



THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

Quarterly



A-4K over Mt. Ruapehu, New Zealand.

THE A-4 EVER

Winter 2007

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 13 • NUMBER 1

Contents:

Tomcats of VMA-311 • Multiple Carriage Bomb Rack • Attic Attacks • Prez Sez A-4s to Israel • Puresome Unplugged • Take No Prisoners • Slow-Breaking News
Twidget Goes Cyber • Size Does Matter

★ All-Marine Skyhawk Reunion ★
19-22 April '07
Hilton Head/Beaufort, SC



www.skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• Raven's Report •

By Bob "Raven" Hickerson

Writing this early on Christmas Eve, it's hard not to reflect that this issue marks the end of our third year of collaborating with Margaret "Warrior Princess" Bone, our Managing Editor of the *A-4Ever*. Our Marine members are very familiar with WP's work on *The Yellow Sheet* and the *MCAA Journal*, both publications of the Marine Corps Aviation Association, and all naval aviators have admired her work for Tailhook Association. We were fortunate indeed when she agreed to help us re-energize the *Skyhawk* Association newsletter (which had fallen on hard times in 2004), bringing us to the point today where the term "newsletter" doesn't adequately describe our publication. Because we're a small (and relatively poor) organization, Margaret donates as much effort as she contracts with us, and I'm very grateful for the professionalism she brings to our collaboration. We are very lucky to have her as a member of our team and wish her all the best in 2007. (Managing Ed Note: *Aw shucks, boss, twarn't nothing...*)

I'm also gratified that our members are contributing so much to our Journal. A good example is the response to last quarter's Powell's Puzzler which asked for input on the call signs of aircraft carriers which deployed with A-4 squadrons. Many members wrote to tell us what they remembered, and although we had some inconsistencies (that "graying lens of time"), the resulting table is most likely an accurate accounting which can be preserved for reference on our website. The responses concerning informal nicknames of the carriers were the most entertaining, but weren't able to be included as suitable for a publication rated PG-13.

High Flight

And speaking of member-reader input, I was quite surprised at the scant response to the query about "High Flight" experiences in the A-4. Based on my own curiosity when I was consistently flying A-4s, I thought more *Skyhawk* pilots would have a good story

about an attempt to reach near sub-orbital altitudes in the Scooter. Dick Carlberg wrote to tell of milking an A-4E to 47,500 ft. in 1973, which has got to be the world's record for an Echo loaded with two 300 gallon drops and a buddy store! Dick's experience easily bests my A-4E (w/two 300 gallon drops) record of 45,500 feet captured one night over Rosie Roads. Fred "Sinbad" Lane wrote to remind us that Aussies always do it better by providing photographic evidence of two super light-weight A-4Fs from 805 Squadron clearly operating above the published service ceiling. I'm sure that our members have more good stories about pushing the altitude limits (and regulations) in the *Skyhawk*. The threat of courts-martial is well past, so let us know about your attempts to top "the windswept heights," and I may tell you about my first hop in an A-4M.

Annual Meeting 2006

We had a great Annual Meeting in D.C. on October 27th, coinciding with the MCAA Symposium, and my only regret is that more members couldn't take advantage of the great program your association provided. Our luncheon guest speakers, LtGen Tom Miller, USMC (Ret) and RADM Whitey Feightner, USN (Ret), were superb, and I'm very grateful to them for taking time to be with us. Peter Mersky organized the luncheon and provided a synopsis of our guests' remarks (see sidebar), while Dan Brannon and Ed Jobin organized a great tour of the National Air & Space Museum's newest addition, the Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles International Airport. We're forever indebted to center Director MajGen Joe Anderson, USMC (Ret), who welcomed us with open arms. Member Denny Baumann organized the docents who provided a special tour for small groups of our members, and Collings Foundation provided their recently restored TA-4 *Skyhawk* for a static display. If you haven't seen the Udvar-Hazy Center, don't miss it the next time that you're in northern Virginia.

More Member Input Sought

In the synopsis of action taken at the October board meeting, you'll see a comment about the increasing amount and variety of "stuff" being donated to *Skyhawk* Association. Although we have a plan to collect NATOPS pubs and will place the resulting collections in collaborating museums, we're undecided on how to proceed with donations of books, art and equipment. As an all-volunteer association, we don't have the manpower or funds to provide proper stewardship of donations, and quite frankly, most museums are similarly overwhelmed with donations of memorabilia. There's no question that we need to get better at this and implement a sound historical program. However, the board needs input and help from our members to do that. If you have any suggestions or would like to volunteer, please let me know.

Raven, Out

In February 2007, my tour as President of *Skyhawk* Association ends, and I will be passing the lead. I've really enjoyed my participation on the Association's leadership team, and I believe we've made progress in the last two years. However, I've left much undone and hope you will continue to support the board and officers as *Skyhawk* Association moves forward. Building membership remains the number one imperative. We have to attract more members to have the kind of association we want. Secretary Terry Cooney reports that while recruiting is strong, we continue to lose 20-22% of our members each year. With that low a "re-enlistment rate," we'll never reach our goal of 1,200 to 1,500 members.

It's been great hearing from so many old squadron-mates these last two years, and I look forward to continue making new friends through *Skyhawk* Association as I remain involved with *The A-4Ever*.

A-4s Forever! Raven



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BOMBS AWAY!

• Winter 2007 •



The Prez Sez: Raven Reminds Readers	2
Fall 2006 Board Meeting	4
Long Range Scheduling Box	5
Take No Prisoners: Letters to the Editor	6
Slow-Breaking News: A Fast-Paced Feature	19
Puresome Unplugged: YP's Excellent Adventures	20
The Boom-Boom Room: Powell's Carrier List	21
Size Does Matter: Modeling News	21
Read? You Think We Read?	22
Attic Attacks	22
Twidget Goes Cyber: A Geek Guide	23
New Paying Member\$	23
TAPS	23



The Tomcats of VMA-311	
1964 – 1966.	
By Col J.T. "Birdie" Bertrand	8-12
The Development of the Multiple	
Carriage Bomb Rack (MCBR).	
By LtGen William H. Fitch, USMC(Ret)	13-15
A-4s To Israel.	
By Richard P. Shipman	16-18

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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.

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Fall 2006 Skyhawk Association Board Meeting
National Air & Space Museum Udvar-Hazy Center, Dulles, Virginia, October 27, 2006



The Skyhawk Association Board of Directors met at 8:45 a.m. on October 27, 2006. Thanks to the hospitality of MajGen Joe Anderson, USMC (Ret), the Director of the new Udvar-Hazy Center of NASM, the meeting was held in the museum's board room overlooking some of America's most historic aircraft. Directors present were Cooney (Secretary), Hickerson (President), Jobin (Vice President – Marines), Powell, Turpen and Williams. Absent were Directors Brannon, Gabbard, Green, Langworthy, Southworth, Weber and Woodul, plus Treasurer Richmond. Proxies: Hickerson voting Weber and Powell voting Woodul to establish a quorum.

Guests attending were Mike Eberhardt, Steve Gray and Ron Stutesman.

Reports presented were Membership by Secretary Cooney (802 members as of October 15th); Website by Webmaster Weber; *A-4Ever* Journal by Hickerson; Tailhook wrap-up by Cooney; and PayPal initiative test by Weber/Hickerson. Copies of reports are available on the Skyhawk Association website (members only-private pages).

Old Business:

- **Midway Contact** – Bill Gilchrist was designated as point of contact for collaborations with the USS *Midway* Museum, San Diego.
- **International membership status** – A new category of membership was proposed to attract international members; annual dues of \$18 USD with access to a digital copy of the Journal only on the association website (hard-copy, mailed Journal membership remains at \$35 USD/year). Motion by Williams, second by Turpen, carried.

New Business:

- **Archiving of Material** – the association is beginning to acquire memorabilia which cannot be digitized and must be stored appropriately (books, paintings and hardware). The Board will solicit ideas and support from members to bolster the historical effort.
- **Disposition of A-4 Tailhooks** – the association acquired two A-4 tailhooks at the Tailhook Reunion. They will be auctioned off to raise funds.

- **Skyhawk Association bumper stickers** –

a proposal to order new bumper stickers was tabled because the secretary has a year's supply.

- **Purchase of USMCSkyhawk.com domain by the association**

– because the USMC Skyhawk group is merging with the Skyhawk Association, Director Mike Green is passing the Skyhawk domain name to the Skyhawk Association. A pointer will be placed at that site to provide automatic routing of hits to www.skyhawk.org.

- **Ernie Laib Memorial** – Director Boom Powell will visit the LSO School to discuss establishing an award in the name of former Director Ernie Laib.

- **Nominating Committee slate** – the Board decided to recommend to the membership that Directors Weber, Powell and Williams be elected to new three-year terms, and that member Bill Gilchrist be elected to fill the expiring term of Director Hickerson (note: the slate was elected by acclamation at the Annual Meeting at noon, October 27, 2006, at the Washington-Dulles Marriott).

Miscellaneous:

- **Recognition Award** – Secretary Terry Cooney was commended by the board for his hard work as Secretary of Skyhawk Association.
- **Election of Officer Slate for 2007/2008** – to be accomplished at the February Board meeting.
- **2007 Mid-winter Board Meeting** – to be held at the Frontiers of Flight Museum, Love Field, Dallas, Texas, at 8:30 a.m., February 3, 2007. Directors Weber and Gabbard will be on-site coordinators.
- **2007 Annual Meeting** – to be held at the Tailhook Reunion, Reno, NV, Sep 6-8, 2007. Directors Cooney, Gilchrist and Woodul will be in charge of on-site coordination.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.



In a lineup that would cause even the LAPD to shiver, Skyhawk Association members fresh and full from their annual luncheon stand in front of the Collings Foundation TA-4 at the Udvar-Hazy Center near Dulles Airport. From left: Henry Holt, one of three men in a blazer; UNK, presumed to be Secret Service; Boom Powell probably singing the National Anthem solo; Steve Richmond, the money man; Mike Eberhardt; Terry Cooney; Bobby Light; Ron Stutesman; Joe Turpen, yes, he does model; Bob Hickerson not quite hiding in back; Steve Gray; Bill Egen who obviously likes red; Jim McNeece, third blazer guy; UNK, must be Secret Service, he has a camera; Mark Williams, almost out of line, and of course, Denny Baumann. Missing in action was Ed Jobin, who was still trying to park.

Skyhawk Association Luncheon, October 27, 2006

by Peter Mersky

Some 40 association members attended this year's luncheon at the Dulles Marriott, enjoying a buffet complete with grilled breast of chicken and London broil and all the trimmings. Featured speakers were LtGen Thomas H. Miller, USMC (Ret) and RAdm E.L. "Whitey" Feightner, USN (Ret). Both men boast highly distinguished careers in naval aviation, logging time in a wide variety of classic aircraft, including the A-4.

