



THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

Journal



A-4A of VA-83 located at the north gate,
Naval Academy, Annapolis.

THE A-4 EVER

Fall 2009

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 15 • NUMBER 3

Contents:

Jet Dive Bombing • Besides, it's Fun to Fly
Puresome Unplugged • An Old Friend
Boom Boom Room • Attic Attacks
Prez Sez • Take No Prisoners
RG's Art • Size Does Matter

★ *All Marine*
A-4 Skyhawkers Reunion ★
20-22 May, 2010
Fort Worth, TX



www.skyhawk.org

COVER PHOTO

• Help Us Save This *Skyhawk* •

By Bob "Raven" Hickerson

This bedraggled *Skyhawk* is on display at the north gate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, adjacent to a major thoroughfare on the campus. The aircraft is A-4A 139968, painted as 142176 AJ 301 of VA-83 to honor Admiral James L. Holloway, III. ADM Holloway commanded VA-83 in 1958 when the squadron embarked in USS *Essex* (CVA-9). During that cruise, VA-83 covered the Marine landings in Lebanon and later flew missions to defend the islands of Quemoy and Matsu against a threatened Chinese Communist invasion.

As you can readily see, the aircraft has deteriorated badly and is in dire need of another restoration. The Naval Academy Foundation is asking our help to raise \$20,000 for this project, and the board of the *Skyhawk* Association has agreed to match \$5,000 from an anonymous donor. For that reason, the project is half-way home; but we need the help of our members to see it through.

Whether your background is Navy or Marine Corps, please step



The need for restoration is obvious.

up to help with this effort. There are *Skyhawks* on display all over the place (see <http://www.skyhawk.org/2c/museum.htm> for details), but very few are displayed in such prominent locations or dedicated to such an important leader. There's no question that the aircraft in this state of deterioration is not an appropriate tribute to a former CNO, nor to the countless sailors and Marines who took pride in maintaining and flying the *Skyhawk* over the years.

If a lot of us give a little to this project, we'll raise the remaining \$10,000 in no time. I'm pledging \$500 to it, and I urge you to meet that challenge. How about you Rampagers out there? The aircraft will be restored in the colors of VA-83, so you guys need to be in the lead on this effort.

Our contributions can be made to the Naval Academy Foundation, for the A-4 Restoration Project (let them know that you are a member of *Skyhawk* Association). Checks should be mailed to:

**Association of Naval Aviation,
1446 Waggaman Circle,
McLean, VA 22101.**

Hurry to meet the December 31st deadline for charitable contributions to count on your 2009 taxes.

Let's make this happen!

A-4s Forever. Raven



Deterioration still continues.

Admiral James L. Holloway III, U.S. Navy (Ret)

Admiral Holloway graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in June, 1942, and was assigned to destroyers in both the Atlantic and Pacific. He participated in the Saipan, Tinian and Palau campaigns and the Battle of Surigao Strait. Following the war, he was assigned to flight training in Pensacola. Upon graduation, he flew F9F-2s in combat during Korea and assumed command of VF-52 when his squadron commander was shot down. He was awarded the DFC and three Air Medals during the Korean Conflict.

From 1965 to 1967 he commanded USS *Enterprise*, the Navy's first nuclear carrier, for two cruises in the Gulf of Tonkin for operations against the North Vietnamese. Subsequently, during a Pentagon tour 1968 - 1970, he established the Navy's Nuclear-Powered Carrier Program, building USS *Nimitz* and paving the way for nine more super carriers of that class. In 1970 he was assigned as Commander of the Carrier Striking Force of the Sixth Fleet, with USS *Independence* serving as his flagship.

He commanded Seventh Fleet during 1972 and 1973, directing the massive carrier strikes against North Vietnam during

Operation Linebacker II, and after the close of hostilities directed Seventh Fleet in the airborne mine-clearing operations in North Vietnamese ports.

As Chief of Naval Operations from July 1974 to June 1978, he was a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and served as Chairman during the evacuation of Cyprus; the rescue of the merchant ship SS *Mayaguez* and its crew, as well as the punitive strikes against the Cambodian forces responsible for its seizure; the evacuation of U.S. nationals from Lebanon, and the Korean DMZ incident in August of 1976.

ADM Holloway holds more than 40 military decorations and in retirement serves many worthy causes, including the Naval Historical Foundation and the Naval Aviation Foundation. He was inducted into the National Museum of Naval Aviation's Hall of Honor in 2004. *Skyhawk* Association was honored by his presence as guest of honor and speaker at the 2005 Annual Meeting in Reno.





IN MEMORY OF
M. DAVIS "WHIZZER" WHITE, D.D.S
(1939-2007)
FOUNDER OF THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Fall 2009 •



The Prez Sez: <i>Raven's Update & Report</i>	4
Even More Prez: <i>Skyhawk Board Meeting</i>	5
Take No Prisoners: <i>Letters to the Editor</i>	7
Size Does Matter: <i>Modeling News</i>	10
The Boom-Boom Room	10
Scheduling Stuff: <i>Mark your Calendar</i>	17
Read? <i>You Think We Read?</i>	19
R.G.'s Art	21
Attic Attacks	22
New Paying Member\$	23



An Old Friend, continued.	
By Dave Dollarhide	11
Besides, it's Fun to Fly: Part II of the series.	
By Harry Gann	12-17
Jet Dive Bombing: circa 1960.	
By Jack Woodul	18
Puresome Unplugged: Sojers.	
By Jack Youthly Puresome Woodul	20-21
Restoration: VMA-131's #158182.	
By Curt Marsh	23

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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 sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org or mailed to Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624.

Stephanie Davis, graphics, stephanie@ncflight.com. Printed by NCCOAST Communications, Morehead City, NC.

Cover: In need of restoration: VA-83 A-4A at the Naval Academy, Annapolis, MD.



THE PREZ SEZ

• Raven's Report •



By Bob "Raven" Hickerson

Annual Meeting 2009

The annual meeting of members for 2009 and the first annual *Whizzer White Memorial Skyhawk Luncheon* are now history, and by all accounts, both went extremely well. I say "by all accounts," because I missed this meeting, the first since I became involved with *Skyhawk Association*.

A highlight of the annual meeting was the *Skyhawk* luncheon, now dedicated in perpetuity to our founder, Whizzer White. We were very fortunate to have his widow, Becky, on hand for the first annual luncheon dedicated to his memory. Our program was presented by Gil Rud, former Blues Commanding Officer, and it fit perfectly with the Tailhook 09 theme of *At the Edge of the Envelope*. It sounds like the Attack Hospitality Suite was busier than ever this year, welcoming the Viking bubbas to the usual A-4/A-6 group grope.



Becky White Cook (far R), widow of Whizzer White, was a guest of honor at the luncheon, joined here by her son Dan, daughter Becky and by Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul.

Hail & Farewells

As you can see by the meeting minutes in the sidebar, two long-serving directors are stepping down, and the board is welcoming some new directors to the association. Both Boom Powell and David Weber have given years of hard work and dedicated service to the *Skyhawk Association*, and their presence and counsel on the board will be missed. However, we're hoping that David will continue to serve as webmaster, and that Boom will continue to contribute to the Journal and regularly participate in *Skyhawk* events.

Boom Powell has been the longest-serving director for some time, having joined

the board as a plank owner in 1995. He was also one of the first to respond when Whizzer White asked if anyone was interested in forming a *Skyhawk Association*. Boom was the first secretary of the association, has been a frequent contributor to the newsletter and journal, and has frequently volunteered to bartend in the hospitality suite (*always under Youthly Puresome's close supervision, of course*). Without question, Boom has been an ardent supporter of this organization for a long time, and his formal presence will be missed.

It's practically impossible to adequately commend David Weber for all the time, effort, sweat and tears he has put into the *Skyhawk Association* website. If ever a volunteer deserved the title "employee," it's David. Elected to the board in 2002, he has served as assistant or webmaster since joining the association in 2001. Together with his cyber-mentor, former director Bud Southworth, he is due much of the credit for that outstanding resource. I have no doubt that the lasting legacy of *Skyhawk Association* will be someday be judged by the quality of the website and its contribution to the preservation of the history of the aircraft and those who manned and maintained it. David and a short list of others are definitely responsible for that achievement.

New board members this year are Gene Atwell, George Blosser and Pete Cole. Gene is a Marine, having served in VMA-331 and H&MS-32 on active duty and VMA-131 at Willow Grove after he joined the reserves. He has flown for American since 1985, and is currently a captain on the B-767/757. Gene has logged time in the A-4PTM (Peculiar to Malaysia), having ferried those aircraft to Malaysia in the summer of 1985. Most importantly, Gene is an IT whizz who is helping create the 3rd generation (3G) of our website, which will enable us to take advantage of new technologies.

George (Woodpecker) Blosser flew A-4s for the Navy on both coasts (VA-155 and VA-34), served as an LSO and went on to fly for National, Pan American, and Delta. He was in charge of the Delta B-727 training program for many years, before retiring to live on Lake Smith, VA.



The Skyhawk Association Board takes a break from the intellectually grueling, arduous meeting, after staging coffee cups on the table prior to photo op: (L-R) seated: Dave Dollarhide, Bear Langworthy, only one who scored a neck lanyard for his name tag, and John Gabbard. (L-R) standing: Todd Frommelt, Joe Turpen, Bill Egen, Mark Williams, Terry Cooney and John Bloore.

Pete Cole is an honest-to-God rocket scientist (*probably too smart to serve as a director of Skyhawk Association*) who flew A-4s for the Navy in VC-4 det Cecil, VC-2 det Cecil, VA-127 and VA-212 (where he made a couple of the USS *Hancock's* "last" cruises). Pete earned a doctorate in astronomy and physics from Boston University and works for Lockheed Martin Intelligence, Test and Evaluation Group at MIT. He served as a reservist at Willow Grove, where only the Marine Corps had A-4s, and was forced to fly H-3s in order to get stick time. However, we won't hold that against him.

All-Marine Skyhawker Reunion: 20-22 May, 2010

The *Skyhawk Association* is supporting another All-Marine *Skyhawk Reunion*, this one to be held in conjunction with the Marine Corps Aviation Association (MCAA) in May 2010. Planning is underway for the best ever *Skyhawk* reunion, so contact Mark Williams at roger.wilco@verizon.net to get your name on the list to receive registration information. Continuously updated information will be posted on the *Skyhawk Association* home page at www.skyhawk.org.

The reunion hotel will be the newly constructed Omni, right in the fabulous Sundance Square district of Fort Worth. Activities in planning are a tour of the Lockheed Martin F-35 production facility for the guys, shopping and museums for the ladies.

