



THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION *Journal*



*Restored Skyhawk TA-4N518TA
from Marana, AZ.*

THE A-4 EVER

Summer 2010

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 16 • NUMBER 2

Contents:

★ RESTORATION ISSUE ★

Prez Sez • “McDougall” Douglas TA-4J First Flight

Resurrecting an Angel • Take No Prisoners

Size Matters • Skyhawks Still Going to Sea

Scooter Soars • You Think We Read?

Welcome Aboard • Puresome Unplugged



www.skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• Raven's Report •



By Bob "Raven" Hickerson

Annapolis A-4 Restoration

At press time, Dutch Rauch of the Association of Naval Aviation reported that we had collectively raised \$18,030 toward our \$20,000 goal, and he was optimistic that another \$2,000 donation would be received. On top of that, a very generous donation of airframe parts was made by VP Ron Guy of United Aeronautical, a company which has supplied A-4 parts since the 1960s. The value of those parts, plus the shipping which was also donated, put our fund-raising campaign well over the top.

As icing on the cake, Dave Dollarhide's friend, Pawel Mankowski, of the Vietnam War Museum in Orlando, FL, donated a nose-wheel door for the project. Dutch reports that he now has so many A-4 parts in his basement office that he's thinking of trying to build his own *Skyhawk*, if he can find a J-52!

The next step is to coordinate with the Naval Academy and their foundation to put a project plan together. Dutch is taking the lead on that and will keep us informed. Good job, everyone!

A Tribute to Twidget

At our May 21st meeting, the *Skyhawk* Association Board of Directors presented a plaque to David Weber commemorating his many years of service to the association, as assistant webmaster during the formative years, webmaster and director. David stepped off the board officially at the September meeting last year. However, he wasn't able to attend that meeting, so we imposed on him to join us in Fort Worth.

David's contribution to the organization has been huge, and we're grateful that he intends to continue serving as an assistant webmaster to Gene Atwell, who is building the new generation of our site. The backlog of information (particularly pictures) waiting to be posted on our site is very impressive, so Twidget's service will continue to be critical to our success. Meanwhile, we congratulate him on a job well done.

2010 Marine Skyhawk Reunion

The 2010 Marine *Skyhawk* Reunion is history and by all accounts, a rousing success. The planning team of *Skyhawk* Association members Mark Williams, Todd Frommelt, Bill Egen, Gene Atwell, Mike Green and John Fischer, joined occasionally by Bob Hickerson, put together a fun event which dovetailed nicely with MCAA 2010 and reunions planned by VMA-331 and VMA-121.

The event was held at the Sheraton Fort Worth, adjacent to the MCAA symposium hotel (the Omni), and all agreed that the hotel did a creditable job



L-R, Bob Hickerson presents plaque to out-going Webmaster David Weber, assisted by new Webmaster Gene Atwell.

of handling the frequently rambunctious Marines. Events at the hotel included a Thursday night check-in reception, a Friday night warm-up reception prior to the MCAA Flight Jacket happy hour, and a sit-down dinner on Saturday night. We were honored to have Maj-Gen Bobbie Butcher, USMC(ret), as our guest of honor on Saturday night. General Butcher is probably the best-known A-4 pilot in the Marine Corps and commanded Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One during two of its formative years.

A highlight of the reunion was a 2-hour tour of Lockheed Martin's F-35 production facility at the Joint Reserve Base in Fort Worth (the old Carswell AFB). Arranged by Bill "Jigger" Egen, the tour and subsequent detailed briefing by retired Col Eric "Beans" Van Camp of Lockheed Martin were amazing. We left in awe of the technology built into

that fighter, but wondered if a lieutenant would ever get to launch in it on an unstructured, "punch holes in the sky" cross country like we enjoyed growing up. Since the aircraft seems capable of communicating with anyone (probably including God), go - no go decisions will probably be made at wing headquarters or higher while the pilot waits to see if the aircraft plans to take off!

The airplane stuff was balanced with a museum tour and shopping for the wives, and we found a great leather store near the stockyards where you can buy a pair of really nice, custom boots for \$5,000, should the mood strike you. If anyone needs a referral, just let me know.

Mark, Todd and Jigger did a great job of finding "lost" Marines while planning this reunion, so we're going to make an effort to keep the list up-to-date. If you receive a copy of this journal and are not yet a member of *Skyhawk* Association, join as soon as possible. Association membership will allow us to keep in touch with you and guarantee that you will hear about future reunions. The planning committee heard many suggestions on when and where to have the next event. One thing's for sure, we need more people to get involved in the planning. If you'd like to work on the next one, drop me a line at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.

Membership Survey

I hope you noticed in the Prez Sez column in the Spring 2010 issue that we're taking a survey of our members to see which products we provide are the most valuable. Your input to this survey will help us decide where to put our effort and funding as we attempt to build the membership of the association. If you haven't already taken the survey, visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/98WR7DV. That URL will take you to a short survey which should only take a few minutes to complete.

Annual Meeting 2010

The Annual Meeting of *Skyhawk* Association will be held at 11:30 a.m., Friday, September 10, 2010, at Tailhook 2010 (Nugget Hotel and Casino, Sparks, NV). See us in our usual booth for directions to the luncheon.

Meanwhile, *A-4s Forever*
Raven



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

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Summer 2010 •



The Prez Sez: <i>Raven's Report</i>	2
Take No Prisoners: <i>Letters to the Editor</i>	6
Scheduling Stuff: <i>Mark your Calendar</i>	17
Read? <i>You Think We Read?</i>	22
New Paying Member\$	23
Size Does Matter: <i>Modeling News</i>	23



Resurrecting an Angel By Rick St. Pierre and Nick St. Pierre	9-12
Scooter Soars over Middlebury, Vermont By Lucy Young	13
"McDougall" Douglas TA-4J First Flight By Paul Filmer	14-17
Puresome Unplugged: A Night on the Town By Jack Youthly Puresome Woodul	18-19
Skyhawks Are Still Going to Sea VF-1 ops aboard NAe Sao Paulo.	20

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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: Restored TA-4 N518TA takes to the sky with pilot Rick Millson at the controls. Back-seater is Mike 'Maj' McDougall of Fighting Classics Aircraft Restoration, Marana, AZ. Photograph courtesy of Paul Filmer, Skippyscape Photography.

REGIONAL SKYHAWK GATHERINGS

Ed. note: we're excited to see more regional gatherings of Skyhawk enthusiasts and members of the Skyhawk Association and are pleased to report on two recent meetings. If you would like to organize a similar event in your neck of the woods, the association can help you get the word out. Just email sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org to get the ball rolling.

Southern California, from Todd Frommelt

With all the work being done on an updated Marine A-4 contact list for the reunion in Fort Worth this May, the 'Southern California' Marine A-4 Gaggle List has been fleshed out very nicely...to some 65 attack jocks! Using the new list made for a great quarterly brunch crew in Carlsbad on 15 April, including retired MajGen Hal Vincent. Others in attendance included George Ampagoomian, Cary Branch, John Campbell, Dave Eisenbrey, Todd Frommelt, Marv Garrison, Hal Henderson, Jon Ingersoll, Doug Kirschke, Lin LaViano, Cap Pinney, Al Ransom, and Mel Turner. If you're in the SoCal area and weren't in on the flurry of emails setting this one up, contact Todd Frommelt (aka the Hun), at toddfrommelt@roadrunner.com to get in on the action. We'll be getting together again sometime this summer in the San Clemente or Carlsbad, CA areas.

Hun sends...

(Photos by Todd Frommelt)



(L-R) Marv Garrison, Gen Hal, Al Ransom.



(Near end to far) Al, Gen Vincent, Marv, Lin LaViano, Dave Eisenbrey, Doug Kirschke.



(Clockwise) Cary Branch, Jon Ingersoll, George Ampagoomian, John Campbell, Cap Pinney, (hidden) Doug K, Dave E, Lin LaViano, Marv Garrison.



(L-R) Hal Henderson, Mel Turner

Marine Skyhawkers in Ft. Worth at MCAA 2010 ~



We doubt that Pappy flew this one! Todd and Jeanne Frommelt, Nick and Luana Kirby pose in front of a Blacksheep AV-8B at the Cowtown Warbird Roundup at Meachum Field.



(L-R): Ray "Notso" Bright, Bill "Jigger" Egen (sporting his VMA-121 reunion cap) and LtGen Chuck Pitman, USMC(Ret).

Why does Brett have so much hair?
(L-R): Mark Williams, Ross Hieb, Nick Matranga, Brett Jones, and Jerry Lawlor.