Gen Miller took the podium first and described his earliest experiences as the first Marine aviator to fly the production A-4 in the fleet introduction program (FIP) as the XO of VMA-224, the first Marine A-4 squadron. He delivered the first production A4D-1 to VMA-224 in September 1956.

Adm Feightner then discussed making the first A-4 deployment in 1959 as

commander Air Wing 10 aboard USS *Essex* (CV-9). He "gently" described the usual competition between the two *Skyhawk* squadrons in the wing, one Navy, one Marine, which brought the expected chuckle from the luncheon group.

Bob Hickerson, association president presented the two speakers with commemorative copies of a new book on the A-4 by British author Jim Winchester, who had previously signed the copies.

At the end of the question and answer period, Gen Miller asked a third retired flag officer, VAdm Bob Dunn, about his A-4 experiences. A former CO of VA-146 during a 1967 Vietnam cruise, Adm Dunn offered a few anecdotes, one especially aimed at the Marines, much to the additional amusement of the group.

Following the luncheon, the attendees drove a few miles from the hotel to

the Udvar-Hazy National Air & Space Museum at Dulles, where a VIP tour awaited them, including an introduction by the museum's associate director, Maj Gen Joseph T. Anderson, USMC (Ret). Then, after breaking into small groups and accompanied by knowledgeable docent volunteers, we took in this fabulous facility with its incredible displays of classic aircraft and memorabilia.

An unusual highlight of this event was the appearance of a magnificently restored TA-4F flown in for the occasion. Sporting the red-and-yellow livery of H&MS-11 of "Playboys" fame, the two-seater was the focus of delighted attention as former drivers clustered around for a group picture.

The two-hour tour was the perfect ending to a great day.



Skyhawk Association members enjoy a buffet luncheon and excellent speakers during the October event.

(Photos by MBone)

At the Annual Luncheon, Skyhawk Association President Bob Hickerson presents signed copies of Jim Winchester's new book *Douglas A-4 Skyhawk* to guest speakers LtGen Tom Miller (on right) and RAdm Whitey Feightner (center).



Long-Range Schedule of Events

Mark Your Long-Range Calendar

- ❑ Skyhawk Association Mid-winter Board meeting – February 2-3, 2007 – Dallas, Texas (Frontiers of Flight Museum)
 - Group dinner Friday night
 - Tours of Frontiers of Flight (www.flightmuseum.com) and Cavanaugh Flight Museum (www.cavanaughflightmuseum.com)
 - Board meeting at Frontiers of Flight (6911 Lemmon Ave, Dallas), 8:30 a.m., Saturday, February 3, 2007
 - Official hotel is Radisson Hotel and Suites, 2330 North Northwest Highway, Dallas (214-351-4477). Check for Skyhawk Association rate
 - RSVP with David Weber (webmaster@a4skyhawk.org)
- ❑ All-Marine Skyhawk Reunion, sponsored by Skyhawk Association – April 19-22, 2007, Beaufort/Hilton Head, SC.
 - MCAS Beaufort Airshow, with Blue Angels
 - Official hotel is Crowne Plaza Hilton Head (www.cphiltonhead.com) (mention Skyhawkers Reunion)
 - RSVP ASAP with Mike Green (mike1965@comcast.net) or Mark Williams (rogerwilco@verizon.net)
 - Watch home page (www.skyhawk.org) for schedule updates
- ❑ Skyhawk Association Annual Meeting and Luncheon 2007 – September 6-8, 2007, Reno, NV.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •

newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org

To the Editor:

Bob,

I received the magazine. Thanks very much for sending it. FYI, I flew a variety of A-4 aircraft while in VRF-31 in Norfolk from 1970 - 1973.

I checked my logbook. I'll bet you don't have many readers who have logged time in:

A-4B (I think this was the last remaining B model in the country), **A-4C, A-4E, A-4F, A-4L, A-4M, A-4N, TA-4B and TA-4F.**

Two of those aircraft types were retrofits for the Israeli Air Force. We used to transport the A4Ns out of Palmdale back to Norfolk for ship transport to Israel. They had no transponders and no navigation equipment other than a flight computer which would be activated in Israel. In order to fly in controlled airspace, the Navy had an "agreement" with the FAA that would authorize flights in controlled airspace if we used the agreed-upon call sign "Navy 12345". That was supposed to mean to the controllers that they weren't to question why we were up there, they'd just give us vectors to the next sector. Our government didn't want it known publicly that we were providing aircraft to the Israelis, so this was a very hush-hush deal.

It rarely worked. Virtually every sector requested (probably out of habit) that we squawk "XXXX". We replied "unable," "negative transponder." Eventually that guy would figure it out and pass us on. On one occasion, a controller came back to me with the comment "Roger, Navy 12345. Is this one of those aircraft for delivery to a foreign government?"

So much for that top secret!

Thanks again for the fine publication.
Bruce Blue
[sabre@sbcglobal.net]

◆ ◆ ◆

Send your letter to
newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org

To the Editor:

Subject: Service ceiling attempt.

Raven,

Don't know who's gone where in an A-4, but I can relay a decent story. Back in 1987, during a WestPac UDP, a young captain with coincidentally the same name as mine, made his move with wingman Steve "Scary" Carey in two late model Mikes over the sea between Iwakuni and Kadena. I forget whose idea it was, but it was getting boring on the transit. We had two drop tanks each (about half full) and just firewalled it and started to climb (of course AFTER declaring VFR to Fukuoka center.)

Passing 40K, things were getting pretty slow, but we were still climbing. Somewhere between 42 and 43, all bets were off, and in pretty rapid succession the departures occurred, and we were on our way down a lot faster than we had been climbing!! Recovery to controlled flight took a bit longer than we had anticipated, bottoming out to level flight at 28k or so. We figured it best NOT to relay our new found data to the CO, Nick "Greek" Kirby, or his sidekick, XO Todd "Hun" Frommelt- which might have been the best decision we made that day!!!

Semper Fi

Col Digger Rotelli, USMCR
[diggerrotelli@sbcglobal.net]

(Disclaimer- I will vehemently deny there is any truth to the above to any and all pay grades/investigating officers/A-4 wannabes/etc.)

(Ed. Note: Digger, I'm sure your secret is safe from Greek and Hun.)

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Dear Raven,

You ask for A-4 service ceiling details in the 2006 Fall edition of the *Skyhawk Association Quarterly*. In Australia, we had special lightweight A-4F *Skyhawks* (all the super secret stuff was left out), and this gave us a bit of an altitude edge. As you can see by the at-



Aussies stake claim to all-time altitude record for the A-4 (see Fred Lane's letter).

tached photo, two Australian Navy 805 Squadron Scooters, with speedbrakes out, slow down to pass behind the moon. I don't know if this constitutes a record, but we must have been pretty high at the time.

Regards, Sinbad
Fred Lane
[fred.lane@optusnet.com.au]

P.S. The photo was made up 30-odd years ago by photoshop ne'er-do-wells with too much time on their hands at NAS Nowra, and to my knowledge has never been published. They also made up an interesting shot of a secret dedicated ASW weapon: an A-4 on the catapult of an Australian submarine, but perhaps that will serve another purpose another day.

(Ed. Note: Sinbad, we are proud to have the honor of bringing this important photo to the world.)

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To the Editor:

Subject: Air Barons Story.

Hey Gang,

I just installed a new toilet in my home and thought I'd initiate it by reading the Fall 2006 Quarterly. To my delight on page 12, I think I have spotted A-4L Buno 148446 flying left wing with the Barons. Being the founder of the A-L / LLC group trying to bring back to life 8 Ls, we just happen to have 148446 in the house being restored to flight status, due out in May of 2007.

I pulled the records on our plane and it shows 446 was for sure at Glenview in December of 1970 thru February 5, 1972, flying with VA 2091. Will keep you informed when it will be back to flight status and what its mission will be!

The nose section of "Fanny Hill" is safe and will be mated to a tail that I have and an L wing in my hangar in Hawkins, TX. It cannot fly again and will be displayed somewhere in a veteran's park.

Semper Fi to all!
Bob Schneider, "Snakbar"
[snakbar@classicnet.net]

(Ed. Note: Congrats on the new indoor plumbing, Snakbar, we hope you continue to enjoy it, and thanks for the update.)

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Dear Warrior Princess,

I'd like to know how you got that title. Do you have scars? Someone sent me a copy of the Fall 06 Quarterly with my picture on page 5. Your editor's note said the Summer 06 issue had a letter from Mark Snyder asking for info on his dad, Bob Snyder (also in the photo with our other two hootchmates). Could you please send me a copy of Mark's letter (or at least his address) so I can contact him. Thank you so much.

Vic Steele, LtCol USMC (Ret)
[vicsteele@msn.com]

(Ed. Note: Vic, a better question would be, do I have tattoos? Just rest assured you should not take my title lightly... Mark Snyder's email is [madmark3@hotmail.com] and he will no doubt be pleased to hear from you.)

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To the Editor:

Subject: The Carriers List
Hello, David:

The forwarded was sent to me by a retired Navy chief engine mechanic. If you think it is appropriate, please forward to *Skyhawk* Association members. I think many of them would appreciate it. *Skyhawk* tailhookers can see the status of the carriers they have operated from during their careers.

Regards,
Bob Krall
[RKRALLA4@aol.com]

*(Ed. Note: See link at Navy.mil:
www.navy.mil/navydata/ships/carriers/cv-list.asp.)*

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To the Editor:

Hello, Boom and Bob.

In early '73, while on a Med cruise with VA-45 Det-1 aboard *Intrepid*, I milked an A-4E tanker to 47,500 feet. The A/C was fully fueled with double-bubble and the store, and was powered by the J52 P-8 engine.

After launching, I hung around until the previous launch recovered and then, with no other assigned mission, decided to kill time by setting my own personal altitude record. I'm sure plenty of other guys have taken an A-4 higher, but, when one considers the A/C's weight and configuration, sustained flight at 47.5K wasn't too shabby.

BTW, *Intrepid's* call sign was Atlas and *Lexington's* was Spartan.

Best regards,
Dick Carlberg
[dick_c@bellsouth.net]

(Ed. Note: Dick, thanks for the data, and something about "Boom and Bob" has a great ring to it, don't you think?)

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Captain Renella was right that there weren't many Ghostriders left, and the surviving ones had many interesting stories. Would be nice if their stories were also told.