Several squadrons are considering holding "embedded" reunions at this event. As of the writing of this column, VMA-214, VMA-331, and the H&MS-11 Playboys are planning reunions.

We're hoping to schedule a tour/event for all *Skyhawk* Association members in the Dallas – Fort Worth area, and if that comes together, details will be published in the Spring 2010 *Skyhawk* Journal (which is published in February) and posted on the website.

Elimination of the Skyhawk Association/Tailhook 800 Toll-free Line

For years *Skyhawk* Association has contracted with the Tailhook Association to man a toll-free 800 number which allowed members and prospective members the ability to call in to initiate a credit-card purchase of a new or renewing membership. This has been a popular feature over the years, but usage has been dropping as costs have risen to the point that we've decided to discontinue the service as of December 31, 2009. Members can now pay by credit card through the *Skyhawk* Association website, and of course, mailing a check is still an option!

A-4s Forever
Raven



Buick Eberhardt presents an R.G. Smith painting of Blue Angel aircraft to Captain Gil Rud, the guest speaker at our first annual Whizzer White Memorial Skyhawk Luncheon.



Admiral Tom Brown reflects on Skyhawk Association founder Whizzer White at the annual meeting luncheon held in Reno, September 2009.



Terry Cooney and Colleen Langworthy staff the Skyhawk Association booth in the Tailhook exhibit area.

Give a Guy a Gift!

Join or renew, and give someone a one-year gift membership for \$20 more.



Contact: Terry Cooney
2421 Clubside Dr.,
Beavercreek, OH 45431
or at skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION BOARD MEETING SUMMARY: SEP 2009

The Board of Directors met on Friday, September 11, 2009, at the Nugget Hotel, Reno, NV. The meeting was called to order at 0835 by Vice President Eberhardt. Directors present were Eberhardt (Vice President), Cooney (Secretary), Williams (Treasurer), Bloore, Dollarhide, Egen, Frommelt, Gabbard, Langworthy, and Turpin. Directors absent were Jobin, Powell and Weber. President Bob Hickerson was also absent.

Communications and Reports

- Secretary Cooney reported on membership, revealing that the number of members is holding steady in the 830 – 840 range. Member retention remains constant at approximately 80%.
- Treasurer Mark Williams reported that the 2009 budget is executing on track, with collection of 2009 dues being slightly ahead of forecast. Overall, dues collection is slightly behind. Detailed financial reports are available on the website at www.skyhawk.org.

- Webmaster David Weber reported that the *Skyhawk* Association website averages about 1000 visits per day. A redesign by Gene Atwell is underway. The backlog of images to be uploaded to the site continues to grow.
- Dave Dollarhide reported for the membership committee which has been discussing methods to attract new members and improve retention of current members. Among the ideas discussed were 1) providing easier access to the SA website private pages, which contain the aircraft images and histories; 2) providing an easy means of communication among members, possibly via Facebook; 3) developing the capability to easily use mass email address groups to communicate with members (possibly providing electronic versions of *The A-4Ever*); 4) promoting regional social gatherings of members (mini-symposia); and 5) possibly providing a means for members to download aircraft images as a perk of membership.

Old Business

- Report of the Nominating Committee: Director Dollarhide reported for the nominating committee with the following recommendation (which was accepted by the membership at the annual meeting)

1. Departing directors: John Bloore, Boom Powell and David Weber.
2. Continuing director: Mark Williams.
3. New directors: Gene Atwell, George Blosser and Pete Cole.

• • •

The nominating committee recommended the following slate of officers for 2010:

1. President – Bob Hickerson
 2. Vice President (USN) – Mike Eberhardt
 3. Vice President (USMC) – Todd Frommelt
 4. Treasurer – Mark Williams
 5. Secretary – Terry Cooney
- The slate was approved by the board.

continued...

BOARD MEETING

Continued...

- Association Shirts – the association has developed a polo shirt with the *Skyhawk* Association logo on the breast pocket. The shirt was offered for sale at the *Skyhawk* Association booth at Tailhook.
- *Whizzer White Memorial Luncheon* – Director Langworthy displayed the banner ordered for the annual *Whizzer White Memorial Luncheon* and discussed plans for the first annual event to be held September 11, 2009, at the Nugget Hotel.
- IPMS Convention – Director Turpen reported on the 2009 International Plastic Modelers' Society National Convention held in Columbus, OH. The Best *Skyhawk* Award presented by

Skyhawk Association was given to a Canadian, Wayne Bowman. (See *Size Does Matter* in this issue.)

- Termination of Tailhook 800 Line – Director Williams reported that the association plans to cancel the 800 line at Tailhook used to process credit card payments. New and renewing members now have the option of using a credit card for payment by accessing the *Skyhawk* Association web page. Memberships may also be purchased by check.

New Business

- Request for Funds to Support a *Skyhawk* Association presence at the MCAA Symposium 2010 – A proposal was presented by Directors Williams and Egen to schedule the first 2010 board meeting of *Skyhawk* Association in conjunction with the MCAA Symposium May 20 – 22, 2010, in Fort Worth, TX. A motion by Williams,

seconded by Langworthy approved a donation of \$500 to support a recruitment table and contribute to a *Skyhawk* Association presence in the admin suite.

- Future of the Attack Hospitality Suite at Tailhook – Secretary Cooney pointed out that the hospitality suite at Tailhook is being underwritten by the Ernie Laib Fund. The board should be planning how to fund that amenity when the Laib fund runs out.

Future Meetings of the Board of Directors

The 2010 Mid-year board meeting will be held at the Omni Hotel, Fort Worth, TX, May 21, 2010. Director Egen will be the on-site coordinator for the meeting and recruiting booth.

• • •

The meeting was adjourned at 1035.
Submitted by Terry Cooney, Secretary

James Stegman: A-4 Legend Heads West

The *Skyhawk* community lost another pioneer when James J. Stegman passed away on July 15, 2009. Stegman, the Chief Production Test Pilot for Douglas Aircraft Corporation's Plant 42 at Palmdale, test flew virtually every A-4 produced between 1958 and 1982, when he retired to live in Palmdale, CA.

He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1940, and as a sergeant was selected for flight training. He received his wings as a tech sergeant and flew combat missions in the Pacific in the SBD dive bomber. Recalled to active duty in 1952, Stegman flew F8F *Bearcats* and F9F *Panthers* in Korea. Following his Korean service, he was hired in 1955 by Douglas to deliver production aircraft, before his assignment as chief production test pilot in 1958.

Stegman flew every model of the A-4 except the A-4S (produced for Singapore) and was lead engineering test pilot on the Australian A-4G and TA-4G. Of his

8,500 hours of total flight time, 3,526 were logged in various models of the *Skyhawk*. Lest the reader think that number of hours isn't too impressive, given the number of years involved, I should add that he logged over 3,700 A-4 sorties.

Naval Aviation News once asked (in reference to Stegman) "Does this man have the best job in the world?" Many people thought so, including Stegman, and any true *Skyhawk* aficionado would have readily agreed. He was given an honorary membership in *Skyhawk* Association last year, and he donated his papers and memorabilia to our historical program.

More information on his life and career can be found on the website at <http://www.skyhawk.org/2d/pilotbios/stegman/stegman.htm>.

Skyhawk Association offers its sincere condolences to the Stegman family.



- ★ Wayne Fairbanks, Canton, NY
- ★ James Stegman, Palmdale, CA



For TAPS lists, members may access these links:
www.a4skyhawk.org/2D/KIA.htm
www.a4skyhawk.org/2E/ops_losses.htm

TAPS notices may be sent to Bob Hickerson, Newsletter Editor at
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org or mail to
Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org



Share the wisdom:
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Please note email address!

To the Editor:

September 18, 2009

Greetings!

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) is very excited about our National Call for Photos, which launched at a press event yesterday. We are gathering photos of the 58,261 people whose names are on The Wall for the Education Center. As you probably know, the Education Center is an underground learning facility being built on the National Mall. It will tell the stories of the people we lost in Vietnam and pay tribute to all who served in all of America's wars.

We are getting a lot of news coverage about our Call for Photos launch, which is vital to helping us get the word out. CNN has featured our story in a blog post, in addition to the stories it is broadcasting.

Here's the link:

<http://newsroom.blogs.cnn.com/category/anchors/kyra-phillips/>. The blog solicits comments, so we'd appreciate it if you would post a message of support.

Thanks for your help!

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
1023 15th Street, NW Washington, DC
20005

hrotondi@vvmf.org

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

I enjoyed Harry Gann's article on the development of the *Skyhawk*, but I had to laugh after his comment about the A-4C's addition of "a fairly sophisticated autopilot." In over 3000 hours of A-4 time, ranging from A-4Cs through TA-4Js, I don't ever remember having a fully functioning autopilot that performed even such rudimentary functions as altitude hold.

The best you could hope for was a working control stick steering mode which wasn't particularly helpful for routine operations, but was useful after disconnecting the flight controls on a post-maintenance flight check.

As far as the terrain clearance radar, the best design feature associated with this nose ballast was to remove it and provide luggage space for cross countries.

Richard "Tricky" Shipman
[ship@vnet.net]

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To the Editor:

Thought you might be interested in how the Blacksheep design came about for the A-4. The year was 1962. I was a newly minted pilot in the waning days of 1961 and had reported to VMA-214 in Kaneohe, Hawaii. At the time, VMA-214 was the last squadron in the Marine Corps flying the FJ4B, and I got to fly that for a few hours before we were due to get our quota of A-4Bs. Our sister attack squadron, VMA-212, already had their birds, and in 1962 we began to receive ours and phase out the FJs.

Major Ray Mullane was the squadron commander, and in those days it was not unusual for squadrons to paint their airplanes to show pride. Major Mullane got First Lieutenants Jody Gardner and myself and told us to come up with a scheme. Jody lived next door to me in the town of Kaneohe, so it was easy to sit down on the living room floor and sketch out ideas.

Finally, I came up with the idea of the butting ram, and Jody came up with the 13 stars on the rudder to signify the original 13 states. We worked all day one day painting the design with water washable paint on one side of a single A-4 just to see if the CO would buy the idea. He did, and pretty soon set the troops to cutting out a big cardboard design so as to paint all of the aircraft on both sides. I'm sure that those troops that had to do the work could have killed two young first lieutenants. Still, when they were all painted and standing side by side on the flight line, they looked great. As the years went by the full body of the ram went away and only the head remained. Gone too were the 13 stars on the rudder. I'm sure it saved hundreds of hours by the painters, but I still



VMA-214 Blacksheep A-4B sporting design created by Duke Stanton and Jody Gardner in 1962. (Photo courtesy of Duke Stanton)

think the original looked the best.
Col D. R. "Duke" Stanton, USMC (Ret.)
[dpstanton@verizon.net]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

All,

The following *Skyhawk* photos were taken by myself or Melly, when we were at the Barbers Point Naval Air Museum on the 8th (May 2009).