Afternoon reunion group at Lockheed Martin F-35 production facility at JRB Fort Worth.



JACKSONVILLE, FL. GATHERING



From Dave Dollarhide

In keeping with the *Skyhawk* Association's effort to hold regional social events, on May 8, we held what may be the first annual "Light Attack Fly In and Reunion."

The goal of conducting association sponsored regional gatherings is to promote new membership, while engaging in what most of us enjoy the most...renewing friendships with old squadronmates.

Haller Air Park is just south of Jacksonville and the former NAS Cecil Field, so there are plenty of light attack folks in the area. Most flew or maintained the A-4 at some point in their career. To get the ball rolling, we decided to hold this "light attack" event, hosted by the "Dreamland Squadron" (Dave

Dollarhide, Pat Lee, Dennis Gillespie and Joe Kannapell) and by "Trader Jon's Flyboy Bar and Aero Club" (John Leenhouts and Doug Moran).

The response to our blanket invitation was tremendous and the "NAS Haller" hangar filled with well over 100 light attack pukes and significant others. One former Cecil Field exchange pilot traveled from France and several people came from as far as Texas and Colorado.

We started at 1700 with some flying around the air patch in our experimental RVs and two vintage Stearman biplanes. We gave some joy rides, made formation flyovers and rolled around the sky in simulated dogfights. We even had a P-51 friend blow by the airport in tribute to our event.

The weather continued to be perfect, while the party and sea stories lasted long after dinner. Later, there was a jam session (Who says steel drums, guitar and a harp don't mix?), with the last of the more stalwart types easing out the ready room door after 1AM.

As intended, it was a fun gathering of light attack types, with a goal of gaining new *Skyhawk* Association members. As we said at the party, the *Skyhawk* Association is the foremost organization in keeping A-4 and light attack history alive. Help us by joining.

By popular demand, this may become an annual event, so we hope to see you next year. Meanwhile, let your buddies know the benefits of becoming a *Skyhawk* Association member.



Welcome aboard NAS Haller.



Plenty to eat and drink.



Waiting for Dave Dollarhide to get back from vacation to ID these four.

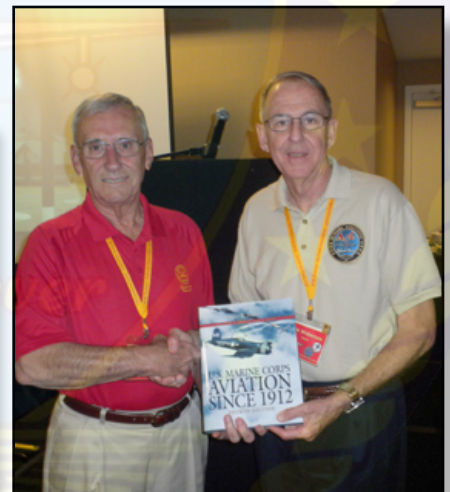
More Skyhawkers in Ft. Worth ~



Jackie and Mark Williams with MajGen Butcher in background.



Gene Atwell mans registration table while others party.



Bob Hickerson presents autographed copy of Peter Mersky's classic U.S. Marine Corps Aviation Since 1912, to MajGen Bobbie Butcher, reunion guest of honor.

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:

The below links will link you to four new videos on YouTube. These videos were shot in the Western Pacific and Vietnam in 1965. The videos have gone from film to video tape to DVD. Then the videos had to be converted from one format to another, and then sliced and diced. Your intrepid video editor has clicked, cut, copied, and pasted 'til not only the cows came home, but also 'til the cows went to sleep. We are not getting any younger, so I thought it best to get this out sooner rather than later.

YouTube only allows 10 minutes on each video. You can link the videos with an application called Play List. When each video finishes, wait for about 10 seconds and the following video will start, 'til the entire play list (videos) has finished. I am working on more videos and I will update you when the videos are available on YouTube. These videos were uploaded successfully, but I have noticed that sometimes the hour glass comes up and they run slowly or freeze. You can get usually around this by moving the duration bar on the bottom of your screen with your mouse. I hope I have explained this so that everyone understands. I believe the problem is on the YouTube side of the fence since they now have over 400 million users. If the problem is on my side of the fence, I will upload the segment again to correct the problem. These below links will never change. On Sunday, a young lad from Christchurch on the South Island of New Zealand emailed me. He said he liked the videos, especially when yet to be President Nixon appeared, but he was wondering what was the significance of the over usage of the middle finger pointing to the air by some of the men in Viet Nam. He really must be a young lad, or he is pulling my leg. I told him it was a 1960s sign of peace. Enjoy the videos.

S/F, Marty

[mjhalpin@juno.com]

PS: There are also 11 slide presentations on YouTube. The images are much clearer. See index included.

Marty Halpin's VMA-225 YouTube Index

www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=82FD5DBFA3DC7F16	Larry Video in 4 Parts
www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=1ACCE4DD0AF94151	Muley Video in 11 Parts
www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=759DCA61D166E510	Carl Video in 6 Parts
www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=2F44A3B1DE4B9390	Avion Video in 3 Parts
www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDu-2SYpCVg	Slides Part 0
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayM2Z2_j-xE	Slides Part 1
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApV5kwmSYXk	Slides Part 2
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWAlgiXC9fs	Slides Part 3
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ja1sTalbnXE	Slides Part 4
www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmObk3jMSxA	Slides Part 5
www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKSBS0tPJE	Slides Part 6
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kzep9xuXLGE	Slides Part 7
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YW7uSPMEHvl	Slides Part 8
www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHRUM1-b2q8	Slides Part 9
www.youtube.com/watch?v=036Uzl_vYrM	Slides Part 10
www.skyhawk.org/4e/vma225/vma225o.htm	VMA-225, Off-duty Photo Album
www.skyhawk.org/4e/vma225/vma225p.htm	VMA-225, Duty Photo Album
www.popasmoke.com/visions/	In "Search by poster" type Halpin

To the Editor:

Hi Bob,

Thanks for the Journal, Summer 2009. It was funny--the first letter to the editor I read was about my old squadron, VA-112. I was one of Terry Cooney's PC'S 66-68 on the *Kitty Hawk*. I am going to send you a few pictures of VA-112 planes from that time you might use. I thought after 40 years, I should share them. Terry might even be flying one of them, they were taken second line period of 68. The third one is a BEAR over-flight in the Sea of Japan.

Thanks again,

John Debaere

[jdebaere@wi.rr.com]

(Ed. note: see photos in *Attic Attack*.)

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Dear Raven,

First congratulations on becoming CO of the SA.

I am glad the Princess forwarded my email about the Brazilian Navy A-4s. I was impressed to get your note today and I'll start laying pipe. I'll try to fit the story in, but as you know we achievers are busier that ever when retired.

I have been back nine years, so my remembrance is a little faded. I sent two emails today; one to a retired BN WO who was a great help to us there. At our time he was the QA chief in HS-1 (Sikorsky SH-3Ds). The other mail went to one of the team who knows where most of the team is now, as I need help in remembering details.

The BN sent out bid invitations for firms for flight training, maintenance training, and shop advisors. Kay and Associates, Arlington Heights, Illinois, was the winner of all three. The team was about 35 men, mostly retired USN/USMC. More Marines (as you know they had the MOS until early 1990s.) We had two IPs, a LtCol Jim ??? who was found teaching at U of Idaho. Stick #2 was a young USN LT Craig Ziemba who just got out after flying A-6Es in VA-75, then three years in Texas as a TA-4J IP.



Just sent something to tease you.

My A-4 background: Worked for Pratt and Whitney over 20 years, 10 years as an Experimental Engineering Assistant (AS degree) and 10 years in Field Service. J52 assignments were MATWING One at Oceana (A-6E) and Kuwait. Later, I was the P/P engineer at Grumman St. Augustine Corporation and supported the conversion of 40 A-4Ls to A-4PTMs. Other jobs led me to be the Civil Service J52 rep at MAG-14, Cherry Point, supporting the four EA-6B squadrons. That is where Kay found me in 1999.

Better yet, I got out of the USN as an AE2 in 1961. I joined the reserves at NAS Willow Grove in 1963 while going to PSU. Had so much fun the first drill weekend, I stayed 32 years. In 1974, I was an AEC selectee, finished my BS degree, and applied for a reserve direct commission. Shocked when selected for a Lt(jg). Next 19 years, I was in four great squadrons as an AMO, VF-202, NAS Dallas; VC-12 (TA-4J), NAS Oceana; VP-62 at Jax, and VFA-203 at Cecil. At VA-203 parties and changes of command, I met Hide. Piped over the side in 1993, at 35 years.