A real interesting story is that when Larry Duthie and Dick Hartman were shot down near the "Hour Glass," Larry was not aware of the importance to the Vietnamese in that area until he visited the area a few years ago and found out that although we transited that area day after day on Alpha strikes, we considered it a safe coast-in point, as did other Air Wings.

He found out by talking to the natives who were aware of the events that day, that it was a safe haven for the Vietnamese officials and was very heavily defended. The only reason they fired and shot down he and Lt. Hartman is that they came right over the area low and appeared threatening on their way out from the strike.

Larry survived and was rescued. Lt. Hartman was captured three days later and was listed as dying shortly after, in a POW camp (I believe that report is false, and that he was killed after he was captured).

Instrumental in the three day Res-cap attempt was VADM Bud Edney, who I put in for a Silver Star. He would have received it, but he requested that I withdraw it because we were not able to rescue Hartman. He had very personal feelings about that and the loss of a *Jolly Green* and its crew in the abortive attempt.

Thanks, Captain Marco, for calling attention to VA-164.

Captain Bill Span,
XO, CO, VA-164 1967-1968
[wfspan@cox.net]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Subject: Re: Powell's Puzzlers, Fall 2006 issue.

Raven:

You do it all! In addition to everything else you edit the newsletter! That's magnificent! I just sent you my renewal for 2007. As I wrote before, thanks for the memories.

Semper Fi, Fred Shaffer
[Fnshaffer@aol.com]

PS: I got a great kick out of the article that appeared two (?) editions ago, which described our special weapons mission across the whitecaps deep into the western heartlands of our adversaries. The author really captured the essence of the fun involved (tongue-in-cheek). He missed the most important part of the mission, recovery. If the SAMs or nuclear explosions didn't get you going in or coming out, you knew the carriers were long gone. So where to go? Look for that submarine that was waiting for you to watch you eject and pick you up, or find the 4000 foot gravel strip which was on the tiny island of Ie Jima, which was northwest of Honshu. I still believe I would have made it.

(Ed. Note: Fred is referring to Jim Walther's article on nuclear weapons training – see The A-4Ever, Winter 2006, p. 4.)

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THE TOMCATS OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

1964 – 1966

By Col J.T. “Birdie” Bertrand



When the VMA-311 Tomcats began to stabilize in September 1963, no one realized that they would be the last Marine A-4 squadron stabilized for deployment to Japan to be dedicated to commitment to the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP). Nor did they realize that their deployment would quickly lead them to the expeditionary airfield in Chu Lai in response to the widening conflict in Vietnam. This is the story of the squadron's journey from El Toro, California, to Vietnam during the years 1964 – 1966.

On September 1, 1963, VMA-311 was assigned to MAG-33, at MCAS El Toro and designated to replace VMA-121 at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, in March 1965.

In mid-October 1963, VMA-311 took delivery of twenty sparkling new A-4E aircraft. The “Echo” model of the Skyhawk was equipped with the powerful Pratt and Whitney J52 engine and theoretically, capable of speeds over

550 knots. The newer engine also provided greater fuel efficiency, significantly extending the airplane's range in both high and low-level regimes. The A-4E had five external ordnance stations and could carry over 8,100 pounds of

weapons. It also had a much improved pressurized air conditioning and heating system which kept one's feet from freezing on long flights at high altitude or in cold temperatures.

In Japan, the squadron was to have alert commitments in the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP), for delivery of special weapons, i.e., nuclear

bombs. (The SIOP is the war plan for the employment of strategic and theater air and naval forces in the event of a nuclear war.) Therefore, VMA-311 weapons training deployments included not only conventional weapons training, but considerable emphasis was given to special weapons delivery.

On April 18, 1964, LtCol Bernard J. “Stubby” Stender took command of the Tomcats, and the squadron began the process of “freezing” all deployable personnel in their present job assignments for the coming deployment to Japan. Once the squadron was “frozen,” it had 28 pilots, four ground officers, one

“In Japan, the squadron was to have alert commitments in the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP), for delivery of special weapons, i.e., nuclear bombs. (The SIOP is the war plan for the employment of strategic and theater air and naval forces in the event of a nuclear war.)”

Navy flight surgeon and 202 enlisted personnel.

The next year consisted of a very demanding and taxing training schedule. In March-April 1964, the squadron trained in Bullpup delivery. 1st Lts Kirby Schnell and Tony Capozza, the squadron's Landing Signal Officers (LSO), started intensive Field Mirror Landing Practice (FMLP) sessions, and the squadron deployed to MCAS Yuma for conventional air-ground and special weapons training.

FMLP training continued at El Toro in May and June 1964, culminating with successful initial carrier qualifications aboard the USS *Hornet* (CVS-12) June 9-12, and from August 5 to 28, VMA-311 deployed to NAAS Fallon for conventional and special weapons training.

On September 7, approximately 16 VMA-311 pilots reported to Marine Corps Base, Pickle Meadows, California, for Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) training. Capt Cary Watkins was the senior officer in charge of that rather rowdy gaggle of pilots, and it goes without saying that these pilots didn't want to be there. Marines from other organizations were also at the school. Following briefings by the school and organization into teams of



Home at Iwakuni. VMA-311's hangar.

6-8 people, the pilots were to live off the land and evade the Communist Circle Trignons (Control Group) who were trying to capture the students. 1st Lt Dick Norris' team was the only team in the previous four years from which no member was captured. In the evasion process, Norris took his team over an 11,000 ft. mountain. The "communists" simply couldn't climb that high – Norris damned near couldn't either!

In October 1964, the squadron deployed to Yuma for two more weeks of weapons training, followed by more FMLP training in November 1964. The squadron re-qualified aboard USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34) December 6-8, and later aboard *Yorktown* (CV-10). VMA-311 had no incidents or accidents while carrier qualifying. For performance aboard the USS *Oriskany*, the Chief of Naval Operations sent a Letter of Commendation to the squadron, congratulating the unit on the best boarding rate recorded by any Marine Corps squadron.

In addition to the intensive special weapons training during deployments to Yuma and Fallon, Tomcat pilots received many hours of ground school instruction by Marine Air Weapons Training Unit-PAC (MAWTU) at El Toro. In early January 1965, the squadron underwent a 10 day Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) at MCAS Yuma under the close scrutiny and grading of MAWTU. The squadron set



Somewhere over the Pacific enroute to Iwakuni, Japan.

up and operated out of a tent city on the base. The exercise was designed to test, to the degree possible, the squadron's ability to operate in an expeditionary environment. A complete operation order was generated, barbed wire and internal security measures undertaken and a field kitchen established to provide meals. The air portion of the ORI culminated with a 16-plane strike on a target area that the squadron had never used before, some 325 miles north of Yuma. The planning for and execution of the strike was graded excellent by MAWTU.

Immediately following and in addition to the ORI, the squadron was given

a Nuclear Ordnance Readiness Mission (NORM). Every individual pilot in the squadron was graded by MAWTU on their special weapons and conventional weapons delivery scores. The squadron was also given the special privilege of participating in an Operational Suitability Test (OST) of a nuclear weapon. The weapon was a typical nuclear device, minus the "stuff" that would enable it to detonate nuclear. 1st Lt Gerry Madison delivered the OST on target, and the weapon detonated as a high explosive bomb. At the conclusion of the ORI and NORM, the squadron was certified as fully qualified to assume their SIOP mission in Japan. *continued...*



Be it ever so humble. Bob and Dick Polhamus (twin brothers) outside the Animal Farm houch (JO BOQ). Dick was a pilot with VMO; Bob with -311.



Arrival at staging area in Cubi Pt, Philippines. L-R: Gus Xavier, Monty Doyel, L.T. "Tom" Preston, Sneaky Shea, George "Greek" Psaros and Don "Digger" Rowe.

311 TOMCATS

Continued...

However, the training continued. February 1965 found the Tomcats at NAAS China Lake firing Shrike anti-radiation missiles. The remainder of February and March 1965 was devoted to in-flight refueling training and preparations for a trans-Pacific (TRANSPAC) movement of the aircraft.

Just prior to the TRANSPAC, the squadron took delivery of 20 newer A-4E aircraft, and the pilots were familiarized with wearing the exposure suits (poopy suits) needed for flying over-water profile missions during cold weather. Poopy suits were very difficult and time consuming to get into and out of and were aptly named. If you were dressed in one of these suits and had to hit the toilet in a hurry, chances were that you would have some "POOPY" in your suit before you got it off.

Of note, the new airplanes had a problem with new fuel transfer valves. After being in cold temperatures (cold soaked) for over four hours, fuel transfer ceased – not a good deal when on a six hour flight. To solve the problem, each airplane was retro-fitted with older fuel transfer valves, and five hour profiles were flown on each aircraft. All of this happened within two weeks of the TRANSPAC to MCAS Iwakuni. With this last minute evolution completed, VMA-311 was completely ready for an 8000 mile TRANSPAC and a 13-month deployment to the Far East.

By one estimate, in the 12 months prior to departing for Iwakuni, members of the squadron had spent about 165 days deployed away from El Toro (and home) for training.

The TRANSPAC commenced on March 23, 1965. The overall squadron movement was code named *Operation Hammerhead*. The first echelon of 10 aircraft, led by LtCol "Stubby" Stender, had two in-flight refuelings from KC-130 aircraft and almost six hours of flight time enroute to landing at MCAS Kaneohe. The second echelon of 10 aircraft, led by Maj Jack Parchen, followed the next day. Staging through Wake Island and NAS Atsugi, all aircraft arrived at Iwakuni by March 31.

Only one section of aircraft was delayed by maintenance problems.

The one-day rest periods in Hawaii and on Wake Island were needed to allow the KC-130 refuelers to position themselves for the follow-on flights. Of course, the rest days also allowed the pilots to hang out on Waikiki to rest their weary butts and visit exotic Polynesian restaurants. On Wake Island, the pilots explored the World War II fortifications, toured the island and visited the Pacific Search and Rescue (SAR) headquarters, where at the "SAR" Bar one could purchase a beer for the exorbitant price of 25 cents. One of the small ironies of the operation was that the "orders" for the movement had been written as "group travel." The disbursing officer at Iwakuni decided that the two nights at Kaneohe and Wake, and the one night at Atsugi, had been incidental to the mode of travel, and this decision



Sampling the local culture. Cherry Blossom Festival, Iwakuni.



The Tomcat Ready Room: Dick Norris (R); Kirby Schnell, LSO, (L); Gerry Madison (facing); Sneaky Shea (back to camera) playing Ace Deuce in the ready room.

limited the participants to collecting a maximum of \$1.75 per diem. Thus, the squadron pilots had traveled over 8,000 miles in six days and could only collect \$8.75 per diem! To be sure--it was the *Marine Corps way*...