The aircraft are:

- A-4E 152061 painted as VA-163 149959 AH-300 (see below)
- A-4E 151030 in VC-1 colors
- A-4E 150023 in VC-1 colors

And of course a photo of Melly hanging out with the duty pilot and a photo of myself back in an A-4 cockpit (152061)



A-4E 152061 photographed May 8, 2009, at Barbers Point Museum, Hawaii.

(Photo via Gary Verver)

after 40+ years ... I still fit although not as roomy as it once was. Also not as pristine as I was once accustomed to ... the RAT cable is held in place by a locking pliers, a screwdriver in the throttle quadrant holds something together and a prop keeps the canopy at 1/2 mast. But miles better than the F-4 cockpit which looks like a corrosion control experiment gone bad after someone's sprinkling system watered it on a regular basis for 15+ years.

The museum is out on the ramp and in addition to the A-4s, they have a number of other aircraft (<http://www.nambarber-point.org/aircraft.htm>), and visitors are free to wander around and climb in, on, or over as they wish. Great place, great memories and had a great time.

Run by volunteers including Brad, Sam and "the gunny," the museum operates on donations and/or what ever

continued...

LETTERS

Continued...

Brad can cadge from MCAS Kaneohe Bay. If you donate to worthy causes from time to time, keep the Barbers Point Museum in mind.
Gary

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:
Hello,

I enjoy reading every issue of The *Skyhawk* Association Journal. Puresome cracks me up! For some time now I've thought that I should submit the lyrics to some of the songs I used to write . . . some were squadron ytheme songs, others for individuals who were leaving for other assignments and unveiled at the monthly "Hail and Farewell" party.

So . . . I am making myself get busy and attend to the duties I've prescribed for myself . . . and here is the first of my lyrics. If you find it worthy of publication, then I will forward others as quickly as I can email them off to you.

Semper Fi,
Ed "Frijole" Benes
LtCol, USMC (Ret)
flyfrijole@aol.com

(Ed. Note: expect to see some of Ed's original work in future issues)

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

I really enjoy every issue of the journal and read them from cover to cover. I started flying the *Skyhawk* in VMT-103, then went to VMAT-102, VMA-214, H&MS-13 and finally, VT-24. What a great experience it was to fly the *Skyhawk*. You guys do such a magnificent job covering the history of the people and the aircraft--I commend you and the board for making the experiences of others come to life in the pages of the journal.

I did notice the head-on silhouette of the A-4 on the cover and throughout the magazine shows the five pylons and canted probe of the later models just right. However, the silhouette does not show the bulges on the underside of the aircraft where the main landing gear struts are housed. I don't know if this has been pointed out before. There may be technical or time reasons for this not being corrected. I just wanted you to know and to convey

my thanks for everything you guys do to support the association.

V/R,

Steve Linder (Dwarf)
SDO VMA-214, VMT-103 and VT-24
[steve.linder@1969.usna.com]

Ed. Note: Steve, thanks for the kind words. As to the missing bulges, I can't say why the silhouette doesn't depict them, unless it's just a lack of definition in the clip art.

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Bob:

Just got the new magazine. Looks good. I was immediately interested in Frank Tullo's story on Trent Powers on pp 10-11. Wish I'd known you were running it. I could have loaned you the photo I copied from the cruise book of him. Not too many around. Also, at the end of his story, Frank doesn't mention that Powers' remains were returned by the Vietnamese. Check my A-4 book pp 18-19. *(Ed. Note: U.S. Navy and Marine Corps A-4 Skyhawk Units of the Vietnam War, Osprey Combat Aircraft #69)*

Peter Mersky
[airwriter@comcast.net]



LtCdr Trent Powers (L) indulges in traditional pilot-to-pilot conversation with LT Steward in VA-164's ready room aboard Oriskany (from Mersky, page 19).

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

(Ed. Note: these emails were in response to Tommy Thomason's question about the larger bulge in the main gear doors on the later A-4Ms.)

6/25/2009

Good morning,

The last block of 24 A-4Ms had the increased weight gear and tires. I don't remember physically bigger main gear struts, but I do remember the fatter tires--don't recall any specs on them. This might account for fatter or bulgier forward main gear doors.



FYI--I thought that the fatter tires lasted longer than the skinny ones on earlier versions.

John Bland
captbland@pa.net

(Ed. Note: in response to John's email, Tommy Thomason wrote on 6/25/2009:)

Some follow-up questions: 1) Was the new landing gear retrofittable? And 2) Were there any retrofits? It seems like an expensive design and qualification effort for only 25 aircraft.

6/26/2009

Tommy,

To my recollection, no retrofits were done; I don't know if Douglas/MacDonald ever presented a proposal to NAVAIR to retrofit. A-4s were clearly going away in favor of AV-8s--why spend any more money on them?

Since the maximum gross takeoff weight and max landing weight also went up (by 2,000 lbs each, I think), there may have been some hidden additional structural enhancements besides the gear and tires, which made any retrofit more costly.

The fatter tires only fit the A-4Ms with the increased gross weight (the last 24; BuNos 160241-160264)--the gear well doors were bulged out a bit to accommodate them. The last 24 could use the skinny tires, but all the rest could not use the fat tires.

I conducted the Laser Maverick OPEVAL at VX-5 and we used two (BuNos 160245 and 160264) of the last 24 Mikes for the test. We needed the extra gross weight to have comfortable landing fuel at the boat. BuNo 160264 was the last *Skyhawk* built--it was a sweet flying jet!
John Bland

6/26/2009

(Ed. Note: And then, Skyhawk Association Director Bill Egen weighed in with this)

Raven, et.al.

I'm on the road without access to my historical waste basket! The last 24 (FY77T) did have ILW (*increased land-*

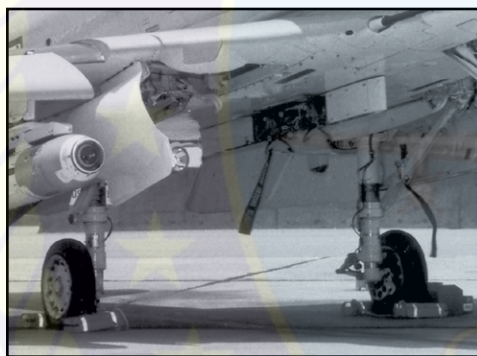
ing weight) gear- jacked up the landing weight to 16,000 and the TO weight to 26,000 (I think). No clue on the gear door sizes. Those airplanes also included the Angle Rate Bombing System, the latest HUDs, ALQ-126/APR-45, etc, Sidewinder and wiring for the Bulldog missile (laser-guided Bullpup- dead on arrival!!) which resulted in the very last two being the baseline for the Laser Maverick wiring and testing (John Bland for details).

There were some other bells and whistles that made us short-sighted. "A-4s Forever" bubbas suggest that the A-4Y should emerge out of this buy. HQMC and especially the Navy said NO, NO, NO, NEVER--Not going to hit congress with another A-4 version while trying to fund the AV-8B!

Will do some more checking when I get home, and everybody correct the brain-matter deficiency if I have told some tall ones! There was also a competitive demo for the Army in the early 60s which included an A-4 (B/C?) with double-wheel mains for rough-field landing--they must have had bulges that were uncommon also--???

Jigger
[zerocep@ec.rr.com]

Ed. Note: It did! See article Flight Testing the Scooter, The A-4Ever Vol. 11, No. 2 Spring 2005. See photo below.)



Larger main gear door is clear on late A-4Ms.

6/27/2009

(Ed. Note: in his response to Gary Verver's question: "Were you the pilot in the attached photos? USS Constellation, 28 June 1982," John Bland wrote the following.)
Gary,

Thanks, these photos bring back memories. I'm in BuNo 160264 (the last Skyhawk produced), VX-5 #13, aboard Connie on 28 June 1982, with a live AGM-65E Laser Maverick on station 4 for the shipboard part of its OPEVAL (*Ed. note:*



see photo above). Also aboard the ship that day was the film crew for *The Right Stuff*--we made our 15 seconds of fame that day.

I think that Bob Darwin (a VX-5 A-7 guy with whom Todd Frommelt and I instructed in VT-21 in the early 1970s) is in BuNo 160245 (#16). (*Ed. Note: photo not included*). I believe that it was Bob who actually made it into the movie--my film was left on the cutting room floor.

John Bland

6/24/2009

(Concerning the larger main gear door bulges on later A-4Ms) See attached picture = 1,000 words. According to Ginter's A-4M monograph, the change was on 160036 and 160241-160264 but at the time he wrote it, he didn't know why. It isn't that noticeable because they are usually hidden behind the drop tanks, but if you'll look closely at some pictures of #2960, you'll see them. The bulged doors appear to be associated with the addition of a scissors link on the main landing gear struts of aircraft with these doors. But why a scissors link after 2,935 Skyhawks? It is not on the A-4Ns. It isn't mentioned in the small chunk of the A-4M flight handbook that I have.

Thanks,
Tommy Thomason
[tommythomason@sbcglobal.net]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Well we finished our A-4 Blue Angel project. The plane came out beautiful. We dedicated the new #6 to Lcdr Mike Gershon. Mike was the last pilot to die as a Blue in an A-4. He was killed in a collision in 1985 at Niagara Falls air show.

My 15 year old son and I spent over 700 hours each restoring and transforming the great aircraft in this memorial. What an experience for my son and it was something I will never forget. Let me explain what happened.

A local newspaper (The Newport Daily News) Newport RI. did a cover story on our project. It was titled "A Tribute To An Angel" In the picture the plane was still in

Send your letters to
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Please note email address!

primer and had not yet been painted. The article explained how we were dedicating the plane to Mike and why we were doing it. Everybody I know saw and read the article. I was a local celebrity for a week or so. That paper came out on a Monday.

Tuesday night I got an email from the reporter that did the article. It read "you got to read this." It was an email from Mike Gershon's brother Joe in Nebraska. He had been forwarded the article from an old friend in Newport. He and the family were overwhelmed with what we were doing and wanted to get in touch with me. Wow!

I wrote him a long email explaining how we had got started on the plane and why we chose his brother. I told him of the plans to dedicate the plane at the RI Air Guard Air show in June.

We contacted the Blue Angels PAO and made arrangements for the ceremony on Saturday night June 27 after the days show.

Joe flew in from Nebraska for the dedication. I had been sending him pictures every week of the progress on the plane. I did not send him anymore after the plane was lettered. Only my son Nick, myself and the guy doing the lettering had seen Mike's name on the canopy. It was covered until the ceremony.



