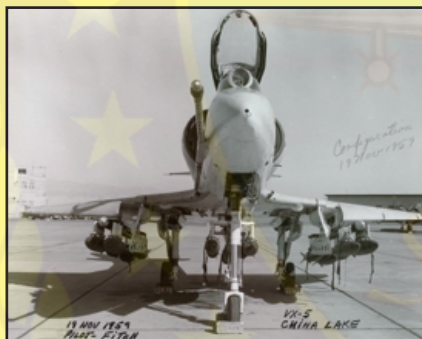
Gary Verver



A4D-1 137820



Skyhawk art work by John "Boog" Powell, former air intelligence, USN.



Two photos which chronicle development of the MCBR (multiple carriage bomb rack) by then-Captain William H. Fitch, USMC, (later LtGen) while assigned to VX-5 at China Lake. The rack was later produced as the MBR, for which General Fitch was granted a U.S. Patent. Photo with Captain Fitch was taken on June 27, 1960, before the first flight on which high-explosive bombs were dropped from the MCBR. Load is 18 Mk. 81s (250# bombs).



TAPS

Dennis A. Cavagnaro
Oakland, CA



TAPS notices may be sent to
Bob Hickerson, Newsletter Editor at
newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org



or mail to Bob Hickerson,
1222 Balcones Drive,
Fredericksburg, TX 78624.



For TAPS lists,
members may
access these links:

www.a4skyhawk.org/2D/KIA.htm
www.a4skyhawk.org/2E/ops_losses.htm





SIZE DOES MATTER

• Modeling News •

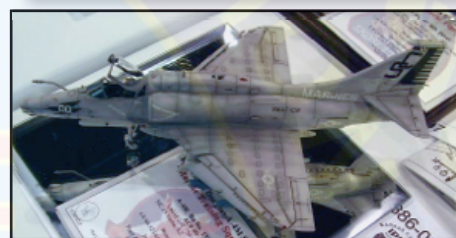
By Joe Turpen

The 2006 International Plastic Modelers Society Nationals were held in Kansas City, Missouri, from Aug. 2nd to 5th. Several *Skyhawk* models were present, and again a Best *Skyhawk* award was presented. This year it was presented at the banquet held Saturday night. The *Skyhawk* that won the award was a VA-46 A-4E from CVW-17 aboard the USS *FORRESTAL* during 1967 and was built by Steve Ellis. The competition was close, and there were tie-breaking decisions that lead to the winner. It was nice to see several *Skyhawks* that were so well built that it was a challenge to pick the winner.

Here's a sampling of great *Skyhawk* models presented at IPMS.



IPMS 2006 Nationals Best Skyhawk winner by Steve Ellis.



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If you are a new member and would like to extend your collection of *The A-4Ever*, copies are available for the following issues: Winter 2005, Spring 2005, Summer 2005, Fall 2005 (very limited numbers), Winter 2006 and Spring 2006. Extra copies may be purchased for \$5.00 per issue, including shipping and handling (domestic addresses only).

Contact: Bob Hickerson at newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org

or mail to: Bob Hickerson
1222 Balcones Drive,
Fredericksburg, TX 78624.





Go Ahead, Give A Guy A Gift

Got a buddy who tries to leave with your copy of the *A-4Ever*? Got a pal who flew the *Scooter* but never reads about its illustrious history? Got women around you that think you're making up all those war stories and flying tales? Got kids who ask what you did in the war, daddy?

Well, help is at hand—it's called the Gift Membership Subscription for the *Skyhawk* Association's favorite publication, the *A-4Ever*. For less than half a tank of gas, you get a full year's worth of Skyhawkabilia in print and not only that, it has become a collector's item as well. Four times a year our members rejoice when finding the *A-4Ever* in the mailbox, and you can share in that love by giving a gift membership to those in need. A card will be sent to the lucky recipient naming you as the donor, or not.

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