Perv sends
bill walker
[billrace@yahoo.com]



To the Editor:

Dear Raven,

I'm Commander Fonseca Jr., skipper of Brazilian Navy VF-1 squadron. I'm a native of Pensacola, FL and 2001 graduate of Naval Air Station Meridian (Advanced Strike Training, carrier qualified in the T-45C on board the USS *Harry S. Truman*). I've just received the subject (Spring 2010 Journal) and thoroughly enjoyed it. As a squadron member of *Skyhawk* Association, that was our first number, and I'd like to send you more information about our squadron to be published in the next numbers. All pilots from the squadron came from US Training Squadron (Meridian or Kingsville), and we are very proud to be part of the *Skyhawk* Association. Being an A-4 pilot is an honor and we still remember stories in the T-45C simulator from Mr. Douglas, Mr. Zeller and Mr. Male ("Buddy") about their adventures flying this awesome airplane.

So, if you think is a good idea to take more information about VF-1 squadron and know about how we are still using our A-4s, please let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you in the next days.

Best regards, Fon

[fonseca.junior@eav-1.mar.mil.br]

(Ed. note: see photos of Brazilian A-4s in action elsewhere in this issue. We're looking forward to regularly publishing stories from VF-1.)



To the Editor:

Sir, attached is a tribute sign I painted and stuck out in the yard to thank A-4 pilots for Memorial Day Weekend. My artistic abilities are not the best, so please don't cringe when viewing.

I also printed off the USN and USMC Vietnam losses from your website and made a make-shift tribute wall down the hallway of my church (Hoyt UMC) with pics. I got quite a few comments from members of the church.

When restoration is completed, I will send you pics of my little cafe racer, a 1971 Honda CB450 that I have painted to look like A-4F BUNO 154190 VA-127 NAS Fallon, NV. The fuel tank and air cleaner covers have the desert camo with the markings of that adversary squadron. My friend, Clarence, is doing all of the mechanical repairs.

Thanks,
Robert MacIntosh SA#1927
Hoyt, KS



Go Ahead, Give A Guy A Gift

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

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

Join or renew at \$30 or \$75, and give a one-year gift membership to someone for \$20 at the same time. Contact Terry Cooney at skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com for your gift membership(s), or at 2421 Clubside Dr., Beavercreek, OH 45431.



BOARD MEETING • FT WORTH, TEXAS

• Skyhawk Association Board Meeting – May 21, 2010, Fort Worth, TX •

Background: The *Skyhawk* Association Board meeting for Spring 2010, was held at the Sheraton Fort Worth, on May 21, 2010, in conjunction with the 2010 Marine *Skyhawk* Reunion.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 0835 by President Hickerson. Officers present included Hickerson, Vice President – Marines Todd Frommelt, Secretary Terry Cooney, and Treasurer Mark Williams. Absent was Vice President – Navy Mike Eberhardt. Directors present were Atwell, Cooney, Cole, Dollarhide, Egen, Frommelt, Gabbard, Langworthy and Williams, constituting a quorum. Directors absent were Eberhardt, Jobin and Turpen.

Motions Approved Since Last Meeting: The board reviewed motions which had been approved since the last meeting, to include:

- Annapolis A-4 Restoration Project. The board had approved an initiative to raise funding in conjunction with the Association of Naval Aviation to restore the A-4 static display at the north gate of the Naval Academy. An update revealed that the project had raised approximately \$17,500 of the \$20,000 goal, not including a significant donation of A-4 metal repair parts by Ron Guy of Hollywood, CA.
- 2010 Budget. The board had approved the calendar year 2010 budget of \$24,964 (expenses) in December 2009.
- 2010 Hospitality Room for Tailhook 2010. The board approved the operation of a hospitality suite in partnership with the A-6 *Intruder* Association at Hook '10.

Communications and Reports: The following reports were filed:

- **Membership** (Secretary Terry Cooney). Association membership was 866 plus 11 honorary members as of May 21st. Retention rate was holding steady at 80%, and new memberships were running slightly ahead of losses.
- **Association Shirts** (Secretary Cooney). Everyone voiced approval for the new shirt design, and efforts will be made to market them through the website and journal.

• **Treasurer's Report** (Treasurer Mark Williams). The 2010 budget execution was on track. Concern was voiced that the Ernie Laib Fund (which partially funds the hospitality suite at Tailhook each year) would run out in one or two more years. Options to replace that funding will be explored.

• **Website Report** (Webmaster Atwell). Gene Atwell discussed the new generation website which is approaching IOC. The board is excited about increased capabilities and wants to make sure that design (look and feel) are ready when the website goes live. Directors were urged to use the test site and provide feedback to Gene as soon as possible.

• **Journal Report** (Editor Hickerson). Bob Hickerson reported that the journal remains very popular, but expensive at approximately \$5,500 per issue (3Xyear). Plans are being made to feature the journal on the new website with "teaser" content available to the general public. Full coverage of current and past journal issues will require membership access, and eventually, a fourth issue of *The A-4Ever* may be published electronically each year.

• **Membership Committee** (Chair Dollarhide). Dave Dollarhide reported on membership initiatives on behalf of the membership committee, stating that efforts to hold regional meetings of members and prospective members in Texas, Virginia and California had met with some success. Bob Hickerson reported on efforts to increase membership among the attendees at the 2010 Marine *Skyhawk* Reunion. New membership initiatives include: 1) holding more regional gatherings; 2) improving services through the website; 3) providing more journal content by using website extensions; 4) enlisting the help of contacts at the last Marine Reserve sites to operate the A-4; and 5) capitalizing on social media opportunities.

Old Business: the following old business was addressed:

- R.G. Smith Blueprint. The board discussed disposition of a blueprint which is believed to be the first design

sketches of the A-4. The print is faded and in need of professional restoration. Hickerson offered to take the print to the museum curators at Texas Tech University to obtain input on restoration options and costs. Disposition of the print will be decided once the condition is stabilized.

- Selection of the Nominating Committee. Director Cole was appointed to head the 2010 Nominating Committee which will address board vacancies due to terms expiring in 2010 (Eberhardt, Egen, Gabbard, Langworthy and Turpen) and recommend a slate of officers for 2011.

New Business: the following new business was addressed:

- Officer succession plan. The need to plan for replacement of the key officers, particularly the secretary and treasurer, was discussed. The need to appoint an assistant treasurer and secretary was emphasized, and the option of having the vice presidents automatically "fleet up" to president was offered.
- Request for funds. The support given to the 2010 Marine *Skyhawk* reunion was discussed. No other requests for funds had been received.
- Request for support. No requests had been received.
- Recognition awards. Former Webmaster and Director David Weber was honored for his many years of service to the association. He is stepping into the role of assistant webmaster and will remain active.

Future Meetings:

The 2010 Annual Meeting will be held at 11:30 a.m., September 10, 2010, at the Nugget Hotel and Casino, Sparks, NV, in conjunction with Tailhook 2010. Pre-event coordination assignments are:

Hospitality Suite – Jack Woodul
Booth – Terry Cooney
Luncheon and speaker – Mike Eberhardt

Adjourn: the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.



RESURRECTING AN ANGEL

• The story of A-4F Bureau Number 155027 •

By Rick St. Pierre and Nick St. Pierre



(L-R) Nick St. Pierre, CAPT Joe Gershon and Rick St. Pierre.

In addition to serving the nation, this combat veteran has also had an interesting and storied “retirement.” This flying sports car is inexorably tied to the life and tragic death of Naval Aviator, LCDR Robert Michael Gershon. Through the efforts of a group of the Quonset Air Museum volunteers led by myself, Rick St Pierre, and my 15 year old son Nick, we were able to transform this aircraft from a neglected flight line hulk to a museum quality tribute to a fallen Angel, Mike Gershon, who was killed while performing as Blue Angel #6.

July 13, 1985 was a warm, sunny day in Niagara Falls, New York, and the NY Air Guard was hosting the Western New York Air Show at the Niagara International Airport. The air show included static and flight demonstrations of civilian aerobatic planes and military aircraft. The weekend event was highlighted by the Navy Flight Demo team, the Blue Angels.

LCDR Mike Gershon had served as team narrator in his first year. In his second year, he was flying #6 in the position of opposing solo pilot. At approximately 3:25 p.m., he saluted

his ground crew and climbed into the cockpit of A-4F *Skyhawk* BN 154992 to perform air show #35 of a planned 73 show season. At 3:30 pm, the Blue Angels team took to the clear skies in their A-4F *Skyhawks* for a well-choreographed routine that had been practiced over and over again.