The wing commander started the show. Then the commander of the Blues said some words. Then Joe thanked us for what we did, climbed the ladder and pulled the covering off his brother's name. Very emotional for him as well as myself. I had not slept for the prior month because of the timeframe I was in with finishing the plane.

I would like to do an article for the Skyhawk magazine. Joe Gershon would help me put something together about his brother. Are you interested??

Rick St. Pierre
stpierre12@cox.net

◆ ◆ ◆



SIZE DOES MATTER

• Modelers' Corner •

By Joe Turpen

This year's winner of the *Whizzer White Memorial Best Skyhawk Award* at the 2009 IPMS (International Plastic Modelers' Society) nationals was built by Wayne Bowman of Beeton, Ontario. The model is a 72nd scale Brazilian AF-1 which started life as a Fujimi A-4M. Wayne added modifications that were unique to the AF-1, such as antennas and alterations to the vertical stabilizer. This model also featured quite a lot of scratch-built details, such as the forward avionics bay and its door, as well as the RAT and its bay and door. The landing gear was modified to add plumbing and other additions. Wayne improved the cockpit by scratch-building the HUD, throttle, cockpit insulation and map case, to name a few. Transparencies were also added for the anti-collision, navigation and landing lights.



Wayne Bowman's Brazilian AF-1, winner of the Whizzer White Memorial Best Skyhawk Award at the 2009 IPMS Nationals.

Visit www.a4model.a4skyhawk.org/models/modelers.htm



Close-up of port side shows amazing detail in forward avionics bay.



BOOM-BOOM ROOM

• Puzzlers from Boom Powell •



Here are some puzzlin' yet probin' photos and questions from the Boomster, see if you can go 3-for-3 with him. This is the honor system, of course...

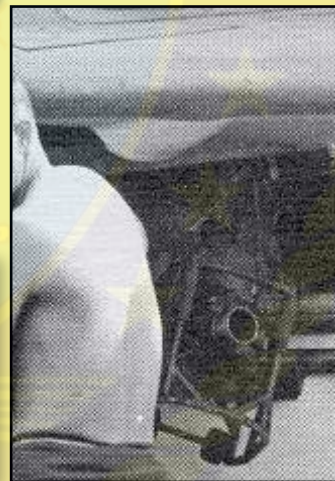
Question 1. As a follow-up to Powell's Puzzler Question 2 in the Summer 2009 *A-4Ever*, this picture depicts NA-4C 145063 photographed at China Lake December 1966. What feature of this specially-configured aircraft makes the "N" designation obvious?



Question 2. What was the A-4Y?



Question 3. What is the ugly mechanism sticking out below this A-4's wing?



See page 21 for answers.

(For Marines, that's between 20 and 22...)

AN OLD FRIEND:

...continued

By Dave Dollarhide



Admiral Stan Arthur (R) and Dave Dollarhide (L) shown in front of AA 403 following the ceremony.

In the Summer 2009 issue of *The A-4Ever*, my article titled *An Old Friend*, described the restoration of A-4B, 142741 at the National Vietnam War Museum in Orlando, FL. If you read the article, you may recall that my name was found under several layers of paint on the right side of the cockpit...a very cool moment!

This restoration involved over three years of work, mostly in the blazing Florida sun. Pawell Mankowski spearheaded the effort for the museum, and the result is a stunning re-creation of

the "Scooter," as it flew with the VA-46 Clansmen in 1968. "LCDR John Donahue" was correctly placed on the left side of AA 403, with mine on the right as it was discovered. John was the operations officer in those days, so it was his airplane, with LTJG Dollarhide just lucky to have his name painted on the right side of one of our ten jets.

A re-dedication ceremony was conducted in June of this year. John and I attended, along with Steve Pollock, who later flew the airplane with VA-72. It was a small, but special ceremony at

this museum totally owned and operated by Vietnam veterans. The occasion was made extra special by the attendance of Admiral Stan Arthur, respected leader and supporter of the tailhook Navy.

Check out the National Vietnam War Museum website at <http://www.nwm-vocf.org/> for location and more photos. If you're in the Orlando area, drop by to see my "old friend."



Old friend, newly restored – A-4B 142741.



Three pilots who flew 142741 in Vietnam gather at Skyhawk dedication ceremony on June 20, 2009. From top: Dave Dollarhide, Steve Pollock and John Donahue.



Repeat: Let's Save this Skyhawk!

Make your check **payable to ANA** (very important, if you want the tax write-off), annotated For the **A-4 Restoration Project**, and let them know you are a member of *Skyhawk Association*.

Checks should be mailed to: Association of Naval Aviation
1446 Waggaman Circle
McLean, VA 22101

BESIDES, IT'S FUN TO FLY

• Part II •

By Harry Gann



"I have great confidence in its ability to stay up there in combat; besides, it's fun to fly."

- Navy Vietnam aviator in reference to the McDonnell Douglas A-4 Skyhawk.

Dual-Seat Skyhawks

During the continual exchange of discussion between Douglas and the Navy, the subject of a two-place model (referred to as the A4D-5T) of the *Skyhawk* was constantly being raised. It was suggested that this configuration would be ideal for advanced navigational instruction, in-type training or familiarization, as well as some combat missions where an additional pilot might be needed. However, budget limitations precluded any orders for such an aircraft until 1964 when the Navy convinced the Department of Defense that money should be allocated to buy a two-place version. The convincing argument, in addition to the obvious training advantages, was that single-place *Skyhawks* used in training could be released for combat duty in Vietnam where they were sorely needed at that time. As a result, the existing A-4E contract was altered to specify that the

sary dual controls as well as instruments, it was decided to also add a few other improvements at the same time. Probably one of the more important improvements was the installation of the new Douglas-designed ejection seat, the Escapac IC-3. The rocket-driven seat provided a capability of allowing either one or both of the two crewman to eject from a disabled aircraft while at ground altitude and with zero forward velocity. This feature greatly improved the chances of a safe egress of the crewman from a malfunctioning aircraft.



First 2-seater to fly, BuNo 152102 was one of two A-4Es converted to the T-model configuration. Originally designated the TA-4E, designation was quickly changed to TA-4F. Shown here in Jan 1966 as test-bed for HARM missile at China Lake.

Another improvement added to the TA-4E was the installation of wing lift spoilers on the upper trailing edge of the wing. Because of the geometry of the earlier *Skyhawk* landing gear arrangement, the crosswind characteristics could be a problem to neophyte pilots when forced to use runways not aligned with the direction of the prevailing wind. The use of the lift spoiler allowed the pilot to remove the lift component which provided greater effectiveness of the brakes. As a bonus, the added drag of the spoilers in the airflow reduced the landing rollout.

Nose-wheel steering by the pilot also was added to allow for better control during crosswind taxiing and ramp or carrier deck maneuvering. As with standard Echoes, the Pratt & Whitney J52-P-8A was selected to power the aircraft.

BuNo 152102 first flew 30 June 1965, designated TA-4E. However, the designation was shortly changed to TA-4F in view of the many improvements to the basic A-4E airframe. The TA-4F became operational in May 1965, with the West Coast A-4 replacement air group squadron, VA-125 at NAS Lemoore, Calif. The production run of



H&MS-32 OA-4M 154306, circa 1983.

TA-4Fs totaled 241, including the two aircraft originally ordered as TA-4Es.

Many of the TA-4Fs were later converted to the TA-4J configuration during a PAR cycle and assigned to the training command to supplement the advanced trainer *Skyhawks*.

Another modification of the basic TA-4F was requested by the Marines to fulfill their requirements for the fast forward air control mission (Fast FAC). During 1978, NARF Pensacola began reworking 23 aircraft, updating the avionics similar to that of the A-4M, including the installation of the aft avionics pod. Despite the designation OA-4M, the modification did not include replacing the A-4M's J52-P-8 with the J52-P-408 engine. These aircraft were operated by Marine Headquarters and Maintenance Squadrons (H&MS) later to be changed to Marine Aviation Logistics Squadrons (MALs). Some TA-4F aircraft were re-designated as EA-4F and assigned to VAQ-33 to serve in an ECM mission. These aircraft were modified by deleting wiring and components to allow the installation of ECM and target missile launching gear as well as special stores.



Originally proposed as the A4D-5T, a dual-seat version of the *Skyhawk* was not ordered until 1964. On right, original Douglas mock-up of the TA-4E. (Photo by Douglas)

last two single-place *Skyhawks*, BuNos 152102 and 152103, would be taken off the production line and modified to two-place aircraft and designated TA-4E.

In addition to the 28-in fuselage plug added for the second seat and the neces-

Enter the Foxtrot

Continued usage of the A-4 as a prime Navy and Marine attack aircraft in Vietnam resulted in an increase of losses from combat and operational causes. To replace these aircraft, the A-4F was ordered in 1965. The A-4F was similar to the A-4E except that it incorporated the nose-wheel steering, lift spoilers, Escapac IC-3 ejection seat and up-rated J52-P-8A engine introduced in the TA-4F. The first A-4F (a revised A-4E airframe) flew 31 August 1966.

A further improvement was later added to the "Foxtrot" in the form of an upper avionics pod. Kits were supplied for aircraft already delivered to the fleet and those aircraft not delivered were so modified at the plant. The pod consisted of a compartment added to the top of the fuselage aft of the canopy which provided for installation of special electronics gear dictated by requirements of the Vietnam War. This location was selected because internal space of the compact *Skyhawk* was so completely occupied that the addition of any more equipment was near impossible to install or, more importantly, to access for maintenance. The pod also was retrofitted to all operational A-4Es and some A-4Cs as part of the A-4C-to-A-4L modification.

Production A-4Fs were initially delivered to VA-23 and VA-192 of Carrier Air Wing 19 which deployed to WestPac and Southeast Asia in late 1967 on board *Ticonderoga*. The A-4F brought to a close the carrier-based deployments of U.S. Navy *Skyhawks*. VA-55, VA-164 and VA-212 took their A-4Fs to WestPac in *Hancock* (CVA-19) 18 March-20 October 1975, where they participated in the evacuation of Phnom Phen and Saigon. This deployment ended 19 years of U.S. Navy A-4 carrier tactical service. Including one aircraft originally ordered as an A-4E, the A-4F production run totaled 147.



Section of A-4Fs of VA-164 over Sierra Nevada. CVW-19 A-4Fs were retrofitted with the more powerful J52-P408 engine between 1972 and 73 cruises on USS *Hancock*.

The Blue Angels A-4F

During the 1973 Blue Angels show season, a decision was made to re-equip the flight demonstration team with the A-4F *Skyhawk II* to reduce the amount of funds needed to sustain operation of the unit. Expected savings were to be made in maintenance and operational cost, especially in fuel usage. In addition, a tragic accident had taken the lives of three team members in a mid-air collision of two of the McDonnell Douglas F-4J *Phantom II* aircraft that had been the Blues' assigned aircraft since 1969. This accident hastened the change to the lighter, more easily maintained A-4.