The \$8.75 barely covered three beers at a very cheap bar in Honolulu.

The VMA-311 aircraft were greeted at Iwakuni by Col John Noble, Commanding Officer of MAG-12. Following eight hours of "in" briefings (consisting of a welcome aboard by the colonel, a G-3 brief, a G-2 brief and, of course, the standard infamous and interesting GI hygiene films), VMA-311 relieved VMA-121 of the SIOP mission and assumed the "Ready" status special weapons missions. It all happened within 72 hours of arrival in Iwakuni.

The Ready status required two aircraft on a hot pad, with pilots on 30-minute standby; two more aircraft and crews on two-hour standby; and four additional pilots and aircraft on eight-hour alert. That was eight pilots, eight "loading officers" and a squadron duty officer, most all of whom were lieutenants. However, all squadron pilots except the commanding officer stood the ready status alert. Of course, this meant that the possibility of a snake ranch in the village was completely out of the question because 17 officers and supporting enlisted had to be on the base at all times to handle these duties. It meant a lot of "sitting in your hooch time" at night, with liberty only one or two nights a week-- if you were lucky. In modern terms, the duty was 24/7. Exciting!

Within 15 days of settling in at MCAS Iwakuni, the squadron was alerted to a possible deployment to Vietnam. Rumors were flying everywhere. The first elements of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade, including MAG-16, had landed near Da Nang on March 8, 1965. VMFA-531, with F-4B aircraft, and VMCJ-1, with F3D-2Q aircraft, deployed to Da Nang in April. By then, plans were being made for MAG-12 and its two A-4 squadrons (VMA-225 and VMA-311) to relocate to an expeditionary airfield 50 miles south of Da Nang, in an area



Advance party of VMA-311 departing Iwakuni to load aboard the LST – next stop, Vietnam.

named "Chu Lai." Shortly thereafter, both VMA-225 and VMA-311 had their squadrons' nuclear posture (SIOP commitment) of 24/7 degraded by higher headquarters so that more time and effort could be put to planning for possible/probable deployment to Vietnam. This change also allowed more time to explore the native population around the Four Corners area in the town of Iwakuni. Then, suddenly, the rumor became official that the squadron was going to Vietnam – pucker, pucker, **PUCKER!!!!**

It was hard to believe that the squadron was going off to war. One of the "ring-knocker" lieutenants in the squadron said at an all pilots meeting, "I'll believe all this stuff about Vietnam when MABS (Marine Airbase Squadron) leaves town." The executive officer responded that MABS was in the process of loading out and departing that very day. That was a wake-up call and the end of all speculation!!!

continued...



All Officers Meeting. Stubby Stender puts out word about deployment to Vietnam.

311 TOMCATS

Continued...

Before leaving Iwakuni, MAG-12 conducted a so called "group grope" launching 24 A-4s from -225 and -311 on May 11, against an island target several hundred miles southwest of Iwakuni. The 12 VMA-311 aircraft were led by Lt Kirby Schnell, since Stubby Stender had radio trouble shortly after take-off and had passed the lead to Schnell, his favorite section leader. Every-

The Tomcats in 1964-66:

1. LtCol Bernard E. Stender (CO)
2. Maj Jack Parchen (XO)
3. Maj Speed F. Shea (OpsO)
4. Maj Donald L. Rowe (MaintO)
5. Capt Leonard T. Preston (ASO)
6. Capt George C. Psaros (Logistics)
7. Capt Cary Watkins (Admin)
8. Capt Miles Mixson
9. Capt Anthony Capozza
10. 1st Lt Rod Daley
11. 1st Lt Richard L. Norris
12. 1st Lt Gerald Madison
13. 1st Lt Brendan McKay Greeley
14. 1st Lt Thomas K. Griffith
15. 1st Lt Roy Stocking
16. 1st Lt Robert Polhamus
17. 1st Lt Monty Doyel
18. 1st Lt Lyle Prouse
19. 1st Lt Kirby Schnell
20. 1st Lt Steve Sewell
21. 1st Lt Eugene J. Shea
22. 1st Lt Thomas Eldridge
23. 1st Lt Richard L. Johnson
24. 2nd Lt Bill Burg
25. 2nd Lt Augusto Maria Xavier
26. 2nd Lt Thomas Hampton
27. 2nd Lt Jerome T. Bertrand
28. 2nd Lt Ellard B. Jarrell

Ground Officers:

1. 1st Lt Don Stone
 2. 1st Lt Robert Nieuman
 3. 2nd Lt Aram Najarian
 4. CWO-3 William Wenglare
- Flight Surgeon: Navy Lt Lowell T. "Zeke" Niebaum
Sgt Major: SgtMaj Adam

one in the squadron always suspected there was something wrong with LtCol Stenders' helmet or his airplane (WL 00) because the electrical problem kept recurring.

In mid-May, the squadron's expeditionary equipment was loaded aboard an LSD, the USS *Comstock* (OIC Maj Jack Parchen) and an LST, the USS *Washoe County* (OIC Capt Tony Capozza accompanied by SgtMaj Adamski). This advance element of six officers and about 75 enlisted men embarked on May 16 and sailed south for Chu Lai, landing on May 24.

In the meantime, VMA-311's airplanes and pilots remained at Iwakuni awaiting departure orders. The pilots mostly had a good time and things got a bit wild and risqué – after all, the squadron was headed off to war. The base commander, a Navy captain, was annoyed by (perhaps jealous of) all the good times the remnants of the squadrons were having. "Some" Navy wives (accompanied tour wives) were complaining about the behavior of the squadron personnel. One or two of them were sympathetic and joined the party. The culminating event was the demolition derby, in which several personal motor vehicles, which were purchased in Japan by squadron members (VMA-225 & VMA-311) and which no one

wanted to buy, were actually destroyed by one method or another. The base commander went "high and right" and was definitely glad to see the squadrons gone.

May 29 - 30, 1965, were sad, but exciting days. VMA-311 departed in flights of four for NAS Cubi Point, with all aircraft arriving by May 30. VMA-225 had begun departing for NAS Cubi a couple of days prior. NAS Cubi Point was to be the staging facility that MAG-12 squadrons would use for movement to their new home at Chu Lai, RVN. Over the next 7-10 days the squadrons awaited instructions to fly off to Chu Lai, usually in flights of two or four. (Staggered departures were necessary because the runway and adequate parking areas were still under construction.) While awaiting fly-off orders, squadron members occasionally visited Olongapo for some debauchery. All VMA-311 airplanes and pilots were in Chu Lai by June 15.

(Ed. Note: Col Bertrand wrote this piece in February 2005. Bill Burg, Tony Capozza, Jack Harris, Dick Jarrell, Jack Parchen, Lyle Prouse, Don Rowe, Kirby Schnell, Steve Sewell, Speed Shea, Roy Stocking, and Cary Watkins contributed. Stay tuned for the next installment, "Tomcats Go To War," in the Spring '07 issue of the A-4Ever.)



Mac Greeley sitting on his personal effects wondering where in the hell in Vietnam the squadron was going.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MULTIPLE CARRIAGE BOMB RACK (MCBR)

By LtGen William H. Fitch, USMC(Ret).



When Marine Capt Bill Fitch completed Test Pilot School in February 1958, he was surprised to receive orders to VX-5 at China Lake, a squadron he had never heard of until a few months before graduation. Joining the squadron in March, he found all the flying was associated with nuclear weapons delivery: low-level navigation; aerial refueling; mission profiles; loft bombing and dive bombing. A full year of flying nuclear profiles-- including an operational suitability test mission from USS Hancock-- convinced him that the Navy and Marine Corps knew how to do the nuclear weapons delivery mission very well. Yet at the same time, most China Lake pilots felt the use of nukes was unlikely. A year into his tour at VX-5, Capt Fitch decided that more emphasis should be placed on conventional weapons capability. The A-4Ever is proud to bring Gen Fitch's article about his invention of the MCBR to our readers.

After coming off the carriers in May 1959, I started thinking seriously about conventional warfare and concluded that we needed to be more concerned about it. However, when I looked at the A4D-2 (A-4B), it wasn't well suited for conventional weapons delivery.

In 1958, the A4D-2 had three bomb stations which were part of the aircraft and installed at the factory: a centerline Aero 7A pylon and an Aero 20 pylon on each wing. For the close air support (CAS) mission, the pilot could carry a high explosive bomb on each of the three pylons, for a grand total of three bombs, or carry a centerline 150 or 300 gallon external fuel tank along with one bomb on each wing station. For the deep strike mission (DAS), he could carry two drop tanks on the wings and have one bomb for delivery.

In other words, the A4 was a pathetic conventional bomber in 1959. On a scale of one to ten, my overall evaluation of the A4D-2 for close air support was a two, and for the conventional DAS mission, two was stretching it. To be blunt, the A4 of that era was a lousy CAS aircraft and an even lousier deep strike aircraft. In a nutshell, with the A4D-2 Skyhawk, the Navy, the Marines and Douglas Aircraft Company had bet the ranch that the only war was going to be a nuclear war. In May 1959, I disagreed.

Then I realized that there was a solution for making the A4 a formidable CAS and strike aircraft. Like most good ideas, this one was very simple; but until that time, no one had thought about either the problem or the solution. Every day we flew missions which involved delivery of MK76 or MK105 practice bombs. The bombs were carried on the A4 and FJ Fury on what we called a "Banger Board." It was a simple steel plate that had six attachment points for the practice bombs and could be attached to a wing or centerline pylon. The Banger Board had a stepper switch with six positions and would release one bomb for each depression of the bomb button on the pilot's control stick.

Looking at this rack that carried six MK-76 practice bombs, I began to think we could build a similar, but larger bomb rack, which could carry high explosive bombs such as the 250 pound MK-81 and the 500 pound MK-82. The larger bomb rack, which I envi-

sioned and now called the *Multiple Carriage Bomb Rack* (or MCBR), could be attached to the existing Aero 7 and Aero 20 pylons on the A4 and could be designed to carry up to six bombs. (We later determined that six bombs could be carried on the centerline Aero 7, but that bomb carriage on the wing station would be limited to five bombs because of interference with the wheel-well door.)

To maximize flexibility and to optimize weapons effects, I wanted the pilot to have the option of dropping bombs in singles, pairs and salvos from the same rack, as well as simultaneously from multiple racks. Those options for

"To be blunt, the A4 of that era was a lousy CAS aircraft and an even lousier deep strike aircraft."

bomb drops from the MCBR would be controlled by a stepper switch in the MCBR, plus the cockpit switches that would be needed to initiate the release of the proper number of bombs for each run.