The two solo pilots demonstrated the high performance capabilities of their A-4 aircraft. In order to dramatically emphasize each maneuver, their opposing passes typically reached closing speeds of almost 1000 miles per hour. At 3:42 pm, in a maneuver called the “opposing blivot,” the lead and opposing solo collided. Lead solo #5 Lt. Andy Caputti ejected safely. Opposing solo #6 LCDR Mike Gershon perished in the accident.

This sad story would have ended with the accident if it were not for dedicated aircraft restoration efforts and sponsorship activities such as those undertaken by the Quonset Air Museum.

Fast-forward 23 years later to January 2008.

Nick and I live in Tiverton, RI, which is 35 miles from Quonset. For

nearly two years, we spent weekends and free time working at the museum located at the former Quonset NAS. We methodically and lovingly transformed A-4F 155027 into a lasting tribute and fitting memorial to Blue Angel #6. Prior restoration attempts were abandoned due to the extensive amount of work and time involved. The aircraft sat untouched for years in the corner of the hangar. Every time I passed by the unfinished aircraft, I had the feeling that it was asking me to pick up the project and take it to completion. And what a rewarding project it would be--my son would have the opportunity of a lifetime restoring this aircraft and dedicating it to the last Blue Angel to lose his life in an A-4.

I was given the approval by the museum to take over the project after I promised I would get the plane completed in time for the 2009 annual Rhode Island Air Guard *continued...*



The project aircraft, A-4F 155027, after years of neglect.



Nick St. Pierre gets down and dirty while working on 027.

RESURRECTING

Continued...

Air Show. My research and hard work then began in earnest. I needed to learn everything I could about the Blue Angels, Mike Gershon, A-4 *Skyhawks* and aircraft painting. Thank you, Al Gore for the internet.

As the flight line “hulk,” over the preceding years, the aircraft had been stripped of many parts and was suffering from neglect with peeling paint and rust invading most of the airframe. Nick and I developed a game plan that included stripping paint and corrosion and preparing all metal surfaces for paint or polishing, followed by painting, detailing, decals and polishing.

In addition to the tedious task of

removing many layers of old paint and preparing the surface for four layers of new paint, we had to find or manufacture replacement parts and panels. Even though the aircraft would not fly, we

ing for some “one-of-a-kind” parts.

The senior Blue Angels historian in Pensacola, FL, provided me with reference material that was essential to the success of the project. He took

“For nearly two years, we spent weekends and free time working at the museum located at the former Quonset NAS. We methodically and lovingly transformed A-4F 155027 into a lasting tribute and fitting memorial to Blue Angel #6.”

needed to obtain or duplicate missing panels and pieces to make the aircraft look airworthy. Parts as small as the angle of attack vane on the side of the plane needed to be replaced. Nick and I spent over 1200 hours in the reconstruction project and made contacts and friends around the country while search-

over 200 photos of the four retired A-4 Blue Angels that hang in the Naval Air Museum. He also provided copies or the original blueprints from 1975 with the correct measurements and placement of all lettering. I was able to scrutinize every inch of those airframes and make sure my work was just as good, or bet-



Many parts were stripped from the aircraft while it sat in the hangar.

ter than those hanging in the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola.

Interestingly enough, neither Nick nor I are aviators, nor did we possess expertise in aircraft airframe maintenance and painting prior to volunteering our time at the Quonset Air Museum. We have learned by doing, and our work has been critically acclaimed by visitors to our museum as being top-notch. Many have left comments in our guest book stating that the levels of detail and authenticity have equaled that of many of the largest air museums which they have visited nation-wide.

I would like to thank my wife Barbara for supporting Nick and myself as we spent so many tireless hours working on the restoration project. There were many times that she would look at me and simply say "I won't even ask," as Nick and I would bring home strange parts and pieces – most anything that we could get in our truck so we could continue the process of restoration. When it was too cold outside to work, she would even find an aircraft tire in the bath tub at our home. FYI, tire tracks do come out if scrubbed hard enough!

Barbara even contacted a local newspaper about doing a story on the project. The front page headline was "Tribute

to an Angel," with a great photo of Nick sitting on the plane. The accompanying article provided many details of our work and unexpectedly sparked a series of events that led to another chapter in the story.

That article was read by a naval officer in Newport, RI, who knew Mike's brother Joe Gershon, CAPT, USN (Ret). I got an email from Joe who was thankful but skeptical about what he had read. After all, it had been 24 years since the accident. I explained to him how I had gotten involved in the project, and that I had contacted the Blue Angels about dedicating the plane at the upcoming air show where the Blues were to perform. As the weeks went by, Joe and I kept in touch by email. Every weekend I would bring him up to speed on what I had done and sometimes sent pictures for his input. As the date of the ceremony got closer,



The first paint goes on.

Joe knew I was on track to finish #6 on time. Joe then made the decision to fly in from Nebraska to attend the dedication. This was a very stressful time for us, as I was hoping that I had not promised more than I could deliver. Our plane was to look exactly, in every detail, as #6 looked on that fateful day. I would settle for nothing less.

All of our effort paid off as we finished installing the polished tailpipe, the very last piece, one hour before #6 was towed down to the Air Force hanger. Plenty of time!

continued...



CAPT Joe Gershon, brother of LCDR Mike Gershon (Blue Angel 6 who was killed at Quonset Point on July 13, 1985, while piloting A-4F 154992) poses in front of the completed project.



Joe Gershon welcomes CDR Greg McWherter, C.O. of the Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron for the 2009 season, during the dedication of 155027.

RESURRECTING

Continued...

Our new Blue Angel 6 was the centerpiece of post show activities. The 2009 Blue Angels team participated in this social event capped by the official aircraft dedication ceremony. It was an honor and touching tribute to have Mike's brother Joe remove the placard that unveiled the bright yellow script: "LCDR Mike Gershon" painted under the canopy rails. It was a very emotional moment for my family because we all knew how much this meant to the Gershon family.

CAPT Gershon commented that the aircraft dedication was the culmination of an unbelievable amount of work, dedication and labor of love. Additionally, the dedication closed the book on an open chapter in Mike's short life, and after twenty-four years there was an enduring tribute which would make the entire Gershon family proud on behalf of Mike.

Joe Gershon is one of the nicest people I've ever met. We stay in contact as I keep him informed on our progress with our display of the plane and personal mementoes he loaned the museum.

The History of A4F, Bureau Number 155027

The birth, life and resurrection of a hardworking *Skyhawk* aircraft that saw plenty of action.

Total airframe hours listed 6713.7

- **2/08/68** - Aircraft 155027 was delivered to the U.S. Navy. First assignment was with VA-153 "Blue Tail Flies," NAS Lemoore CA.
- **6/69-8/69** - aboard the U.S.S. *Oriskany* with VA-153.
- **2/71-6/73** - aboard the U.S.S. *Hancock* at Yankee Station off the coast of North Vietnam as part of VA-164 "Ghostriders".
- **7/73-10/75** - remained with VA-164 "Ghostriders."
- **11/75- 10/79** - alternating between MARTD Alameda, CA. and Pensacola, FL.
- **11/79** - transferred to Marine Squadron HMS-42 det. Alameda, CA. Remained with that unit until 6/89.
- **6/89** - transferred to NFWS-TOPGUN at NAS Miramar.
- **9/92** - transferred to VF-43 "Challengers," NAS Oceana, VA.
- **5/93** - grounded due to wing spar crack.
- **1/94** - aircraft 155027 transferred to Quonset Air Museum for non-flyable display.

The Blue Angels dedication aircraft is just one of the stories associated with the vintage aircraft fleet here in Rhode Island. We have a lot of different planes at our museum and many are still in the process of restoration and maintenance for display. The A-4 *Skyhawk* was always my favorite, and now I will always have a special place in my heart

for this particular A-4, along with the memory of Mike Gershon. To all you drivers who were lucky enough to fly the A-4, I envy you and say, *thank you for your service to our country.*

Rick St Pierre
Stpierre12@cox.net
Quonset Air Museum
www.theqam.org



Nick St. Pierre (L) and dad Rick pose in front of restored A-4F.

SCOOTER SOARS

• Over Middlebury, Vermont •

By Lucy Young. (Photos courtesy of Lucy Young and Carolyn Nixon.)

Never underestimate the power of the little guy to get a seemingly impossible project to come to fruition!