The timing was just right for the switch. McDonnell Douglas had supplied 147 A-4Fs to the Navy and had provided 100 kits to replace the Pratt & Whitney J52-P-8 engine with a J52-P-408 power plant resulting in a thrust gain of about 2,000 lbs., obtained without the use of a fuel guzzling afterburner. At this time, the Navy was replacing the A-4s in the carrier air wings with the LTV A-7 *Corsair II*, making the A-4Fs available.



Blue Angel A-4F 155029, circa 1975. These aircraft were modified specifically for the flight demonstration mission, and the team operated the *Skyhawk* from 1974 to 1987, a run of 13 years.

Airframes were identified and eight were sent to the Douglas plant in Long Beach in late 1973 for the modification to Blue Angels' requirements. The changes were of a minor nature and consisted of:

1. Deleted aft avionic package.
2. Added drag chute.
3. Added additional load feel bungees to provide demonstration flight stick force.
4. Added smoke system.
5. Added inverted fuel system.
6. Added foldable ladder for crew entry at left gun position.
7. Revised pilot restraint harness.
8. Revised horizontal stabilizer actuator to provide three degree nose down trim.
9. Bolted wing slats in the closed position.

A new TA-4J also was delivered to the team to provide for the narrator's flight program and various logistical duties. Other than the drag chute, the foldable ladder and Blue Angels markings, this two-seat A-4 was similar to training command aircraft.

The A-4s provided yeoman service for the squadron. (The team was officially designated a squadron in early 1974 under the leadership of CDR Tony Less). They were not replaced until the 1987 season, spanning 13 years of operation, being relieved by another McDonnell Douglas product, the F/A-18A *Hornet*.



A-4G 155061 of Royal Australian Navy.
(Photo courtesy of John Bartels)

The A-4G and TA-4G for the Royal Australian Navy

In January 1966, after a thorough evaluation of existing aircraft, the Royal Australian Navy selected the A-4 for an air defense role for HMAS *Melbourne*, an antisubmarine warfare (ASW) carrier. The *Skyhawks* were to provide a proven counter against hostile reconnaissance aircraft, and at the same time provide a limited strike capability against a surface force attack.

Eight single-place A-4Gs and two TA-4Gs were delivered starting in July 1967, for use by 805 Squadron. The "G" series of *Skyhawks* was essentially the same configuration as the U.S. Navy A-4F and TA-4F without the upper avionics pod.

In mid-1970, the Australian government announced the procurement of an additional ten *Skyhawks*. They were obtained from the U.S. Navy inventory of A-4Fs and TA-4s and modified to the "G" configuration; eight aircraft being the single-place versions and two 2-place trainers.

continued...

FUN TO FLY

Continued...

The Israeli Air Force A-4H and TA-4H

The existence of the A-4H for Israel was first acknowledged in May 1968, during a public flyby over a parade to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel.

The A-4H was basically an A-4F with certain deletions, mainly black boxes. The lack of the aft avionics pod being the most evident of these changes. Additions included an IFF antenna in



With "boards" (speedbrakes) out, an Israeli A-4H taxis in following a mission.

(Photo courtesy of Peter Mersky)

the vertical fin which squared it off and the installation of a drag chute under the aft fuselage. In addition, some aircraft substituted 30mm cannons for the normal 20mm guns.

Seventeen TA-4J(H)s and ten TA-4Hs which were similar to the TA-4Js and TA-4Fs also were delivered to the Israeli Air Force, along with 90 of the single-place A-4Hs.



TA-4Js, such as 158076 shown here over South Texas, began replacing U.S. Navy Training Command TF-9J Cougars in 1969.

TA-4Js Replace Training Command's Cougars

The Advanced Training Command's requirement for a replacement for their aging Grumman TF-9J *Cougars* resulted in the 1968 purchase of the TA-4J to train pilots for the Navy and Marine Corps. Since the TA-4F combat trainer had already been operational since 1966, it was relatively simple and inexpensive to tailor the two-place *Skyhawk* for the advanced training function.

The adaptation consisted of deleting the tactical weapon systems such as the air-to-air and air-to-ground missile launching equipment, low altitude bombing system, radar and associated gear and in-flight refueling tanker capability (the in-flight refueling probe was retained).

The resulting deletion reduced the aircraft empty weight by 230 lbs. The lower-rated J52-P-6 engine rated at 8,500 lbs. was installed in place of the J52-P-8A. A red-orange and white paint scheme in line with Navy specifications was substituted for the gull gray and white of fleet *Skyhawks*.

The TA-4J first flew 17 December 1968, and entered service with VT-21 in mid-1969. A mass delivery of 50 aircraft to NAS Kingsville, Texas, was made from the final assembly plant at Palmdale, Calif. Factory-to-training command deliveries of the TA-4J amounted to 226 aircraft. This number was later supplemented with many TA-4F airframes that were converted by the deletion of certain ordnance equipment.

Of the total of 2,960 *Skyhawks* built, 555 were two-place configuration. This figure also includes some foreign deliveries.

The Kiwi A-4 and TA-4Ks

In mid-1968, the Royal New Zealand Air Force became the fourth offshore nation to select the *Skyhawk* to equip its air unit when it ordered ten single-place and four two-place A-4s. While similar to the A-4F, some additions and deletions were made to the basic configuration. Added was a 14-ft.-diameter drag chute to reduce landing rollouts and the installation of an IFF antenna on the vertical fin which altered the vertical tail to

a squared-off appearance. Another change that affected the appearance of the aircraft was the application of a four-color camouflage paint scheme identical to colors of USAF Tactical Air Command aircraft. Deleted were provisions for Bullpup and Shrike air-to-ground missiles and some avionics.

These aircraft were delivered to Number 75 Squadron in early 1970, replacing *Canberras* in the strike role.

The A-4L Conversion for the Reserves

As a result of the Vietnam War, the Naval Reserve pushed for an upgrading of its *Skyhawks* to include the tactical and ECM equipment similar



TA-4K bound for New Zealand cruises over Yosemite National Park with Half Dome in background.

to that installed in fleet A-4s. When plans were finalized in 1970 to form two Reserve carrier air wings that would be fully combat ready, approval was given to Douglas to flight test one modified A-4C (BuNo 148307) and fabricate 99 kits to allow A-4Cs to be modified at Naval Air Rework Facilities (NARF). The first of the reworked A-4Cs came off the Navy line in December 1969, and were delivered to the Naval Air Reserve Training Unit (NARTU) Jacksonville, Fla.

The A-4L, as the modified A-4C was designated, had an uprated J65 engine and relocated electronic gear in the newly installed upper avionics pod located on the upper center fuselage. Wing lift spoilers, first introduced on the TA-4F, were included in the modification package. The initial A-4L was flown 21 August 1969, and was the first of 100 aircraft so modified.



A late-60s requirement to upgrade reserve capability led to conversion of 100 A-4Cs to A-4L configuration.

A Skyhawk for the Marines

In 1968, an engine development by Pratt & Whitney was to be instrumental in extending the already long life of the Skyhawk. In production 14 years at that time, the versatile A-4 had stayed equal to the task imposed on it by constantly upgrading the detail features of a basic airframe that reflected its excellent design. But how far could a good design be stretched?

Pratt & Whitney provided the answer when it developed a new version of its J52 engine with a rating of 11,200 lbs. static thrust, a 20% increase over its J52-P-8A predecessor. The cost of this thrust increase was a one percent weight increase and no significant increase in specific fuel consumption. Smokeless burner cans were also installed to reduce the level of visible exhaust. This engine was designated as the J52-P-408.

Other changes added to the A-4M included a larger canopy to improve pilot visibility especially in the rearward direction. This was accomplished by using a windscreen similar to those installed on the trainer versions and increasing the width of the canopy some three inches. To complement the added short field capability provided by the increased engine thrust, a ribbon-type drag chute similar to that installed on the A-4H and A-4K was added to slow the aircraft after touchdown. Thus, routine operations from relatively short 4,000 ft. runways were possible, a feature that matched a Marine Corps requirement for operations on short strips in close air support of ground troops.

Two other recognition differences were the squared-off tip of the vertical tail and the dog-legging of the in flight refueling probe. Installation of an IFF antenna was the reason for the

tail geometry, while the refueling boom canting was made to allow a wider-angle target acquisition system (Shrike) that was being installed.

To accomplish the A-4M flight tests, two A-4Fs (BuNos 155042 and 155049) were returned to the factory and reworked into the A-4M configuration after authority to proceed was given in May 1969. Test pilot Walt Smith flew the first aircraft 10 April 1970, before many eager Marine officials at the Douglas assembly and flight test facility at Palmdale. Fleet deliveries began 26 February 1971, to VMA-324, normally based at MCAS Beaufort, SC, but then on deployment to MCAS Yuma, Ariz.

(Ed. Note: the first deliveries of the A-4M to VMA-324 were in April 1971. I was in the squadron at that time, and my first A-4M sortie was April 15th, 1971, in 158154.)

Including the two revised A-4Fs, a total of 160 A-4Ms were procured. The "Mikes" served the active-duty Marines until 27 February 1990, when VMA-211 transferred its last Skyhawk (BuNo 158428) to MAG-42's VMA-133, an NAS Alameda Reserve squadron. This move ended the operational career of the A-4 with active duty tactical units after 35 years. VMA-211 operated A-4s for 34 years of that time.

Development of the A-4N for Israel

With the success of the A-4H in the Middle Eastern conflict, discussions were held in the early 1970s concerning an improved Skyhawk version based on the A-4M, with the exception of two 30mm guns replacing the 20mm cannons, an Elliott HUD and a new navigation/weapons delivery system.

The A-4N first flew 8 June 1972, and was the first of 117 of this version delivered to the Israeli Defense Force under a U.S. Navy monitored contract.

Argentina's A-4P and A-4Q

In 1970, the U.S. Government agreed to sell used A-4 Skyhawks to the Argentine Armed Forces from surplus stock. Fifty A-4Bs were initially reworked by the Douglas Aircraft facility at Tulsa, Okla. In 1976, an additional 25 A-4Cs were remanufactured by Lockheed Aircraft Services at Ontario, Calif.

Those aircraft used by the Argentine Air Force were designated A-4P and the

Argentine Navy's were A-4Q. It was reported that 19 of these Skyhawks were lost in action during the 1982 Falklands War.

The A-4Ku and the TA-4Ku for Kuwait

In 1975, the McDonnell Douglas Corporation was awarded a contract with the government of Kuwait for 30 single-seat attack and six two-seat trainer/attack aircraft. The attack configuration was based on the A-4M, while the trainers were unique in that they were powered with the J52-P-408 engine, the only two-place Skyhawks to carry this installation. The trainers also had the aft avionics package fitted.