In the prototype, we installed a stepper switch from a wrecked AD Skyraider into the A4D-2 cockpit. (This cockpit stepper switch was not incorporated in the production Multiple Bomb Rack (MBR), but it could have been.) That stepper switch in the cockpit of our test aircraft made that A4D-2 unique, with the capability to drop any bomb from any MCBR station on the aircraft. With a fully loaded A4, *continued...*



Loaded for more bears than usual: A-4 with new bomb racks at China Lake.

that provided the capability to drop from one bomb to 16 bombs (assuming three MCBRs loaded with six 250 or 500 pound bombs on the centerline and a total of ten bombs on the wing racks). From this initial work on the concept of operations (CONOPS), I concluded at the outset-- before we had started building anything-- that the MCBR would work. There was no reason that it would not.

In late May or early June 1959, I talked with Maj K.P. Rice, the other Marine in VX-5, and told him what I had in mind for conventional bombing and explained my ideas for developing a MCBR. He was an aeronautical engineer and one of the smartest officers I ever worked with in the military. He agreed that there was no reason why it should not succeed. We began to design the MCBR and went to brief the executive officer of the squadron, CDR Dale Cox. I explained my ideas for enhancing conventional bombing with the A-4 and outlined how the MCBR CONOPS would work. We convinced him that we could build a workable MCBR in-house in VX-5 and further convinced him that the concept could provide a six-fold increase in combat capability for the A-4. He gave us the go-ahead, and we were off and running.

We immediately went to work assembling the materials to build the first prototype rack. It involved some heavy channel iron procured from the Naval Ordnance Test Station and six Aero 15 bomb racks from wrecked AD *Skyraiders* (these became the individual bomb attachment points). K.P. worked on the stress analysis, and I was assigned to supervise the VX-5 metalsmiths who would put the first MCBR together.

During the process, K.P. started having some trouble with the stress analysis, so we went to Douglas Aircraft Company in El Segundo to discuss it with them. From the outset of the project, the Douglas tech rep at China Lake was following everything we were doing. On this trip, we met with a friend named Whiff Caldwell, a former Navy pilot, who had been with Douglas for



Capt Bill Fitch on 27 June, 1960, prior to dropping high-explosive bombs for the first time from MCBRs.

many years. He began following our project closely, and about two months later, Douglas began preparing an unsolicited proposal for a multiple bomb rack.

By September 30, 1959, the first MCBR was nearing completion. Both ordnance and avionics knew that I intended to fly the rack as soon as it was finished. At 1700 that day, I called the ordnance chief and asked him to come get the MCBR and hang it on the centerline of the test A4D-2. For that first flight, there were no bombs on it and no wiring harness installed. The intention was to take the aircraft up to high speed (well over 500 knots), pull about four or five *G* and see if anything fell off the rack.

On that flight, I made two high-speed passes on Charlie Range, roughly 550 knots at 200 feet with four *G* pulls. The Charlie Range crew verified that nothing had fallen off, so I returned to China Lake approximately fifteen minutes after takeoff. I debriefed with the avionics officer and asked him to install the wiring harness. Then I called the ordnance chief (one of the first E-9s), and asked him to load six inert MK-81s on the rack after avionics completed the harness installation.

The next morning, October 1, 1959, I got to the squadron at about 6:30, ready to fly the first bombing hop with the MCBR. The A4D-2 was on the flightline with the wiring harness installed (with the stepper switch in the cockpit), and six MK-81 inert 250 pound bombs

hanging on the centerline MCBR. I carefully preflighted the aircraft and racks and took off. I accelerated to about 500 knots, turned onto the run-in line for Charlie Range and started dropping the MK-81s individually in low-angle loft maneuvers. The hop was successful. The next day, I flew a firepower demo that included releasing three banded MK-81 inert bombs from each Aero 20 wing pylon and six MK-81 inerts from the centerline MCBR.

During October 1959, a firepower demonstration had been planned as part of a Marine weapons meet at MCAS Yuma, scheduled for early December. I asked CDR Cox if he could get us a slot in the firepower demo, so we could present the capabilities of an A4D-2 with three MCBRs. Within a few days, he had it arranged. At that time, the Aviation Department at HQMC, the Navy's OP 05 and the Bureau of Naval Weapons were starting to hear about the bomb racks being flown by VX-5. However, they didn't know any details. We decided that the Yuma weapons meet was going to be the coming out party for the MCBR.

We needed two more MCBRs for the wing stations for the firepower demo, and the squadron immediately began building them, completing the work on November 18. The next morning the test A-4 was ready, carrying 16 MK-81 bombs attached to the wing and centerline MCBRs. I took the plane up to about 500 knots, pulled a few *G* and then landed back at NAF China Lake to see if anything had fallen off the aircraft. Nothing had, so I took off for a full test flight which included dropping bombs from all three stations.

At that point, we were aware that the fleet needed to be sold on the MCBR idea before we talked with BuWeps and Washington. There needed to be an increase in the momentum of fleet support, but up to that time, there had only been a static display of the MCBR at El Toro. On November 23, I flew another firepower demo at China Lake for senior officers from El Toro, including MajGen Jack, who was the CG, Air Fleet Marine Forces, Pacific. We also had some senior Navy officers visiting from Lemoore. Everyone--Marine Corps and Navy, was suitably impressed with the MCBR.

The capstone for the project would be the firepower demonstration at Yuma on December 3. I flew to Yuma to co-ordinate our participation in the demo. It was decided that the plane should arrive on December 2, with 16 MK-81 inert bombs. At the beginning of the firepower demonstration, I would fly by the stands belly-up to the crowd, so they could see the 16 bombs. After the pass, I would loft the 12 bombs off the wings in a low angle loft maneuver and then pull-up to skip bomb the remaining six MK-81 bombs with a salvo. The plan was accepted.

On December 3, the firepower demonstration was flown as planned. When the plane went belly-up to the crowd, revealing 16 bombs, VADM Pirie (OP05) reportedly said, "We are going to buy that," or words to that effect. After the fly-by, I did the low angle loft maneuver as planned and then delivered the six MK-81s off the centerline MCBR in a skip bombing run. Everything worked perfectly. That day marked just over six months since I had first started thinking about the A4D-2 *Skyhawk* and conventional bombing. That thought process had now led to an actual, working Multiple Carriage Bomb Rack.

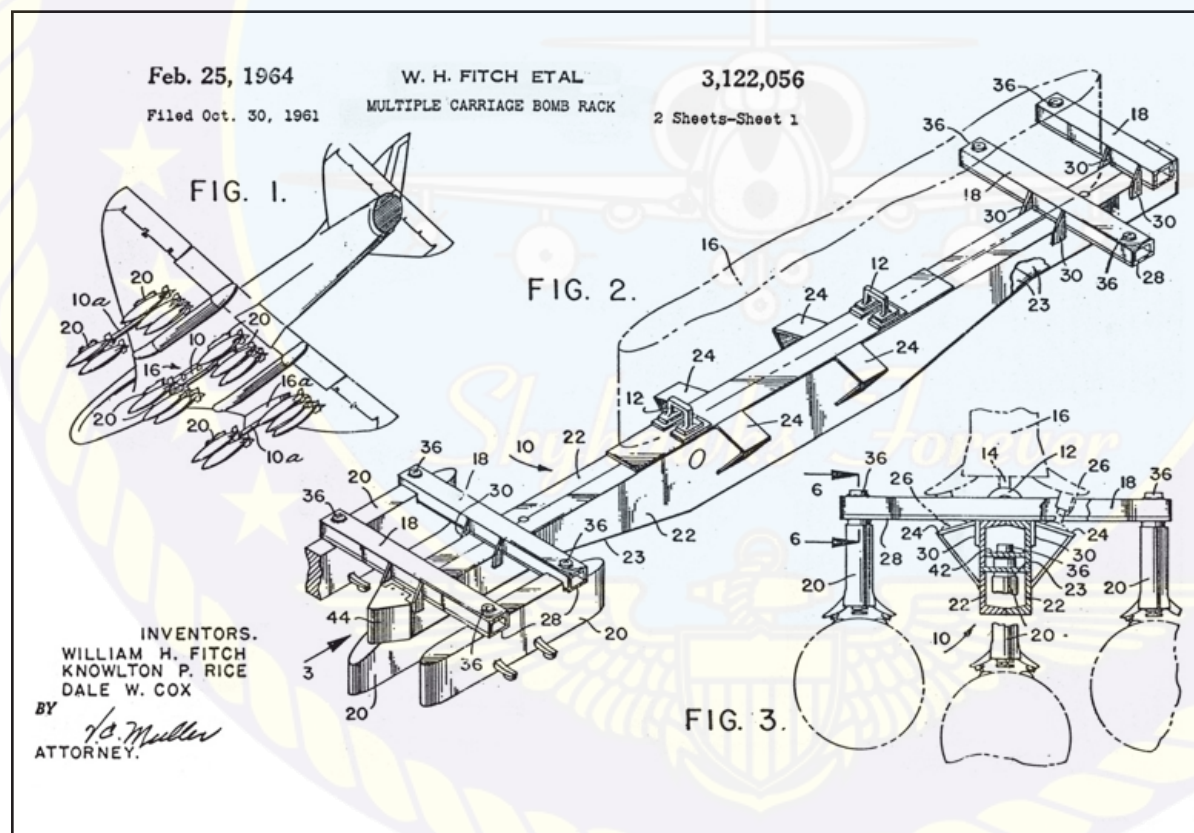
In early 1960, we learned that Douglas Aircraft had submitted an unsolicited proposal to BuWeps for a multiple bomb rack, patterned after the MCBR. As noted, Douglas had been following our project very closely, which was okay with us. At VX-5, we were looking for a rapid fleet introduction of the improved capability for conventional war, and we were anxious to see the multiple bomb rack in mass production. Douglas Aircraft was eventually awarded a contract for 2,000 Multiple Bomb Racks (MBR) in May 1960. They deleted the "C" (for carriage) from the name we had chosen at China Lake. That was remarkable progress, for less than a year had gone by since we had started the project in May 1959.

As was the case with the MCBR, the Douglas MBR used gravity drop. A couple of years later, BuWeps decided that the bombs on the MBR had to be ejected. In response, Douglas developed the Multiple Ejector Rack (MER). Later, with the introduction of the F4H-1 *Phantom* into VX-5, the project pilots had Douglas cut the MER into two parts to create the Triple Ejector Rack (TER).

A Patent is Assigned

During the fall of 1960, while assigned to VMA-311 at MCAS El Toro, I received a call from CDR Bob Kunz, project director at VX-5. He said that VX-5 and the Navy wanted me to patent the Multiple Carriage Bomb Rack. There was concern that Douglas Aircraft might try to charge the government for work on the MCBR.