It all started as a discussion about what type of static display could be procured to grace the front of American Legion Post 27. Everywhere, others had tanks and artillery, it seemed. Marine aviator and retired Delta pilot Jim Kater suggested a loan of an aircraft, and the project was born. Jim started the loan application process in 1998, received approval in 1999, was added to the waiting list, and waited, and waited, and waited. At long last, in the fall of 2004, the call he had been waiting for came through. The National Naval Aviation Museum offered the loan of a surplus TA-4J which was located at MCAS Cherry Point, NC. It was formerly a VT-7, TW-1 training command aircraft, side number 740 with the international orange paint scheme.

Jim and his Legion colleagues were able to find an aircraft moving company, Worldwide Aircraft Recovery, Ltd., to truck the aircraft up to Vermont in several pieces. It was delivered in June 2005, to Middlebury Airport, where it

was reassembled by the movers. Michael Vincent, airport manager and mechanic (who spent 5 years in the Marine Corps painting aircraft), went to work on a beautiful restoration job. Jim got paint schemes from VMA-211 in Yuma, and obtained stencils for the markings and code numbers for paint colors.

Side number 27 was affixed in honor of their American Legion Post. Bill Riley, a USAF veteran, climbed up the tailpipe and figured out how to mount the aircraft to the pedestal using brackets and four very large bolts. Jim and his colleagues used a protractor and a model of the aircraft to determine an appropriate angle for the mounting bracket. Legion member and engineer David Gipson designed the pedestal, pylon and mounting hardware. His employer, Carrara Construction of Middlebury, provided crews for manufacture and installation of the cement base, pylon and hardware. Legion member David Wright of Green Mountain Masonry installed Vermont marble facings on the base, mined from the same quarry as that used for headstones in Arlington National Cemetery. After

the paint job was finished, crews towed it on its own gear (with tractor inner tubes!) to the American Legion property, and another crew craned it into position. Jim directed that the landing gear be retracted, and it became a sleek, "clean" *Skyhawk* for display.

The dedication ceremony was held on June 14, 2006, and the VMA-211 *Skyhawk* was unveiled. The ceremony was attended by a broad spectrum of military units and veterans, including the Vermont National Guard, VMA-211 and dignitaries from the American Legion. In late 2006, when Jim and his wife Cheryl were out of town, the Legionnaires voted to place Jim's name on the canopy rail. On June 14, 2007, in conjunction with their annual officer installation ceremony, the Legion members were herded outside, and there for all to see was LT JIM KATER painted on the canopy rail. A fine tribute to a Marine aviator who never lost his fondness for the mighty Scooter and who led this terrific effort!

There are approximately 135 A-4s on static display worldwide, and we can proudly add the Vermont scooter, Buno 158090, to the list. *Bravo Zulu to Jim Kater, and American Legion Post 27!*



(Ed. note: Lucy Young flew A-4s with VC-1 and VT-21, and currently resides in Teaticket, Massachusetts. See <http://www.americanlegionpost27.com/> for a slide show depicting this project.)



TA-4J 158090 arrives--some assembly required.



In the paint shop.

“MCDUGALL” DOUGLAS TA-4J FIRST FLIGHT

by Paul Filmer



10:40 on the 18th of April 2010, marked a major milestone in a small corner of Arizona as TA-4J *Skyhawk* N518TA made its maiden flight after a thorough and lengthy build and restoration.

The work was carried out by Fighting Classics under the watchful eye of Mike “Maj” McDougall with a highly skilled and dedicated crew based in a single hangar at Marana Regional Airport in Arizona.

The aircraft started as an A-4L Bu148602 which was one of a batch of A-4Cs that were converted to A-4L standard and sold to the Malaysian Air Force. This example was one of 36 that were left behind to be used for spare parts and stored at Dross Metals (later called Aircraft Restoration and Marketing) just outside of AMARC. The aircraft were sold as a job lot by the Malaysian Air Force and changed hands a few times before being released to the open market. The project called for an airworthy A-4, and with the work to be undertaken, it seemed sensible to build a 2-seat version to give the most use and appeal from an owner’s point of view.

The front fuselage sections of some TA-4Js were available, albeit completely stripped with no sticks, no actuators, rotted wires and no complete lines--basically, just the shell with no data tags. As no aft fuselages from TA-4s were available, the decision was made to mate the front half of a TA-4J to the rear of an A-4L. The cockpit basically bolts on to the rear fuselage of a standard A-4, and most major sections are interchangeable with the only modifications being different internal housings to accept different engines. The more powerful J52 engine was used on the original TA-4Js, and so the fuselage of this A-4L was modified to accommodate the power plant and the plumbing required.

The basic configuration is as follows: forward fuselage and engine is TA-4J

standard with the aft fuselage, tailplane and wing being A-4L standard. The wings from the *Lima* model differ from the original *Charlie* model with the addition of spoilers, as did the original TA-4s.

The front and rear cockpits are identical, and everything can be performed if needed from the rear seat. The detail of this restoration is incredible. All unnecessary components have been taken out, and everything down to the last nut and bolt has been replaced or serviced.

Maj started his aviation career with Planes of Fame at Chino, CA, in 1980 as a janitor in the afternoons and evenings, and when his work was done he would help in the restoration shop. He later moved into the shop as a painter work-

ing on various aircraft. He was then put in charge of the restoration of an AD-6 *Skyraider*, with other project leads following.

As family became more of a commitment, he went into the film business as an electrician in commercials and also helped with some aircraft as a sideline. He moved back to Arizona in 2004, working with Evergreen on a program to kick-start their museum in McMinnville, OR.

He was recruited as a consultant to buy a couple of A-4s, but the owners also wanted to find a shop. After looking around, they came back and said that they would like Maj to build it if he was interested in starting a new business. This is when the current location was chosen and a hangar was consequently found and rented from Pima Aviation.

So the project started with a single aircraft and a pair of drop-tanks on 13 June 2005, with the original estimate put at three years. The first six months was preparation, planning, tooling, and finding parts before the build started. Maj worked on his own for the first year or



N518TA takes flight at Marana Regional Airport, AZ.



Happy crew! (L-R) pilot Rick Millson, maintenance supervisor Maj McDougall and project manager Don Keating pose with N518TA.



Ground checks are completed prior to flight of 518TA.

so before recruiting his first employee. At any one time in the restoration, there have been a maximum of four people working on the aircraft, including him.

Just under five years later, here we are with a fully functioning, flying aircraft with experienced test pilot Rick Millson ready to fly the aircraft. Rick is an ex-US Navy pilot and Vietnam veteran with 250 combat sorties and 400 carrier landings under his belt in A-4 *Skyhawks*. He also did one tour with the Blue Angels in F-11 *Tigers* and was also a slot pilot using the F-4 *Phantom*.

Rick has spent 30 years as a corporate and test pilot and also worked for Aviation partners when they designed and tested the winglets on Boeing 737s. He has been a designated examiner with the FAA for the last 20 years on almost all the jet warbirds, so the flight would always be in great hands.

The first flight brief was planned to be close to the airport using a SIAI Marchetti SF-260 as a chase plane with Roger Tonry at the controls. The plan was to leave the gear and flaps down, climb to 6500 feet and stay below 200kts. Then move to half-flaps, and raise the gear making sure all looked good in the cockpit, as well as a visual check from the chase plane. The chase would also look out for any smoke from the engine and any obvious fluid leaks. A couple more

cycles of the gear, and then fly back into the pattern with a low pass on the cross runway (the hangar is at the end of this runway) for a touch-and-go to landing. Basically, exercise everything and bring it back for the engineers to have a good look over after landing.

They had ground crew with radio communications positioned at the start for the take-off run and at midfield, and



Boys will be boys--Maj is showered with champagne following the successful first flight. (Photo courtesy of Paul Filmer, with permission.)

all were equipped with extinguishers. Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) at Tucson issued discreet squawk codes even though they would be out of all airspace, and Tucson International would be a diversion field if there were issues with hydraulics or brakes as they would be able to trap the wire there. For this first flight, a pair of drop-tanks were fitted which, as well as being part of the kit, would save the fuselage if a wheels-up landing was required in a worst case scenario.

This first flight was a complete success, with just a couple of adjustments to make with items like the Angle of Attack (AOA) indicator, so the project for the ground crew suddenly moved from a restoration to a maintenance job.

On landing, Maj was showered with bottle of champagne, which we had strategically hidden the day before--and you couldn't have found a happier guy. On the second flight, Maj joined us in the SF-260 chase which was combined with a photo sortie to see his pride and joy close up in the air. This elation became overwhelming when it was decided he should go on one of the later flights in the rear seat.

The subsequent flights were made with the drop-tanks off, and all that was left was to install the oxygen system. Then the aircraft was truly ready to go. *continued...*

RESURRECTING

Continued...