These aircraft were delivered from April 1977 through July 1978, to form two squadrons. In 1984, it was reported that the approximately 30 aircraft still operational would be traded back to the U.S. as partial payment on an F/A-18 replacement order. However, the recent invasion by Iraq has clouded that issue. It has been reported that the surviving Kuwaiti A-4s were flown to Saudi Arabia after operating from roads when their runways were damaged.

Skyhawks That Never Were: The A4D-4 and A4D-6

Douglas, as well as the other aircraft manufacturers, constantly strive to update their aircraft to be competitive, as well as to satisfy the stockholders on the balance sheet. Not all are winners. One of these was the aforementioned A4D-3 cancelled in favor of the less ambitious and more economical A4D-2N.

The A4D-4 was a 1958 proposal as a long-range, all-weather attack aircraft with the primary purpose of delivering a special weapon at low altitude. The wingspan would have been increased ten ft. which would have required folding wings, a feature not found on the standard A-4. The longer fuselage was to have carried more avionics and fuel for the intended mission. Seven store positions were to be available on wing hard points to carry a varied quantity of ordnance and special stores. The A4D-4 design only gathered dust in the engineering vaults.

To compete for the VAL (light attack competition) requirements for the U.S. Navy in 1963, Douglas

continued...

STILL FUN

Continued...

proposed the A4D-6. The designation was changed in-house to A-4F to conform to the then-new DOD standardized designation system but is not to be confused with the later (1966) production A-4F.

This *Skyhawk* would have been slightly larger and would have had almost four times the range of the A-4E. The Pratt & Whitney TF30 was the intended power plant with a military rating of 11,350 lbs. of static thrust.

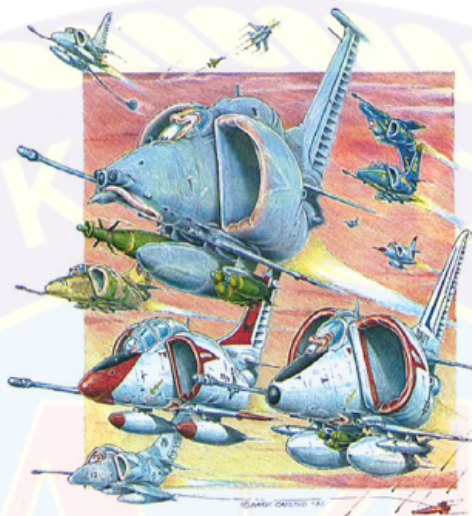
LTV brought in the successful bid with its A-7, and the A4D-6 did not make it beyond the design stage.

Design Features and Construction

The basic structure of the *Skyhawk* is in three major assemblies: a one-piece wing, a forward fuselage and an aft fuselage. The low wing is a modified delta plan form of low aspect ratio, with ailerons, split flaps, aerodynamically-operated leading-edge slats, and spoilers. The wing has three one-piece spars with span-wise stiffened skin, continuous from tip to tip. Most of the wing area between the spars contains an integral fuel tank with a 560-gal. capacity. The fuselage structure is of all-metal, semi-monocoque construction, and is built in two major assemblies. The forward fuselage assembly includes the

electronic compartment, cockpit, engine support sections, and a self-sealing fuel tank aft of the cockpit and between the engine air ducts. The fuselage aft section includes the empennage and speed brakes. It houses the engine tail cone, tailpipe and the drag-chute housing on some versions. The fuselage aft section is easily detached for engine removal.

A wide variety of ordnance, cluster and separate bombs, gun pods, air-to-air



By Hank Caruso

missiles, rockets, fuel tanks and special mission stores can be carried on three or five store stations. Two 20mm or 30mm cannons are installed in the wing roots.

Wing spoilers reduce landing roll and provide excellent crosswind landing characteristics. Use of JATO provides the capability to carry additional loads from short airstrips.

All *Skyhawks* are fully aircraft carrier capable. They retain the catapult and arresting hooks for land-based operation; thus they are equipped for the Marines' Short Airfield Tactical Support (SATS) operation.

The tricycle landing gear, nose gear, nose-wheel steering, flaps, spoilers and fuselage speed brakes are hydraulically operated. An electrically operated, fully adjustable horizontal stabilizer is used for longitudinal trim. Flight controls are irreversibly powered by dual hydraulic systems, however flight control is possible through direct mechanical linkage. An air-driven drop-out emergency generator is available in case of power failure.

The ejection seat is the Douglas Escapac IC-3. It provides safe escape at all operating speeds and altitudes including zero-zero. On the ejection stroke, vertical acceleration of the seat and pilot is accomplished by a catapult system which does not impose excessive peak forces on the pilot's spine. Cockpit environment control is provided by a combination air conditioning and pressurization system. Breathing oxygen is supplied from a ten liter LOX system. Windshield demisting, defogging and rain removal systems are also incorporated.

With the installation of the J52-P-408 engine in the A-4M, A-4N, A-4Ku TA-4Ku and the retrofit to 100 A-4F aircraft, Douglas Aircraft Co. chose to unofficially refer to these aircraft as *Skyhawk IIs*.

The Future of the A-4

(Ed. Note: remember, Harry Gann wrote this in 1990)

Many A-4s have been updated for foreign usage by companies other than McDonnell Douglas. These include the A-4S for Singapore (Lockheed Services), the A-4PTM for Malaysia (Grumman) as well as re-engining to the General Electric F404 by Singapore. Many A-4Es, in addition to A-4H and A-4Ns, supplied to Israel during the Seven-Day War have now been sold to Indonesia.

The U.S. will continue to operate the *Skyhawk* as advanced and adversary trainers for some time. Reserve squadrons still fly the *Skyhawk IIs*. There is much more history to be written before the A-4s retire from U.S. Naval and foreign service.

In the 36 years since the *Skyhawk's* first flight, the "Scooter" has probably been flown by more naval Avia-

tors than any single airplane since World War Two. If any aircraft ever deserved the appellation: "A legend in its own time," that aircraft is certainly the A-4 Skyhawk.

The longevity and the success of the *Skyhawk* is a memorial to the genius of one individual and his design team. Ed Heinemann was not a one-time flash. From the SBD to the AD, the A3D, the A-20 and the A-26 attack aircraft, as well as the F4D fighter, not to mention streamlined stores, bomb racks, ejection seats and in flight refueling systems, his designs were practical as well as visionary.

It is hoped that others like him are in the pipeline.

Ed. Note: This article was first published in *The Hook*, Winter 1990. Part I was reprinted in *The A-4Ever*, Summer 2009. Used with permission.



About the author: *Harry Gann, a legend in the Skyhawk community*

While serving with U.S. Army WWII Armored Forces in Europe, Harry Gann was wounded during the Battle of the Bulge. Following recuperation and discharge at the end of the war, he received a B.E. in Mechanical Engineering in 1950 from the University of Southern California.

After two years with North American Aviation and two more years with small aviation companies, Harry joined Douglas Aircraft Company's El Segundo division. He worked as a designer of mechanical control systems for the F4D *Skyray*, F5D *Skylancer*,

A3D *Skywarrior* and A4D *Skyhawk*.

In 1989, he was transferred to the communications group and became the Douglas Aircraft Company historian. Gann's lifelong hobby of aircraft photography was utilized in specialized air-to-air photography for flight demonstration organizations using McDonnell Douglas aircraft. This function was later expanded to include photography of Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps units. Considered the unofficial Blue Angel photographer, Harry was designated an Honorary Blue Angel in 1979, having already been named an Honorary Naval

and Marine Aviator during his long and distinguished career.

A legend in the *Skyhawk* community, after retirement in 1992 Harry continued to contribute to aviation history as a volunteer for the MCAS El Toro Historical Foundation (later the Flying Leatherneck Museum). He also served as historian of the *Skyhawk* Association.

Harry Gann passed away in October 2000, leaving a void which will never be filled. The Fall 2000 issue of the *Skyhawk* Journal was dedicated to his memory.



NOTICE! ATTENTION! HEADZUP!

The toll-free line for *Skyhawk* Association membership renewals will no longer be in service. Memberships may be purchased or renewed by mail or online by visiting the *Skyhawk* Association home page at www.skyhawk.org.

Click on "Join Us" and follow the instructions to download a print application, or use the PayPal options listed.

If more information is needed, email the secretary at skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com.

SCHEDULING STUFF

- Reunions & Requests •



PLAN AHEAD

- ★ **All Marine A-4 Skyhawkers Reunion** in conjunction with Marine Corps Aviation Association (MCAA), May 20-22, 2010, Ft. Worth, TX. Contact is Mark Williams (roger.wilco@verizon.net), 400 Howell Way, #102, Edmonds, WA 98020-4190, 425-771-2030 (Pacific time) or see www.skyhawk.org.
- ★ **Skyhawk Association Board Meeting**, May 21, 2010, Omni Hotel, Fort Worth, TX. See www.skyhawk.org for more information.
- ★ **Skyhawk Association 2010 Annual Meeting and Luncheon**: 11:30 a.m., September 10, 2010, Tailhook Symposium, Reno, NV.
- ★ **VA-23 West Coast (All Invited) Reunion** is planned for 13-15 August 2010 in McMinnville, OR, at the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum. Contact Jim Cameron ('64-'67) jc3sher@fastmail.fm or at 503-780-2191 (Pacific time).



JET DIVE BOMBING

circa 1960

By CDR Jack Woodul, USNR-R-RET (A.K.A. *Youthly Puresome*)



As veteran Vietnam attack pilots, our dive bombing dive angle and release heights varied with the threat environment. Napalm and Snake Eye retarded bombs were limited to permissive environments, with delivery altitudes of 100-300' AGL. Initially, our air wing attacks against major targets in North Vietnam, which were heavily defended with both optically aimed and radar controlled flak, used a 60 degree high-dive delivery from some 12,000-15,000 feet, with a release altitude of around 6500 feet.

Antiaircraft (AA) hits were common, so dive bombing runs were not the canned, predictable, stable flight paths of peacetime, predicated on an accurate dive angle and release altitude. Getting shot at accurately tended to disrupt stability, so my bomb run often involved getting as steep as I could and pressing the attack to as low an altitude as I could; then pulling as many g's as I could (7 g's was standard) until the nose was above the horizon, maintaining enough energy to maneuver vertically and horizontally to escape tracking fire.