On 25 February 1964, United States Patent Number 3,122,056 was granted to William H. Fitch (inventor), Knowlton P. Rice, and Dale Cox. It was a classic team effort to develop and test the Multiple Carriage Bomb Rack. Although K.P. Rice and I did the hands-on work, Dale Cox provided the horsepower and funding to get the job done. Had he or K.P. not been involved, the MCBR project would never have come to fruition. The project was a bargain. We spent approximately \$500 on channel iron for the first rack, and around \$2,000 to fabricate the two wing racks using better metal. Of course, those were 1959 dollars, but a bargain none the less.



(Ed. Note: LtGen Fitch was commissioned and designated a naval aviator on 1 April 1952. During his career, he logged over 6000 hours and more than 300 carrier landings, commanding VMA(AW)-225, VMA(AW)-533, 32nd MAU and 1st MAW. He served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Aviation at HQMC, 1982-84. During his tour in Vietnam in 1967-1968, he flew more than 100 missions in the A-4, as well as 200+ A-6A missions, the majority low level at night in North Vietnam. On all of those missions, he used the multiple bomb rack.)

A-4s TO ISRAEL

By Richard P. Shipman.



In October 1973, Egypt, Syria and Iraq launched a surprise attack against Israel. The ensuing “Yom Kippur War” resulted in heavy losses for the Israeli Air Force, particularly among its A-4 and F-4 aircraft. Recently supplied Russian SA-6 missiles and anti-aircraft artillery were devastatingly effective against the *Skyhawks* and *Phantoms*, with their older ECM capabilities. After much political debate, the US agreed to begin re-supplying war materials, including A-4s. The need was urgent; the aircraft would have to be flown over to Israel as soon as possible.

At the time, I was flying TA-4Js as an instructor at VT-22, Kingsville, Texas. On October 16, 1973, I received a call from the squadron duty officer directing me to report immediately for a special briefing. Four of us from VT-22 had been selected to ferry A-4s to Israel. The powers-that-be were looking for fleet-experienced pilots with carrier landing currency and in-flight refueling proficiency (in that era of many plow-back instructors). Previous experience in the Mediterranean was a plus. I had completed a Fleet tour in VA-81, flying A-4Cs on one cruise and transitioning to A-7Es for a second cruise, both to the Mediterranean. (Hey, somebody had to protect the French Riviera, even if there was a war going on in Vietnam!)

Within a day, we were enroute to Norfolk, VA, where the A-4s we were going to fly were being reworked at the Naval Air Rework Facility. The aircraft, A-4Es and Fs, came from several sources: the Marine Reserves, active duty VA and VC squadrons, adversary squadrons and naval reserve bases. The plan, once we reached Norfolk, was for us to fly several familiarization flights in the single-seat A-4s, practice air-to-air refueling with an Air Force KC-135 (which would lead us across the Atlantic) and then make a few carrier landings to regain our currency, since a

carrier in the Med was to be one of our stopover points.

The mission was given high priority. A command post set up at Atlantic Fleet Headquarters had been given “carte blanche” to do what was needed to facilitate the effort. We were discouraged from wearing identifiable flight gear, so the supply locker was opened up and we all stocked up on new flight jackets, flight suits, helmets and other gear that we may or may not have needed for the trip. An Air Force KC-135 was arranged for practice “plugs” in the nearby VACAPES ops area. About the only arrangement that wasn’t made was for the carrier landings. The urgency of the mission and the lack of an available deck precluded the practice traps. Fortunately, most of us had managed to bag a few traps in conjunction with our instructor duties during student CQ sessions.

I flew two practice flights on 18 October. The first was a basic familiarization/test flight for the A-4E I would

fly to Israel, and the second was for in-flight refueling practice with a KC-135. I hope that today’s environment of inter-service cooperation has produced a refueling package for the KC-135 that is fully compatible with Navy probe-and-drogue systems. Such was not the case in 1973. The aircraft that would take us across the Atlantic and refuel us four to five times had only a heavy, rigid hose with no hydraulic take-up reel such as we were used to on Navy refueling packages. The result was that if you hit the refueling basket with anything more than minimal closure, the hose would

react by producing a wicked “sine wave” effect that could rip off your refueling probe. Also, the KC-135 basket coupling was not fully compatible with A-4 probes. When fuel was transferred, a spray emitted constantly from around the coupling. Since the engine intakes on the A-4 were directly in line with the refueling probe, this spray could easily be ingested by the engine and potentially lead to a flame out. Some of the A-4s we picked up had the bent probe modification, which I believe went to the more senior pilots in the group!

Our trip to Israel consisted of three segments. The first leg was a trans-Atlantic flight from Norfolk to Lajes AFB in the Azores behind an Air Force KC-135. We were given the option of donning “poopy suits” for the flight, but with the prospect of a 5+ hour flight in the never-commodious *Skyhawk* cockpit, most of us opted to cheat death in the comfort of our flight suits. Besides, if we went down in the mid-Atlantic, what good would a few extra hours survival time in the water do?

Takeoff and rendezvous with the Air Force tankers was uneventful. The trans-Lant was a fatiguing flight, flying (some semblance of) formation for 5 hours and 20 minutes, without an autopilot, of course, interspersed with the challenge of in-flight refueling. Everyone managed to plug several times without snapping off their probes,

“We were discouraged from wearing identifiable flight gear, so the supply locker was opened up and we all stocked up on new flight jackets, flight suits, helmets and other gear that we may or may not have needed for the trip.”

and the troublesome spray of fuel from around the probe couplings caused no engine flameouts.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of this flight was answering “the call of nature.” Before we took off we had to decide how little we could drink and still survive the long flight without yielding to “physiological needs.” Going without coffee in the morning was not an option for me, so I made the decision to accept the consequences. As every A-4 pilot knows, there was no relief tube in the “Scooter.” In almost 2000 hours of A-4 time, I had never be-

fore had to make use of the A-4's "pilot defueling system" which consisted of a plastic baggie. When it became apparent, halfway across the Atlantic, that I wasn't going to make it to Lajes on a single bladder load, I began my preparations. By unstrapping from the ejection seat, moving the rudder pedals full forward, and sliding into a semi-recumbent position I was able to succeed, but not without great difficulty, as those in the formation could attest to by the wild gyrations of my aircraft.

We had our last refueling from the KC-135 when we were within one fuel load's range of our destination. The tanker returned to the US while we landed at the bustling Lajes AFB and found sleeping quarters, not an easy task at the



Current VT-22 Squadron Patch

and locate the ship as it turned into the wind for our recovery. After 5 ½ hours of flying, most of us got aboard on our first pass with no undue excitement for the LSOs. Kudos to the A-4 for its excellent handling qualities coming aboard.

Spending the night on a "haze gray and underway" carrier would ordinarily not be high on anyone's list of good deals, but after the rigors of preced-

used to flying with clean A-4s rather than those laden with double 300-gallon drop tanks, because he soon became a speck on the horizon even though we had our throttles firewalled.

Fortunately, the *Mirage* pilot started an orbit over our destination airfield before we completely lost sight of him. With a large airfield in sight below us, we spiraled down from 20,000 feet and landed. We had a few blown tires on landing due to the carrier-inflation tire pressures, but other than that, the A-4s arrived intact. As we were pulling into our parking spots, Israeli ground crew members were already painting Stars of David on earlier arrived A-4s and arming them for their next mission.

We spent one night at the military base, the name of which I do not know to this day. There were several ceremonies where we received commemorative medals in olive-wood boxes, honorary IAF pilot wings and letters from appreciative children. The following day we were transported to Tel Aviv where we caught a C-5A that took us directly to Dover AFB. From there we worked our way back to Kingsville on commercial transport.

Our delivery of A-4 aircraft was a small part of Operation Nickel-Grass, which also included F-4 transfers and a massive re-supply of war materials to Israel. Thanks in large part to this effort, Israel was able to regain military superiority and went on to defeat the Arab coalition. The Yom Kippur War and Operation Nickel-Grass had many interesting logistical and political aspects. For more information and insights, I would recommend Walter Boyne's book "The Two O'clock War," St. Martin's Press, 2002. From a "little picture" pilot's standpoint, I found the mission challenging, interesting and a nice change of pace from watching student pilot rendezvous overshoots.

(Ed. Note: Richard Shipman spent 10 years on active duty and 15 more in the Naval Air Reserve. He accumulated more than 3000 hours in the A-4, flying with VA-44, VA-81, VT-22 and VFC-12. He was also a former editor of Approach Magazine and wrote a book on the history of the Naval Air Reserve titled "Wings at the Ready." He lives just outside Charlotte, NC, after retiring from USAirways in 2004.) continued...

"We launched without knowing where we were supposed to land.

The plan was to proceed to a rendezvous point where Israeli Air

Force aircraft would intercept us and lead us to our destination.

The rendezvous occurred as scheduled off the coast of Israel"

crowded air base. Portugal was about the only European country that would allow access to its territory for the US airlift, and the Azores base was jammed with C-5As, C-141s and other elements of the massive re-supply effort.

After a way-too-short night in the Azores, we took off the next morning behind a Naval Air Reserve KA-3, headed for a rendezvous with a Marine KC-130 off the coast of Spain. Refueling from the familiar "Whale" with its Navy refueling package was a welcome relief, as was refueling from the Marine KC-130 with the familiar "buddy stores" strapped onto its wing stations.

After refueling, we were on our own for navigation. We had the standard A-4 avionics "suite": one intermittent TACAN, one UHF ADF and an inop (or uninstalled) radar. Due to the political sensitivities of this operation, we were prohibited from flying over any foreign countries. Fortunately, we did our last refueling off the coast of Spain and the weather was solid VFR, so we had a good view of the Straits of Gibraltar. With a good starting point, some old fashioned dead-reckoning navigation and a few occasional TACAN cuts, we were able to navigate within range of USS *Roosevelt's* strong TACAN signal

ing days, getting some rest and decent food (relatively speaking) in a friendly environment was extremely welcome. Unfortunately, I got to experience the hospitality of my host squadron, VA-15, for an extra day when inadvertent actuation of the hangar deck fire sprinkling system doused the cockpit of my A-4, including the parachute. Therefore, I spent an extra day aboard the ship while the parachute dried, and was scheduled to join with another flight for the final leg into Israel.

The following day, I was catapulted off CV-42 and rendezvoused with my new wingmen and headed toward Israel. We had been loaded with a token number of 20mm rounds, for what purpose I'm not sure. The A-4 was a more than capable dogfighter, but with no lead computing gunsight and a "whippy" 20mm gun barrel, any thought of in-flight defense with 50 rounds of 20 mike mike was highly optimistic.