Thoughts from Maj

"First flight. As we approached the weekend that the first flights were to take place (Friday through Monday), I was thinking about the possibility of flying in it, but Friday came and went and we had not flown because everything seems to take way longer than you think it will! I had decided I wanted to focus on meeting our flight objectives, which were to make sure our aircraft was operating as perfectly as possible, and that the back-seater would be the most qualified person available to assist if that was needed during any of the flights. Don Keating has worked with me full time this entire period as project manager (and friend), as well as flying a full time corporate job. He is a highly competent pilot in many types of aircraft, so he was who I wanted in the back seat.

"Rick flew the first flight on Saturday morning, and the second flight the same evening. During lunch on Saturday, I made clear to Don my feelings on that point, and he agreed that we needed to get as much out of the next few days as possible. He flew with Rick on the second flight. I saw it from the air in the SF-260, and it was spectacular! It was amazing to see all those individual pieces I was familiar with, flying as one beautiful machine. So all in all I was elated that our airplane was in the air and performing well. According to Rick it trimmed out perfectly, and he was pleased with how it flew, to say the least.

"Sunday morning started with our normal preparations and inspections prior to the pre-flight briefing. Don called me over and had me stand next to him while he went through frequencies and contingency plans. As we were finishing up, he looked at Rick and sort of rubbed his stomach and said, 'Hey Rick, I'm not really feeling that good. I must have had too much for breakfast. I don't think I will be able to handle flying this morning.' Then he put his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Maj, do you think you would mind taking my place? You would be doing me a big favor.' I wasn't sure what I was hearing, but I didn't have to be asked twice. I was completely taken by surprise.

"I strapped into the back seat and looked around while everyone got ground

equipment started. And it just seemed surrealistic. However, my flight was not to happen until 16:00 that afternoon because before we got moving, we had to change a tire due to tread separation. That took an hour, and we were ready to go again. I did get a take-off, which is indescribable, with the amount of acceleration you feel. We broke ground... gear handle up, and didn't get a nose gear up indication. My heart was in my throat. Rick cycled the gear once, and still did not get the indication, so he put the gear down and we landed. I was still in awe of what it felt like to be in the air in this airplane. It took the next six hours to troubleshoot the forward nose gear door uplock. I just kept telling myself these are nice squawks to have on the first flights of an airplane that wasn't an airplane when we started. We sorted it out and were back in the airplane by around 1600, and this time the gear was up and in the wells! I was elated. It was interesting to me as a pilot that I really didn't want to fly the airplane in this flight because I just wanted to look around at it while we were in the air. I had at least 2000 hours in this cockpit already, but now I was doing 200kts at 3000 feet above the ground. There were no words to describe how amazing it felt.

"Paul took pictures while we flew off of Roger's wing for a while, and after they had gotten their pictures, Rick said, 'See ya later, boys.' We went from 160kts to 250kts in a blink of an eye. We flew around for another 10 or 15 minutes, and I enjoyed every second of it. We did a roll, a low pass and a touch and go. During that whole time, I felt elated for being at this point in our project. I was humbled by the amount of work and help it took to get here, and I was in awe that this wasn't a dream (I was really flying in an A-4). The airplane that I used to watch as a kid land at El Toro and see at airshows was the airplane that I was now flying in. I was taking in a view that I never would have imagined I would ever get to see.

"We flew three times on Monday, and on our last two flights, we had no squawks to work.

"I still don't really have words that describe how I felt through the course of the weekend. We worked our tails off, and we saw the airplane fly multiple times. The whole time we were doing this, I was thinking, 'This is my job. This is what I do. How did I get so lucky? Thank you Lord!'"

The Last Flight on Monday

"After the second flight on Monday, I met Don and Rick at the bottom of the ladder, and they were pleased to report we had no squawks! We were going to do a quick turn and inspect the aircraft for one more flight before Don had to leave for home.

"Rick was elated. It was a beautiful flight, and the airplane felt great. Rick's phone rang, and it was a call from a life-long friend, Frank. I began inspecting the airplane to get it ready for the final flight of the day when I heard that Rick had lost someone near to him. It turned out that his friend who phoned was in the process of dying and was calling to say goodbye. After some time had passed, Don was talking to Rick and said we've accomplished our goals and under the circumstances it would be fine to call it a day. Rick however, mentioned that his friend Frank had encouraged him to 'keep flying as long as he had an airplane to fly.'

"We dedicated the last flight of the day to Rick's buddy, Frank Chesley. Don put his hand on Rick's shoulder and said, 'It's your airplane. You do whatever you want this flight.' It really put some special meaning to our last scheduled flight of the weekend. Rick roared down the runway, picked up the gear and held it at about 25 feet or so. When he reached the end of the runway, he pulled it straight up and climbed out of sight. We were all with Rick right then at that moment. It seemed to make that flight a little more special than all the rest."

Frank Chesley passed away at 05:00 on 21 April, 2010.

Folks who worked on the aircraft:

Greg Klein, Mike Pannell, Roberto Ramos, Jae Williams, Alfred Hudgin, Chris Straughn, Seth Chandler, Stacy Beardsley, Ken De Cook, Larry Gutierrez, Bob Fox, Drabbs, Jeff Nelson, Jamie Sego, Ed Wenner, Ashley Baker, Ed Miller, Chad Nichols, Robert Bingham and Bryan Winters.

As well as all the people mentioned in the article, the author would also like to thank Roger Tonry without whom some of these photos would have been impossible to capture.

(Ed. note: story and photographs by Paul Filmer of Skippyscage Photography. Used with permission. See www.skippyscage.com for more of Paul's work.)

Commentary by Don Keating, Project Manager:

Concerning flight testing of N518TA during the period April 16-19, 2010.

April 16 – We worked very hard getting the airplane ready for flight that afternoon. As the afternoon wore on, it became apparent to me that we were pushing things a little too hard, so I decided we would do a taxi run that evening and fly the next morning (Saturday), since it was the first time Rick Millson had been able to run the airplane.

April 17 – By early morning we had the drop tanks installed, maintenance preflight accomplished and were ready for the first flight. I was in the chase plane, a Marchetti SF-260, as an observer. We had briefed the flight very carefully, which was to be a 15 minute sortie to verify air operation of gear, flaps and slats and airspeed vs. AOA. The Marchetti was good to about 180K which was suitable for our purposes. Post-flight of the airplane showed no significant issues other than AOA adjustments. We flew two sorties on the 17th, second was 0.9 hours. Paul Filmer flew in the chase airplane for the second and subsequent test flights over the next 2 days.

April 18 - I flew in the back seat for most of test flights except for the 3rd and 4th in which Mike McDougall (DOM for the project) occupied the back seat. We had a nose gear door front latch that would not engage on the first flight that day which was adjusted and worked fine after that. We flew two flights on the 18th.

April 19 – We flew two flights, the first reached 16,500ft and 400K. We also expanded the G envelope to +5/-1.

May 7-9 -Further flight testing occurred with seven sorties flown over that weekend. I also received flight training and a Type Rating issued by Rick Millson.

May 14- We departed for KCNO (Chino, CA) at about 1155hrs, arriving there at 1410. I was in the front seat, Mike in the back. We were configured with 680 gallons of internal fuel only. We flew at 12,500 feet since we had not yet com-



Initial flights were remarkably smooth, with few maintenance gripes encountered.

pleted the oxygen system. The 350 NM flight took 1+19 and we burned 385 gallons. Climb to 12,500 feet took 2.5 minutes and we loped along at 1800pph/270K TAS. There wasn't much wind at 12,500, so our ground speed was about the same. The airplane was displayed at the Planes of Fame Airshow over the weekend of 15/16 May. We were due to depart on Monday, 17 May, but the weather was bad in KCNO. I had to return to Seattle for my day job and return to KCNO on 29 May to fly it back to KAVQ (Marana Regional). The flight back was over the same routing I used on the way out. Two photographers met us on landing at KAVQ and took some more shots.

Here is a link to some Youtube videos taken by Mike McDougall: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7N1Am0ouV4>.

We plan to paint the airplane over the summer, and our next visit will be to the Reno Air Races in September. We may do Miramar in October as well.

Don Keating

SCHEDULING STUFF

• Reunions & Requests •



PLAN AHEAD



VA-23 West Coast (All Invited) Reunion, August 13-15, 2010, in McMinnville, OR, at Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum. Contact Jim Cameron (jc3sher@fastmail.fm), 1301 NE Hwy 99W, #185, McMinnville, OR 97128; (503) 780-2191.