This tactic evolved with the advent of surface-to-air missiles to feature an ingress at 3500' AGL, which was supposed to be above the light-weapon envelope and below the SAM envelope. The bomb run involved popping up to some 12,000', then diving at 45 degrees to release at an altitude of some 4500'. I can tell you that a heavily-laden A-4 *Skyhawk* was uncomfortably slow and sluggish at roll-in, vulnerable to both flak and SAM. Later tactics reverted to steep dive angle and higher release, the better to see and avoid SAMs. The same technique used by Stuka pilots in

WWII--a steep dive angle and low release--got good results.

Peace-time bomb patterns were mostly canned, 450 knot, 30-degree dive angle, 2500' release altitude, practiced over and over again until the groove was automatic. Errors of dive angle and airspeed could be recognized and compensated for in other ways. In combat, maneuvering in the dive made this skill very necessary in order to compensate to get good hits. Air Force *Thud* pilot friends agree with me that when in a fight, get as steep as you can and press the target as long as you can--then pickle and pull like crazy.

There was a peace time bomb delivery tactic called "*low and slow*." The A-4 was flown at 180 knots and half flaps to deliver both bombs and rockets. It was fun and accurate, but the Bad Guys would have blown us out of the sky in North Vietnam. Some staff puke Navy captain visited our air wing and advocated the use of *low and slow* to win the war. We didn't have to be told not to talk to him.

I found an intriguing 1951 article by Major Jack Bolt, then of VMF-311, but later an F-86 exchange pilot with the USAF and the only USMC ace of the Korean War. He noted that

SBDs typically dived at 70 degrees and 240 knots and seldom took AA hits. But F9F *Panthers* and other jets usually bombed at 30 degrees and more than 400 knots, but frequently took AA hits. In order to be nose-level at 2,000 feet the SBD dropped at 2,400 feet; the *Panthers* at 3,200 with attendant diminished accuracy. However, "own blast" concerns had many jets recovering at 3,000 feet to avoid the fragmentation pattern. What to do?

Bolt recommended delayed-action bombs (up to 5 minutes) in order to concentrate a flight on to and off the target as fast as possible. Recommended procedure was a 35-40 degree dive, drop 1,800 ft above target elevation, with simultaneous 100 percent power, retract speed brake, and a 5-g pull.

Apparently, it wasn't widely adopted owing to increasing AA, but I thought it interesting that the *slow but deadly* of the Battle of Midway fame influenced jet tactics, however briefly.

—♦—

USMC A-4 Skyhawkers'



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In conjunction with MCAA Symposium

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Or visit www.skyhawk.org

READ? YOU THINK WE READ?

Loud and Clear: The Memoir of an Israeli Fighter Pilot

By Brigadier General Iftach Spector.
Zenith Press, Minneapolis, MN.
426 pages. \$30.

Although better known as a *Mirage* and F-4 pilot (he commanded a *Skyhawk* squadron and a *Phantom* squadron), and one of the Israeli Air Force's ranking aces with 12 official kills, General Spector also flew the A-4 while the CO of two IAF bases in the 1980s. His first flight in the Scooter was, however, in March 1970, shortly after the aircraft first came to Israel. He subsequently flew combat missions in the A-4 during the 1982 Lebanon War, attacking SA-6 batteries. Later, after leaving active duty, but remaining in the reserves, he instructed in the A-4. He now devotes his time to more scholarly pursuits and writing.

Iftach Spector has always lived in a whirlwind. A few years ago, he set off a minor firestorm when he signed the declaration of a small group of Israeli pilots who were against his country's actions in Lebanon. If the declaration had come from a bunch of Israeli "hippies" it would not have generated the amount of indignation and righteous wrath from those in military power. But coming as it did from a well-known, heavily experienced combat leader, it stung.

Confrontation is nothing new to Spector, however, and as he cruised through this latest sea of controversy, he decided to write this memoir. He has also written an emotional, often mystical, yet autobiographical novel about the terrible first days of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, when the IAF, and indeed, the nation, teetered precariously on the edge of extinction. Israeli F-4s and A-4s, their crews, senior and junior, were lost as they threw themselves against Egyptian and Syrian surface-to-air missiles in a desperate attempt to halt the Arab advance across the Sinai and Golan Heights into Israel. Unfortunately, the novel, *A Dream in Blue and Black*, while published in Israel to great acclaim, has yet to have an English edition produced.

Perhaps begun in part as an answer to the reaction to the letter, *Loud and Clear* is a long but colorful, interesting read, written as only Spector could. It's full of personal references that set up the main topic, namely how Israel's fabled air force had to fight its many conflicts, the ones with its Arab neighbors,

and those within its tight-knit organization. He begins by describing his own family's early history, the loss of his father, when Spector was barely a year old, on a commando raid against Syria in 1941, and the role his strong, intense mother played in his growing up. She was a leader in the Palmach, an early group of fighters that fought alongside the British during World War II and then helped establish Israel as a state in 1948.

Spector's words are not those of the typical fighter-pilot-turned-writer, struggling to describe his experiences. The words flow lyrically with the ease and intensity of a practiced writer of fiction or of an experienced essayist. Actually, *Loud and Clear* is not for someone looking mainly for an aerial shoot-'em-up, although there is enough dog-fight action as the author leads us through his deeply personal narrative. Spector shows us his mistakes and successes in the air and on the ground, as a junior pilot and as a senior combat leader trying to keep his squadron together and alive for one more strike.

The general is a deep thinker, a modern version of the French aviation-writer icon Antoine de St. Exupery, but with a much more active, modern style that won't put you to sleep as will "St. Ex's" boring and dated prose. Spector's introduction and subsequent description of one of his first squadron commanders, arguably one of the most colorful and dynamic individuals the IAF ever had, is an artful chapter of personal recollection and admiration. Even after Spector and the older pilot have a terrible confrontation over rumors about wartime atrocities, Spector's tone is one of sorrowful respect and regret. The senior aviator, an early IAF ace, and respected pilot, remains a seminal character to this day. Spector has simply put him in a beautifully crafted frame. His later introspective review of his own tour as a squadron commander is a wonderfully personal look at how he thought he did in this most difficult time in a military career. It would benefit any current CO to read it.

Describing Operation Moked (Focus), the initial IAF attack of the 1967 Six Day

War that devastated most of the Arab aerial opposition on the ground, the author also pulls things together in a nugget-filled essay that puts the war in perspective better than most other such descriptions I have seen. Likewise, his assessment of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and the criticism leveled at the higher echelons of the Israel Defense Force are enlightening. His description of the early development of Israeli reconnaissance drones--what we now call unmanned aerial vehicles which have served American forces so well in Iraq and Afghanistan--and his end-of-book discussion of the June 1981 attack on the Iraqi nuclear installation, on which he flew, are also unusual, unexpected summations of important events within the IAF.

Having finished the book, I was struck by how much of himself the author had put in the narrative, while remaining clearly above the fray. He had participated in much of the action he wrote about, but he always remained something of an ethereal creature hovering above the clouds, outside the main arena. Perhaps that is what angered so many people in 2003, when he signed the pilot's declaration against activity in the "territories," namely Gaza and Lebanon. This detachment comes from someone who has the credentials to comment stridently on these actions. The reader will see what I am talking about when reading this highly personal memoir.

There have been several recent memoirs by Israeli pilots, and perhaps one or two more on the way. All by men who are well known in their home country, but unfamiliar in Europe and the U.S. All have been originally published in Hebrew and then translated for their English edition. Thus, there are occasional odd phrasings, but the meaning of the author's words is always unmistakable. What was once a *terra incognita*--the deeply intimate experiences of the secretive *chel ha'avir's* aviators--has been thrust into the glaring light of public knowledge and inspection. This latest effort is arguably the best of the lot...so far. More to come?

Reviewed by Peter Mersky

(Ed. Note: for more information, see Peter Mersky's interview in *Air&Space* with General Spector at www.airspacemag.com/military-aviation/AS-Interview-Brig-Gen-Iftach-Spector.html)



Author BGen Iftach Spector prepares to launch in IAF F-16.

PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul

~ Dead Sojers* ~

* Naval Aviator's Dictionary:

Dead Soldiers--the mangled aluminum, tin, and glass corpse containers of at-sea liquid joy, smashed flat and hidden away until suitable conditions for consignment to the deep, usually late at night.....

"When Puresome comes marching home again, *Hooraw! Hooraw!*" was playing with drums and fifes in Puresome's head as he and Weed heroically marched down the midnight passageway toward the fantail, magically invisible and oblivious to the tinkling contents of two parachute bags as they whanged against knee-knockers and pipes as the carrier thrummed through the night.

The silly grins that were frozen on their faces belied their grim mission. Earlier perusal of their magnificent stateroom had shown no more places to stow remains; and old, displaced skivvies piled in corners were causing scowls from the Brotherhood of Stewards. So, well fortified with cactus juice and Hawaiian Punch, a decent burial off the fantail was decided on.

Puresome and Weed had come by such a backlog as a result of planning. In preparation for the cruise, they had spent \$25 on a second-hand refrigerator, had it craned up to the number two elevator, and with the help of some of Weed's ordnance persons, stuffed it down two ladders and a passageway and into their stateroom. With the addition of a hasp and a lock, it was ready to produce ice to chill the vegetable and fruit juices so necessary to hydrate naval aviators.

The further discovery that two cases of foamy refreshment in a parachute bag was the approximate size of an Akai tape recorder led to many conversations on the quarter-deck on returning to the ship:

"LTJG Puresome reports this

return aboard, sir!"

"Very well! What'd you buy?"

"Akai tape recorder, sir!"

"You aviators sure do like your music.."

"Yes, sir!" With a stomp and salute.

Once though, Puresome actually did bring on an Akai tape recorder.

The ice and stockpiled refreshment made their stateroom a popular place. The dentist next door would come over, and he and Puresome would sing selected parts from "The Messiah" at the top of their alcoholic lungs. Many meetings of the Reserve Junior Officers Association were convened. Often, Puresome would lapse into sleep with someone like Ray Roge droning on about



"Day..is..done!" sang Puresome as he sailed a can

and Weed did a kazoo imitation of "Taps." "Gone

the...sun!" as another can arched into the dark.

"From the...hill! And the dale! And like that there!"

the physics of the interaction of ice cubes with the scorch in his mug, and awake hours later not to have missed any of the monologue. All in all, it helped everyone deal with the troublesome fact that, just because they were dropping bombs on North Vietnamese bridge approaches, the Gomers were trying to shoot them. Puresome thought this unreasonable and advocated bombing the dikes so they couldn't "have a rice day," but Weed felt sorry for the poor girls.

But, for all the social good, possession of Sojers alive or dead was officially verboten. The word from the ship's XO was breaking of swords, ripping off of buttons and body parts if discovered. This naturally added piquancy to life aboard ship. Puresome's skipper and XO gained huge status when they

locked everyone in the ready room at the end of line periods for piquant movies and doses of Old Overhold obtained from Quackus Attackus, the flight surgeon.