We launched without knowing where we were supposed to land. The plan was to proceed to a rendezvous point where Israeli Air Force aircraft would intercept us and lead us to our destination. The rendezvous occurred as scheduled off the coast of Israel. Unfortunately, the Israeli *Mirage* fighter must have been

A-4s to ISRAEL

MORE NICKEL GRASS

“At an AOM, the skipper, Cdr. Tulley, asked for volunteers to fly a special mission which ‘would involve some danger.’ Nearly all of us instructors raised our hands.”

The airborne delivery of some forty Skyhawks and a like number of Air Force F-4 Phantoms was only part of the huge operation which was *Nickel Grass*. USAF airlift assets were strained carrying 23,000 tons of materiel which included tanks and other heavy equipment. The Portuguese airfield at Lajes handled over thirty flights a day.

The A-4s and the pilots came from a variety of sources. Al Chesterman cruised the Med with VA-216 and went to Yankee station in A-7s (VA-56) before joining VA-127. He provided this account:

“At an AOM, the skipper, Cdr. Tulley, asked for volunteers to fly a special mission which ‘would involve some danger.’ Nearly all of us instructors raised our hands. He said all he knew for sure was we were to fly many of our own aircraft to Norfolk, and we would receive further briefing there. Pack for a week, he added.

VA-127 had been the instrument training squadron in Lemoore for quite some time. The A-7 drivers on their way to VA-125 or VA-122 were obligated to make a stop and fly our TA-4s under the bag to sharpen their scan (or humiliate those newly minted naval aviators). VA-125 had switched from an A-4 RAG to an A-7 RAG when the powers that be decided no more A-4s would be going on cruises.

Of course A-4s kept cruising, so VA-127 became the A-4 RAG to train pilots for each successive ‘A-4 Last Annual Cruise.’ We had a cadre of fleet experienced A-4 pilots who taught tactics and CQ’ed all sorts of pilots who were slated to fly the Scooter on various 27C carriers still floating about in WestPac. When we became the RAG we got the latest versions of A-4Es and Fs, including the P408 powered model which the Blue Angels flew after being “trained” at VA-127.

Once in Norfolk, we waited another day after the briefing for the Rework Facility to take out the electronics we did not want to hand over to the Israelis. They also painted out all the markings

on the A4s except for the single star and bar on each side of the aft fuselage.

I launched in a flight of twelve A-4s with two KC-135s acting as pathfinders and tankers. The flight from Norfolk to the Azores turned out to be my longest A-4 flight at 5.5 hours. We spent the night in Lajes and managed to find the O’Club. Meanwhile the maintenance

there was some doubt as to the status of my tailhook. The dashpot did not keep the hook from bouncing (that was the reason for my bolter the evening before on Roosevelt – that’s my story and I’m sticking to it). By the time I landed, the first two or three aircraft already had the stars and bars painted out and the Star of David as a new marking.

“The drogue on the 135s did not retract like the one on our buddy stores and some of the training command plow-backs who had joined us had never refueled from anything. The bent probes were fixed by the heaviest guys doing some pull-ups.”

guys had to straighten out a fuel probe or two which became slightly bent during our refueling with the 135s. The drogue on the 135s did not retract like the one on our buddy stores and some of the training command plow-backs who had joined us had never refueled from anything. The bent probes were fixed by the heaviest guys doing some pull-ups.

Next day, we launched with loaded cannon – no reason was given. We rendezvoused with a bunch of KC-130 Marine tankers just outside of Gibraltar. As we passed by Libya, an unnamed JO decided to make sure his guns actually worked. Of course he had to break right and pull up so as not to waste the rounds.”

The Kennedy was on her way home when word came to loiter near Gibraltar. Two A-4s landed aboard and caused a flail when catapult bridles to launch them could not be located. After a couple of days they were found in some obscure storeroom. All the other Nickel Grass Skyhawks landed aboard Roosevelt. Al Chesterman continues:

“Aboard FDR we had another admiral brief us on the final leg of our mission. The most important part of which, we all listened to very carefully. Israeli F-4s would escort us from their ADIZ to the intending landing field. We launched, the Phantoms found us and we landed without incident. I landed last because

When I was taxiing in, I saw several gun emplacements with laundry hanging from the AAA barrel. Around the emplacement was a family with kids playing in a yard. It seems a family was assigned to man this defensive piece of the war. No wonder the Israelis fight so hard – they literally were totally involved.

Next stop was the O’Club. Yep, the Israelis followed our USAF flying brethren’s lead and built the club before the runway. Our short stay at the O’Club was welcome and... surreal. As we ate the food they had laid out and did our best to drink all their booze, we chatted with the pilots of the local squadrons. In the middle of a conversation one guy said, ‘Excuse me, I have to go brief for the afternoon launch.’ He had been drinking iced tea. Of course, the same guy who took a shot at Muammar Gaddafi tried to bribe one of their guys to take him in the back seat of their TA-4. He would have had a better chance if he had been drinking iced tea.”

(Ed. Note: Al Chesterman left VA-127 to become the shooter (catapult officer) on the Big E. There were no reserve flying jobs available when he left the Navy, so he became an AEDO. He retired from the reserves in ‘95 as his son was being commissioned. He retired again two years ago, this time from United Airlines, and landed a nice corporate flying job last summer.)

SLOW BREAKING NEWS

A Fast-Paced Feature



Skyhawk Display Dedicated at Wall of Honor Museum, Bartlesville, Oklahoma

At the Wall of Honor Museum in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, on 28 October 2006, an A-4C *Skyhawk* display was dedicated as a salute to American airpower. The aircraft was painted in the markings of AH-300 of the VA-163 *Saints*, the aircraft in which Senator John McCain was lost over North Vietnam. The aircraft was provided by the National Museum of Naval Aviation and restored by Cessna Aircraft. ConocoPhillips and other businesses provided financial and in-kind assistance.

Gen Charles Krulak, USMC (Ret), 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps (1995-1999), delivered the dedication speech, assisted by ConocoPhillips Chairman and CEO James Mulva, who is a Navy veteran. Former Marine Charlie Kittrell of Bartlesville spearheaded the project.

Gen Krulak praised the *Skyhawk*, calling it the "warhorse" of the Vietnam War and noting that 352 aircraft were lost to enemy action during the conflict.



Past members of VA-163 attended the ceremony and were pleased by the honor to their squadron and shipmates.

Senator McCain was invited to speak at the dedication but regretted due to other commitments.



Former Saints Olen Hill and Russ Stickley discuss dedication of AH-300 with former Marine Bill Hickerson at the October 28 ceremony.

USS Midway Ready Room Seeks Donations of Survival Equipment

The Attack Ready Room restoration aboard USS *Midway* is nearing completion, and the restoration team is seeking donations of survival and flotation gear to outfit a mannequin display. The museum can accept a donation or loan of the equipment, and the donor will receive recognition.

Midway contact is Bill Gilchrist at a4driver@san.rr.com.



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PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul

Blood Brothers

Early-on camaraderie had gradually lost out to sullen belligerence as the Club had filled up with Phantom pukes, A-6 pukes, RIO pukes, and some ship's company pukes, including the Air Boss, who was, besides being a commander, generally considered to be an arseholt.

Not only were most of the crowd not righteous A-4 drivers, their noise was drowning out the Filipino band's version of such favorites as "You Better Quit Kickin' My Dog Around," which usually caused Puresome to get all wet and runny. The Cubi Point O-Club was crowded as hell with aviators fresh from Yankee Station, and Puresome and Weed had been there since early afternoon, when they sneaked off from their respective extremely responsible junior officer collateral duties aboard CVA-62. They were at the stage of beer-swilling (short of bullet-proof and invisible) where the facial muscles are paralyzed, limiting the subject to a single, silly-assed expression and terse speech.

"Hey, Weed," Puresome nudged his room-mate, "lookit that weenie Air Boss sitting over with that bunch of blackshoe weenies!" "Yup," commented Weed incisively. "I vote we launch an Alpha Strike," continued Puresome. Other malcontents joined up, selected ordnance, and considered mil settings. None of the shot glasses lofted from the bar across the smoke-filled room actually struck the target, but its approaches were severely cratered.

Though it had seemed like a good idea at the time, Puresome and Weed found it prudent to exit at low altitude and high

speed for a different part of the crowd away from the bar, to avoid missiles and considerable flak launched from the impact area. Puresome was also moved by the relentless filtration of San Miguel through his system, and he left Weed for the long trip to the head or the bushes outside, whichever came first.

After a trip outside and a furtive stop back at the bar for more cold beer, Puresome eventually found Weed in intense conversation with a short, skinheaded in-

"One...two...three!" The section turned, aimed and fired, nailing the Jarhead, who had not moved from the original scene of triumph. He dropped out of sight in a forest of legs."

dividual who Weed was staring down like a snake stares at a *conejo*. "I bet you're a... Blaz...Nabbid...MARINE!" Weed was saying. "I bet you're a Blaz.. Nabbid...CAPTAIN!" he continued. "I bet you're a Blaz Nabbid...ROTORHEAD!" Weed hissed, about two inches from skinhead's face.

To Puresome, grinning fixedly, time went one-potato, two-potato, while the object of Weed's withering scorn deliberately shifted his bottle from his right hand to his left; drew back his fist; estimated range, elevation, and windage to Weed's nose, and fired....*smack!* rendering Weed's normally perpendicular snoot about forty-five degrees port.

Time again went one-potato, two-potato while a thin trickle of blood started seeping out Weed's bent nose. The little captain just leaned back and surveyed his

work. Weed was still grinning, the neural road to awareness somewhat awash in San Miguel.

Finally--the truth dawned. Puresome and Weed slowly faced each other. "Dammnit, Weed," said Puresome, "*he hit you!*" "Yeh, Dammnit, he did!" Weed acknowledged.

"Let's hit him!" suggested Puresome, who was not a LT(jg) for nothing. Weed nodded his head in agreement. "One...two...three!" The section turned, aimed and fired, nailing the Jarhead, who had not moved from the original scene of triumph. He dropped out of sight in a forest of legs.

"Fixed his ass," said Weed.

The killer duo had hardly completed their first triumphant swig of beer when a slightly bent *capitano* struggled up from the floor and yelled, "Dammnit, for a couple of Squids, you guys can hit!" "Aw,

hell, a section ought to nail a single anytime, and you punched Ol' Weed a purty good one, too," offered Puresome. "Hell of a deal anyway, pardner," said the Marine, "Us go get a beer!"

"Bet your ass," snuffled Weed.