JRB Willow Grove, gathering of Willow Grove Marines to commemorate the closing of the Orion Club, August 20-22, 2010. Contact Bob "Beaver" Beavis (bbeavis@optonline.net), (732) 449-9126.



Skyhawk Association 2010 Annual Meeting and Luncheon: September 10, 2010, 11:30 a.m., Tailhook Symposium, Reno, NV.



Marine Corps Aviation Association Symposium, May 18- 21, 2011, Town and Country Hotel, San Diego, CA.



PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul

~ A Night On The Town ~

"Chingum tu serape!" hissed Puresome. The Portales Gonsleenger menaced the Ready Room, hoping the insult would cause some mad fool to try and draw his pistola against the legendary pal of Pancho Villa, harasser of Federales, returner of land to peasants, protector of Santa Tunita, and general bad ass. All that was lacking was a sombrero, bandoleers of fat cartridges across his manly chest, and five-inch, Spanish spurs instead of a crew cut and a guyabera shirt.

"I, Carrasco, could have hondred womens!" he roared.

"You buy me air-conditioned Honda, I love you no shit," was the obligatory reply from Candy Andy, nominal leader of the Last Chance Expedition into Darkest Olongopo.

Since the ship was scheduled to leave scenic Subic Bay early next morning enroute to Yankee Station, festivities seemed in order, and Brown-Bar bachelor Candy Andy, the Prince of "Po," was selected as guide. The entire Reserve Junior Officers Association, except those poor souls having the duty and integrity watches, had signed on. What had Puresome especially excited was that someone had found a "Mexican" restaurant in town, and supper was to be there. The prospect of doing monkey tacos instead of scarfing with the rest of the Air Wing at the Cubi Club was almost too much to bear. Especially since the obligatory incident amongst the golden-braided Black-Shoed Folk of the posh Subic Bay Officers Club, the squadron needed a different place to eat anyway. They had been invited to go far, far away, strong letters to follow. It was not enough that they had eaten all the lobster-tails and drunk all the Champagne, they were everso-much loud, obscene, rude, and aviator-like. Especially almost-Major Spider.

Stingers had been ordered, and Spi-

der had launched into a story at about the same decibel level as the Fox-four in max burner sitting on Number One Catapult, parting the hair and displacing cutlery on the mandatory group of the distinguished-looking, silver-haired gentlemen and their wives two tables away.

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" began Spider, pointedly not checking his six, "I knew this really sensitive F-8 pilot who showed up as an FNG with the Checkertails, who were overjoyed to

have a sensitive FNG among fellow sensitive fighter pilots. Of course, every FNG frabbup made by the sensitive young FNG was tenderly pointed out on every possible occasion with great gusto. Finally, the kid had enjoyed all the tenderness he could stand-- it was damaging his self image, and he was tearing out his already thinning hair in anguish. So he stood and announced at an AOM that he was tired of being known as the FNG.

"All right," the Operations Officer shot back, "From now on, you will be known as 'The Bald-Headed Chicken Frabber!'"

The "Har! Har! Hars!" were still subsiding when Silver Rocket One separated himself from his dinner group, which was quivering in righteous indignation at about forty quivers a second, and walked over to the rowdies. He quickly picked the two senior citizens out of the bunch, identified himself as COMNAVFAC-

FOCFRABBLE there at the Naval Base, whose pleasure it was that they leave, since they were a bottled-in-bond offense to womanhood, especially his wife. This did not rankle too much, because, of course, it was quite true. But more importantly, it meant that they had won the game of "goof the black shoes," widely held to be prissy types only tolerated to drive the Boat around for the pleasure of naval aviators.

So the skipper and XO explained that they were just a nice bunch of boys from VF-41 on convalescent leave whose wounds sometimes made them act like attack pilots. They were doing a pretty good job of disengaging the squadron and bugging out when Spider stopped by the Head Black Shoe's table and whispered something in the wife's ear that possibly involved Mad Monkey Kung Fu. Which was

"Olongopo, on the other hand, was incapable of being grossed out. The town outside the squeaky clean confines of Subic Bay Naval Station and the aviation ghetto of NAS Cubi Point was set up to accommodate sailors driven bat-shit by the 24 hours a day rat race of long line periods at Yankee Station."

shortly followed by a shriek, much screaming for the shore patrol and anti-aviator nastiness by the Senior Boat Driver Present Aboard, and the squadron unloading and leaving the fight at the speed of heat. Doorknobs did not strike their beautocks on the way out. Later, safely back aboard U.S.S. Boat, the Subic Bay Officers Club was marked on everybody's chart as a max threat area to be avoided by a whole bunch of miles.

Olongopo, on the other hand, was incapable of being grossed out. The town outside the squeaky clean confines of Subic Bay Naval Station and the aviation ghetto of NAS Cubi Point was set up to accommodate sailors driven bat-shit by the 24 hours a day rat race of long line periods at Yankee Station. Once across the Sludge River outside the main gate, it was snuffy paradise of nasty girls and endless brown bottles of San Miguel beer. Officers and gentlemen aviators could

break furniture and swill Cubi specials at the Cubi O-Club with some immunity, but PO City was a sailor's damp dream.

But manly men do not live on Cubi specials alone, and chaps like Candy Andy had quickly got the gauge on places like "New Pauline's" and "the Willows" that catered to officer types who didn't object to the occasional barong-challenged lady floor show and bar-girls that might subtly tweek about to offer intent. The whole setup took Puresome nostalgically back to his college days of high-speed car trips to the closest border town for dime high-balls, horse filet-mignons, the floor show at the new Waikiki, and adventures at Irma's. But that was in another country and pre-Tunita. Tonight, Puresome was just happy to get off the boat and do something different the last night ashore. Puresome was so happy he tossed all his change at the kids anchored in the Sludge River, amazed as always that they actually dived into the chunks of stuff after coins.

Candy Andy commandeered a couple of jeepneys and led the way. Cold beers were had at several places, where he personally knew most of the bar girls, which ones were temporarily "Hangar Queens," and that an exotic toot named "Snakey" went for commanders only. Puresome drank San Miguel, defended his Unit, and ad-

were breaking bar glasses on some of the more enthusiastic passages. It was mother's milk to Puresome.

Many more beers were bought. Vast quantities of tacos and enchiladas were scarfed as monkey and iguana went on the endangered species list. Puresome sang the songs of his youth very soulfully at the top of his lungs, and managed a sad tear while describing that great Ciudad Juarez cabaret favorite, "Bride of the Burrito."

"Ay! Yi! Yi!... Yi! Yi!" howled Puresome when it was time to head on back to the ship.

Crowds saluted the poop and saluted the deck, reporting back aboard the

Flinging open the door, the head was.....full of salt water and floating chunks, sloshing with the motion of the ship.

"Yaaaaaaa!" howled Puresome as he turned and started up the ladder to the next deck, manfully pinching his gluteae maximae and moving as fast as this configuration would safely allow.

Needles on pressure gages were definitely in the yellow and creeping toward the red danger zone as Puresome made it to the next deck. "Yess!" he exhaled through clenched teeth and accelerated, doing his best to stay out of burner. But he had forgotten about the knee-knockers...

"Cold beers were had at several places, where he personally knew most of the bar girls, which ones were temporarily 'Hangar Queens,' and that an exotic toot named 'Snakey' went for commanders only."

great, grey, hulking iron boat before liberty expired. Black shoes did their thing, and, at zero dark thirty early, CVA-62 eased away from the pier and thrummed out to sea. Puresome was oblivious to it all, sacked out in his palatial stateroom above the boiler, still in his party clothes.

Stewing gently in his own juices, he awoke to the realization that the

Puresome rounded the corner to the head like a runaway Peterbilt eighteen-wheeler swerving down Peligro Canyon with no brakes. Screaming to a halt in front of the stall, his aviator hands blurred in a tricky, coordinated maneuver involving opening the stall door with one hand and loosening his "I-been-there" belt buckle with the other. But in the pressure of the moment, the left hand bounced the stall door off the stops while the right was tugging at the buckle, and the door whanged back closed. On Puresome's finger. Which broke. Almost exactly simultaneously with a tremendous migratory movement from Puresome's interior. Clearly, it would have been better if his pants had been down.

Which was exactly the point Weed was trying to make back in the palatial stateroom above the boiler right before Puresome smacked him hard with the hand with the unbroken finger.

Come the morning, not one of the Sidewinders cut him any slack. His application for a "Distinguished Dysentery Cross" was denied. And Candy Andy informed him with great finality that neither did it qualify as one of the "Breaks of Naval Air." You just had to expect some losses in an operation like this.