If swilling was semi-dangerous, disposing of the remains was doubly so. There were numerous stories of burial details come to grief. One such party had crept onto the flight deck and flung a paper sack full of casualties directly into an upright whip antennae, which had bent over and volleyed the sack back onto the flight deck, and the unfortunates had to chase the tinkling cans down the flight deck.

Thus, finally backed into a corner by a stateroom full of earthly remains, Puresome and Weed had fortified themselves, gathered up the evidence into two parachute bags, and set off for the Zero-Dark-Thirty fantail.

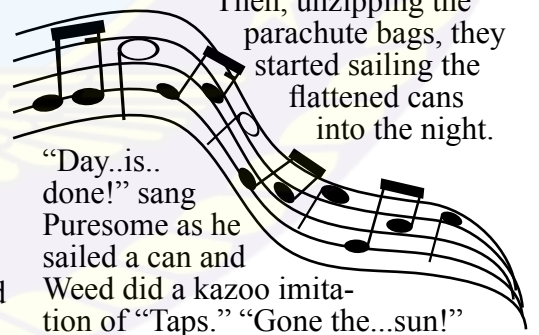
The few persons encountered in the deserted passageways had evidently not seen anything amiss in two glazed-eyed characters in flight

suits and orange ball caps hauling tinkling parachute bags that smelled strangely like stale juice of the hops.

With their pupils the size of pencil leads from the bright lights of the passageways, Puresome and Weed finally arrived at the fantail, which was dark as only night at sea can be. The two stood at the railing, momentarily mesmerized by the roiling phosphorescence of the wake.

Then, unzipping the parachute bags, they started sailing the flattened cans into the night.

"Day..is..done!" sang Puresome as he sailed a can and Weed did a kazoo imitation of "Taps." "Gone the...sun!"



as another can arched into the dark. "From the...hill! And the dale! And like that there!"

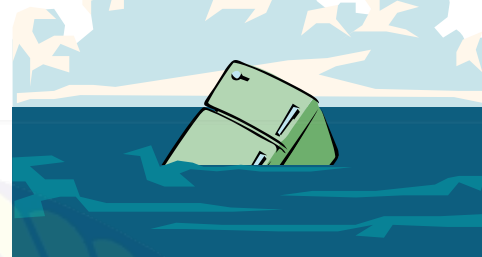
Puresome and Weed had happily conducted about a third of the required ceremony when their eyeballs started adjusting to the dark. At about the same time, they both became aware of....several cigarette ends glowing in the dark. They.. Were..Not....Alone!

Yaaaaaaa! Two parachute bags were flung over the railing and the two bugged out in panic like the nuggets they were, careening down

passageways and ladders to huddle in their stateroom, waiting for the "man overboard" alarm to sound. As their breathing slowly returned to normal, they realized that Grong, the God of Happy Hours, Olongopo and Junior Officers, had smiled on them once again, and they had truly been invisible. *Stupid, but invisible.*

So, survival broughteth wisdom. In the after days and on other cruises, Puresome and Weed passed on the knowledge of the ages, and more and more junior aviators survived the ritual.

When their reefer finally died of old age and interior fungus, a large group of young, manly men gathered on the number four sponson as it was chunked into the deep. It was as if they were witness to the passing of an old and honorable friend.



R.G.'s ART

• TA-4Js •



R. G. Smith,
(1914-2001)

Named Honorary Naval
Aviator Number 11.

As night falls, two TA-4Js approach the USS *America* for carrier qualifications. Image courtesy of Sharlyn Marsh.



? Puzzle Answers: Boom-Boom Room ?

Answer 1. An A-4C with outboard wing stations is definitely "special." Photo via Gary Verver, who reports that this was an A-4C sporting an Echo wing.



(See page 10 for questions)

Answer 2. At the end of the 1970s, there was some enthusiasm for designating the A-4M with the increased landing weight and the angle-rate bombing system as the A-4Y and pushing for further production beyond the 24 aircraft already procured. However, the proposal was in direct competition with the acquisition of the AV-8 *Harrier* and was never seriously considered.

(Ed. Note: see *Letters to the Editor - Bland* for more information).

Answer 2. An engine start unit. To save weight, the turbine which rotated the J-65 was made a separate item which was removed by the ground crew after start. The availability of starters made planning cross-country fuel stops a challenge. There was a way to carry the starter stuffed up the aft hell-hole, but this was rarely done. The J-52 engine used on later models had the turbine built in. Photo via Boom Powell.



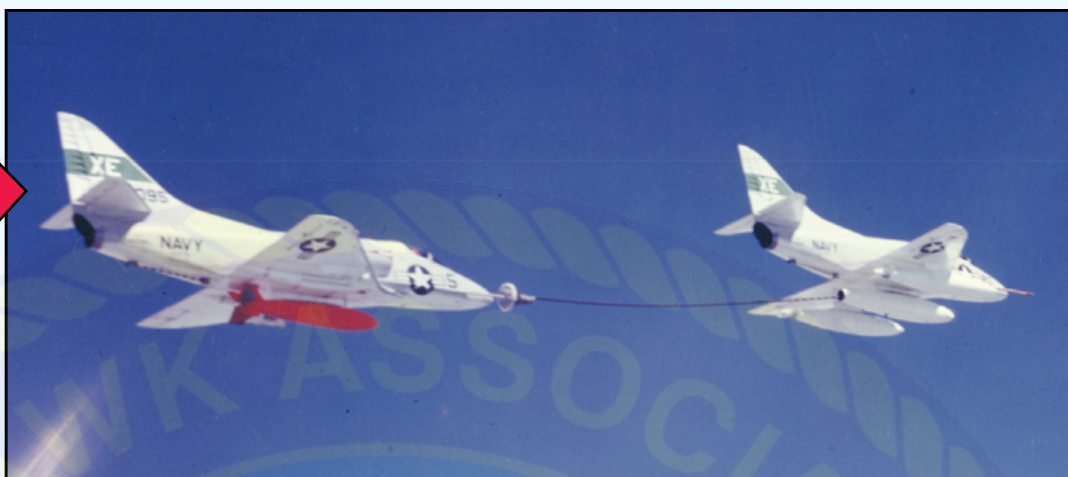
ATTIC ATTACKS

• Mailbag •

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VX-5 A-4B Skyhawk
BuNo 142121, XE-23,
refueling VX-5 A-4B
BuNo 142095, XE-5, with
a nuclear shape on the
centerline, circa 1958.
Official U.S. Navy photo
from Larry Cauble via
Gary Verver.



Youthly Puresome, early 1965 in VA-86 CAG bird (Lord knows that Double Nuts had to be a spare). Could also be Alpha Aaron, but I no thinkee--note no mask on fearless aviator.
(Photo taken by division leader, Skip Wood)



News

From MCDONNELL DOUGLAS CORPORATION

70-187A

PHOTO CAPTION

WESTERN NEWS BUREAU Santa Monica, California 90406
November 3, 1970
(213) 399-9311, extension 2566

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIRST A-4M SKYHAWK DELIVERY -- First production A-4M, newest and most powerful version of Skyhawk series of light attack aircraft, is delivered to the United States Navy and Marine Corps at Douglas Aircraft Company division of McDonnell Douglas Corporation in Long Beach, California. Participants in brief ceremony are (from left) Brigadier General L.E. Brown, USMC, assistant wing commander of the Third Marine Aircraft Wing at El Toro, California; Howell L. Walker, Douglas vice president-military systems division; Marine Lieutenant Colonel Gene Russell, who is accepting first A-4M log books from Captain K.B. Mattson, Naval Plant Representative Officer at Douglas; Robert F. Canaday, Douglas vice president-military systems marketing, and Wellwood E. Beall, Douglas executive vice president. A-4M, produced by McDonnell Douglas for the Marine Corps, was scheduled to be flown to Navel Air Test Center at Patuxent River, Maryland, for Navy Bureau of Inspection and Survey trials before introduction into Marine air arms. New Skyhawk is designed for operation from carriers or from forward area bases.

RESTORATION

of VMA-131's #158182

From Curt "Swamp" Marsh, email: curt.marsh@itt.com



Attached is a newsletter from the Delaware Valley Historical Aircraft Association at JRB Willow Grove, PA. This issue features the A-4. They have an A-4M on display that belonged to VMA-131 #158182 (see <http://www.dvhha.org/aircraft/a4m.html>). It was restored after being damaged in flight and then turned into a hangar queen.

I need to pull out my log book to confirm the date and the other pilots in the flight; however, I was in the flight when the incident occurred. We were on a low-level flight with this aircraft in the lead of a 3-plane formation. Just after crossing a ridgeline, he flew into a flock of geese. He pushed over to avoid them, but still hit a couple, taking off the upper portion of the vertical stabilizer including the pitot

tube that provided airspeed and altitude information. There was no other damage, and he was able to land safely using angle of attack and our assistance.

(Ed. note: we pulled this information off the Delaware Historical Aircraft Association website.)

History of 158182

This aircraft was delivered to the Marines in October 1971. This aircraft saw service with VMA-331 "Bumblebees", VMAT-102, VMA-214 "Black Sheep", MAG-42, and VMA-131 within MAG-49 prior to being stricken from service in June of 1994.

DVHAA received #158182 in June of 1994. At the time of receipt, the aircraft had been stripped of parts and lay in pieces upon the hangar floor at MAG-49.

Marines assisted DVHAA volunteers in piecing the aircraft back together using unserviceable parts gathered from a number of sources. The cockpit was brought back up to a complete configuration, including all the ejection seat components and instrumentation. Weapons were requested, and their demilitarized issue approved by Marine officials.

Over the course of the next two years, #158182's appearance was continually upgraded and polished for air show appearances.

During March 1996, a complete repaint was initiated. MAG-49 at NAS-JRB Willow Grove graciously lent hangar space and patience to enthusiastic DVHAA volunteers who spent three weeks wet sanding, patching and priming the aircraft.

Some three thousand man hours of volunteer effort by twenty-five DVHAA members, aided by Marines from MAG-49, airmen from the PA Air National Guard, and sailors from the NAS-JRB Transient Line Crew culminated in a magnificent tribute to the colorful days of Marine Corps aviation, twenty years ago.



"Before" photo shows damage to vertical stabilizer on 158182.



After restoration, 158182 shines in traditional paint scheme of the VMA-131 Diamondbacks.

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Volume 15 • Number 3



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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 all back issues beginning with Fall 2004 (Vol 10, No. 4). Extra copies may be purchased for \$5.00 per issue, including shipping and handling (domestic addresses only).

Contact: Bob Hickerson at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

or mail to: Bob Hickerson
1222 Balcones Drive,
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