The rest of the evening was a paragon of inter-service tolerance and buddy-dom. Whiskies were drunk; war-stories were traded; even the Commandant was toasted. When the Marine finally wandered off into the bleary distance, Weed allowed that he was a "good ol' boy."

Aboard ship next morning, a befuddled and bent Weed roughly shook the sleeping Puresome awake. "Hey, did you see the sumbitch that hit me?" he said, pointing to the forty-five degree list of his nose.

"Yup," replied Puresome. "*It was a Blaz...Nabbid....Marine!*"

New Member? Like to Have Some Back Issues of The A-4Ever?

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.





BOOM-BOOM ROOM

• Powell's Puzzlers •



CARRIER CALLSIGNS CONTEST



Scooter fans, you will remember of course that we got a great response to this memory test that ran in the Fall '06 issue of the *A-4Ever* in this column. Most of you worked from memory (risky at best...), but Nick Nickerson cleverly enlisted the aid of **Google** search to provide a nearly complete list (see below for names of those who responded). We'll keep this file open on our website, so if you can fill in one of the remaining blanks, send your updates to newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org. If the world were a just place, there would be prizes for all who submitted...But for a link to a great carrier research site on the internet, see Bob Krall's letter to the editor in this issue.

Contributors

Nick Nickerson, Steve Pollack, Stu Fitrell, Fred Shaffer, Chris Waggener, Obie ?, Dale Osborne, Dick Carlberg, Roland Schmidt, R. Eddy.

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



CV	USS	Callsign	Nickname(s)
9	<i>Essex</i>	Banknote	?
10	<i>Yorktown</i>	Ocean Wave	?
11	<i>Intrepid</i>	Atlas	The (Fighting) I
12	<i>Hornet</i>	Judo	?
14	<i>Ticonderoga</i>	Panther	Tico
15	<i>Randolph</i>	Hardgrove	Randu
		Johnstown	
16	<i>Lexington</i>	Spartan	Lady Lex
18	<i>Wasp</i>		?
19	<i>Hancock</i>	Rampage	Hanna
20	<i>Bennington</i>	Big Boy	?
31	<i>Bon Homme Richard</i>	Ocean Wave	Bonnie Dick
33	<i>Kearsarge</i>	Wildcat	Mighty Kay
34	<i>Oriskany</i>	Child Play	Big O, O-boat Mighty O
36	<i>Antietam</i>	?	?
38	<i>Shangri La</i>	All Star	Shang
41	<i>Midway</i>	School Boy	?
42	<i>Franklin D Roosevelt</i>	Riptide	Rosie
43	<i>Coral Sea</i>	Mustang	Cora, or Coral, Maru
59	<i>Forrestal</i>	Handbook	FIDLIP, Forest Fire
60	<i>Saratoga</i>	?	Sara
61	<i>Ranger</i>	Top Gun	Ranger Boat
		Gray Eagle	
62	<i>Independence</i>	Guntrain	Indy
63	<i>Kitty Hawk</i>	Pawtucket	Chicken Hawk
64	<i>Constellation</i>	War Chief	Connie
65	<i>Enterprise</i>	Climax	Big E
66	<i>America</i>	Courage	?
67	<i>John F Kennedy</i>	Eagle Cliff	JFK



SIZE DOES MATTER

• New Skyhawk Model Releases •

By Joe Turpen

Hasegawa has good news for those who are interested in modeling the *Skyhawk*. The company is in the process of issuing or has issued some new *Skyhawk* kits. All of these new kits will be limited editions, so they probably won't be around long.

A 1/48th scale A-4M *Skyhawk* with VMA-311 markings (kit No. 09710) was released in November 2006. It contains decals for the following aircraft:

158166 WL-12 from 1977
158473 WL 460 from 1978
158194 WL-01 from 1981 and is in the low visibility scheme

In January 2007, Hasegawa will issue a 1/48th scale A-4KU "Free Kuwait" (kit No. 09729) with markings for the following aircraft:

160180 Code 801 from 1990
160188 Code 809 from 1990
160193 Code 814 from 1990
160189 Code 810 from 1993
160201 Code 822 from 1993

The nice thing about this release is it will provide kits that can (hopefully) be converted into Brazilian Navy AF-1s.

In March 2007, another kit will be re-released. It is the 1/48th scale A-4SU kit (No. 09735). When the Hasegawa A-4SU kit originally appeared it was in the markings of the Black Knights flight demonstration team. This time it will be in a tactical scheme with markings for the Singapore aircraft coded 938.

Perhaps one day Hasegawa will start releasing some two-seat *Skyhawks*. We can only hope.



ATTIC ATTACKS

• Mailbag •



**VMA-211 Pilots
From Same Home Town**
Eric Hastings provided this picture and news release from 1st Marine Aircraft Wing which describes a most unusual situation that occurred at Chu Lai in 1969. Three squadron pilots (Maj Dave Pospisil, Capt Jeff McAnally and Capt Eric Hastings) serving simultaneously in the VMA-211 Avengers were from the same small town: Bozeman, Montana. This information surfaced when *Skyhawk* Association members and others were assembling information for the family of Dave Pospisil following his untimely death this fall.

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



Chu Lai “Brain Book” Donation

New member Charlie Robinson cleaned out his attic and found a vintage “brain book” from his tour in VMA-223 at Chu Lai in 1969. The book is chock full of standard MAG-12 information that most of us forgot years ago. If anyone is wondering what frequency they contacted Hostage on, we can now provide the answer.

Standby for some quizzes in the future: Does anyone remember the heading and distance from Chu Lai to Ubon?

READ? YOU THINK WE READ?

Zanek, a Chronicle of the Israeli Air Force

By William Stevenson
Random House, Inc. (Bantam), 1971.

Zanek was written thirty-four years ago, but is still of interest to *Skyhawk* fans. The Israeli Air Force is, of course, one of the major users of the A-4 in combat and did much to enhance its reputation as a superb, all-round warplane. A fighter pilot himself (Fleet Air Arm, no less) William Stevenson describes air combat very well and has a good touch for personalities. Coverage is of all the air force with the *Skyhawk* receiving its due and this striking description:

“Bang in the middle of this black-topped desert a traffic light blinked like something in a Salvador Dali painting. You stopped on red to let a line of Skyhawks curtsey past, their jets creating a shimmering haze so that you felt the whole thing was a mirage. Sometimes there were bombs hanging from the Skyhawks. They carried their long thin noses very high and moved on long haughty legs. They had the arrogance of high-fashion models, elegant and untouchable despite their bursting bellies, swaying down the strip. Then the traffic light turned green and you crossed very cautiously indeed the runway you would otherwise never have seen.”



Unfortunately, this book is no longer in print, but it is available through Amazon.com. It is one of those treasures which are frequently found at thrift stores and garage sales.

R.R. “Boom” Powell

TWIDGET GOES CYBER

• www.skyhawk.org •

By David "Twidget" Weber, Skyhawk Association Webmaster

Unsolicited Commercial Email (UCE) is commonly referred to as *spam*, or *spamming*. Note that the word "SPAM" is a trademark of the SPAM Corporation and refers to their product (don't use the capital S used when referring to UCE). UCE is a significant problem for many email users. Much of the UCE comes with a legitimate looking return address. It's easy and commonplace for somebody sending UCE to simply adopt a fake header I.D., which disguises the true source of the UCE and makes it appear that it is coming from someone else. Simply blocking a source email I.D. may or may not stop the trash email. Don't despair - there is hope! You just need to spend a little time to educate yourself on how to handle UCE. There are many products on the market that will reduce or even stop the unwanted emails you are receiving.

"Phishing" is the use of e-mail and a URL (internet link) to a fraudulent

website to lure you into providing the bad guys with personal information. Typically, the e-mail will seem to come from a reputable company and will include a form or link for you to "update your account" or "confirm your password." However, if you respond, the information is transmitted to an unauthorized third party and used for identity theft. **NEVER** use a link sent in an email for updating personal information. When accessing any site that requires your personal information, always type in the company's legitimate address into your browser, ensuring that you are going to the legitimate site. You can then bookmark it for later use.

Stock Tips And don't fall for the common scam of those "hot stock" notices. These scammers send out millions of these "free info on a hot stock" messages, and having purchased the stock at its normal low price, wait for the price to go up as "suckers" buy the stock. The scammer then sells his shares

for a profit before the stock collapses back to its normal level. Let common sense prevail- if it's too good to be true, it really is too good to be true!

Downloaders Beware Another way to get hurt is to be careless when you access a web site and download software. Read the fine print before you download, or you may receive more than you bargained for, such as things like adware and spyware.

Recently the old sdo@a4skyhawk.org email I.D. started receiving large amounts of UCE. Since some of the members on the list have not addressed the issue at their desktop, I have been forced to drop the use of that email list. A new SDO email list has been developed that is private in nature, and thus not susceptible to UCE and/or phishing. Remember, any email I.D. or website I.D. can be high-jacked by a "hacker".

Check it out Visit these sites, get in the know and don't let those "crooks" get the upper hand on you. Don't let them ruin your legitimate communications with your favorite association!

<http://spam.abuse.net/>
<http://www.ftc.gov/spam/>
<http://www.antiphishing.org/>

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Contact Terry Cooney at
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2421 Clubside Dr., Beavercreek, OH 45431.

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Blanding, John - Hurst, TX
Cunningham, Ernest C. - Pensacola, FL
Curtis, Robert - Honolulu, HI
Elmore, Jim - Heber City, UT
Felt, Donald - Virginia Beach, VA
Genrich, Charles M. - Clever, MO
Gill, Jim - Arlington, VA
Grier, John H. - Colorado Springs, CO

Hart, John - Annandale, VA
Holland, Mike - Fairburn, GA
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Jacoppo, John - Weymouth, MA
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Lockard, Phil - Phoenix, AZ
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O'Rourke, Bob - Port Aransas, TX
Petretti, Dennis - Mahopac, NY
Rapp, Carl S. - Boulder, CO
Robinson, Charles D. - Boulder, CO
Rogers, James E. - Eagle, ID
Shackelford, Ken - Thayne, WY
Steele, Victor - Madison, GA
Vell, T.E. - Brooklyn, NY
Weinel, Tom - Kalispell, MT

TAPS

Neil R. Anderson - Fort Worth, TX
Riley L. Harrell - Woodbine, GA
E.J. Hofstra - Valley Falls, KS

★ 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

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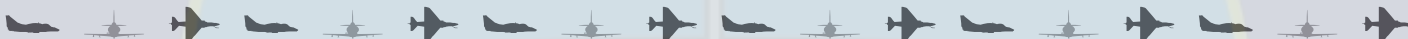


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