"Vast quantities of tacos and enchiladas were scarfed as monkey and iguana went on the endangered species list. Puresome sang the songs of his youth very soulfully at the top of his lungs, and managed a sad tear while describing that great Ciudad Juarez cabaret favorite, 'Bride of the Burrito.'"

mired the interesting choreography of dances done in white vinyl "Go-Go" boots that exposed the original ethnic and must have been "Art."

Finally, as Worm put it, it was time to "take it in the mouth." A short jeepney ride took Puresome, Weed, Worm, Pee-nut, and Candy Andy to "Papagayos," a genuine, Filipino Mexican restaurant! Inside, a genuine Filipino mariachi band was blasting out revolutionary favorites, and trumpets

thrumming of the ship was matched by the thrumming of his innards. As he lay there, pondering possible reasons for his malaise, the interior thrumming escalated to sharp, interior kicks, as if he had swallowed a live, feisty animal that was looking for a way out. Puresome knew there was a way out, and clamping himself together, rolled off his top rack and started a Charlie Chapman waddle for the closest head. Which was just around the corner.

SKYHAWKS STILL GOING TO SEA

• VF-1 Operations Aboard NAe *Sao Paulo* •

by CDR Fonseca, VF-1



Brazilian Navy VF-1 Squadron Participates in PASSEX with the US Navy

Between March 1st and 3rd, the Brazilian Navy A-4 *Skyhawk* squadron VF-1 took part in the exercise PASSEX with two United States Navy ships, USS *Carl Vinson* (CVN-70) and USS *Bunker Hill* (CG-52) that were cruising from the east to the west coast.

In this mission, the Brazilian AF-1/1A took off from NAS São Pedro da Aldeia to do wave-offs on the US Navy carrier *Carl Vinson* as well as performing a precise attack to the Brazilian Navy ships involved in the operation. In order to accomplish that, the FCLPs (Field Carrier Landing Practice) started on January 26th with more than 60 sorties being flown by the five naval aviators who were assigned for this mission.

The "Falcons" preparation also included a US Navy LSO's visit to VF-1 squadron with the objective of evaluating the pilots' FCLP training. Besides that, VF-1 LSOs and a safety officer embarked on CVN-70 in order to assist in the planning

process of the operation to be conducted, to observe USN aircraft passes and to wave the A-4s.

VF-1 participation in this mission was definitely a valuable opportunity for the pilots to gather experience regarding carrier on-board operation and to update standardized procedures already employed, foreseeing an increase in our operative capabilities with safety of flight always in the first place.

Mission Accomplished and *Scooters Forever*
Fonz



★ From the *Skyhawk* Association Website: ★

NAe *São Paulo* (A12) is a *Clemenceau* class aircraft carrier of the Brazilian Navy, formerly the French *Foch*. It was built in 1957 and was purchased from France in 2000.

With United States cooperation, in 1997 Brazil negotiated a \$70 million contract for purchase of twenty A-4KU and three TA-4KU *Skyhawks* from Kuwait. The Kuwaiti *Skyhawks*, modified A-4Ms and TA-4Js delivered in 1977, were among the last of those models built by Douglas.

The Kuwaiti *Skyhawks* were selected by Brazil because of low flight time, excellent physical condition, and a favorable price tag. Re-designated AF-1 and AF-1A *Falcões* (*Hawks*), the ex-Kuwaiti *Skyhawks* arrived in Brazil in early September 1998 and were placed in overhaul maintenance status for significant upgrading. The upgrading program is continuing and AF-1 and AF-1A *Falcões* are currently operational in Brazil.

Initial training of Brazilian *Skyhawk* pilots was conducted in both Argentina and the United States, the latter by Training Squadron Seven (VT-7) at Naval Air Station Meridian, Mississippi.

On 18 January 2001, an AF-1 trapped aboard the Brazilian aircraft carrier *Minas Gerais* (A-11) and later was successfully catapulted, making Brazil's fixed-wing carrier force operational.

Ed. note: these photos of VF-1 operations aboard Sao Paulo were taken by Dutch photographer Rob Schleiffert [falcons@casema.nl], who graciously granted permission for our use. Eat your hearts out, guys! More of Rob's work can be found at: http://www.airliners.net/search/photo.search?photographersearch=Rob%20Schleiffert&distinct_entry=true.

ATTIC ATTACKS

• Mailbag •

Before they fade and crumple,
share your photos.

email to
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Naval Aircraft Flight Record (The Yellow Sheet) which documented ferry flight of TA-4 154649 into Palm Springs International Airport (PSP) on 3 May, 2003.



VC-8 crews prepare to ferry last two TA-4s from NAVSTA Roosevelt Roads to air museums in CONUS. (L-R): CDR Tom McDonough (CO/VC-8); CAPT Greg Cooper (CO/Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range); CDR John Fristachi (XO/VC-8); and LT Rick Woods (VC-8 pilot) - Guess we know who carried the bags on that hop! TA-4 in background (154649) was piloted by Woods/Cooper on last flight of a U.S. Navy Skyhawk when they delivered the aircraft to the Palm Springs Air Museum on 3 May, 2003. Photo via CAPT Cooper. (Ed. note: see Cooper letter to the editor, Spring 2010, for more details.)



Photos from VA-112
cruises during 1966 to
1968 aboard Kitty Hawk via
John DeBaere.



READ? YOU THINK WE READ?

Aircraft Carriers at War A Personal Retrospective Of Korea, Vietnam, And The Soviet Union

Author: Admiral James L. Holloway, III, USN (Ret)

U.S. Naval Institute Press,
Annapolis, MD

463 pages

Reviewed by Dutch Rauch.

On the face of it, the reader might think such a book would be a yawn – yet another self-dissertation by a very senior retired flag officer. What a mistake that would be! For nothing could be farther from the truth.

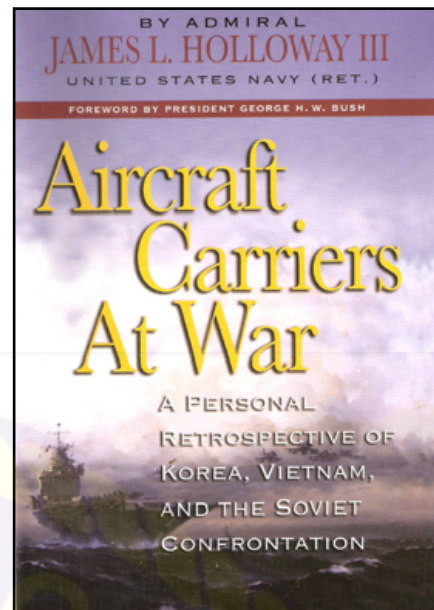
In fact, *Aircraft Carriers* is a fascinating first-hand, contemporary account of the development of Naval aviation during the Cold War by one of its most active participants, one of the key “players” who was a combat carrier pilot in the Korean War; the commanding officer of our first nuclear-power aircraft carrier during its first combat operations in Vietnam; the commander of Seventh Fleet in Vietnam operations, and finally, Chief of Naval Operations. Not satisfied to go to pasture, ADM Holloway continued with a career in public service, mostly as a presidential appointee to several Cold War and anti-terrorism positions.

From a first-hand account of manning a gun director in USS *Bennion* in a 1943 night engagement against Japanese warships in Leyte Gulf, to meetings and conversations with many national leaders as CNO and Presidential advisor, ADM Holloway puts the reader right along side--within earshot of history-forming battles that finished WWII, combat during the Vietnam War and operations during Cold War that shaped our country and the politics of the world as we know it today.

The book cover speaks very well, “... a contemporary perspective of the events, decisions and outcomes in the history of the Cold War – Korea, Vietnam, and the Soviet confrontation – that shaped today’s U.S. Navy and its principal ship-of-the-line, the large-deck, nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. ... [ADM] Holloway was a prominent player...” “...first-person narrative of combat action conveys the tense atmosphere of hostile fire and the urgency of command decisions. His descriptions of conversations with presidents ... and meetings with the Joint Chiefs offer ... telling details that add valuable dimensions to the big picture of the Cold War as a coherent conflict.”

Grab a seat – sit alongside – and listen to the key players, the very participants, as Japanese warships meet their destruction, a *Panther* jet fighter flies combat in Korea, and the commanding officer of VA-83 flies a demanding mission in his early *Skyhawk*

to deliver an exercise nuclear weapon many hundreds of miles from the aircraft carrier. ‘Listen’ to the events that led to the adoption of modern day NATOPS, to the prospective commanding officer of USS *Enterprise* as he was interviewed by VADM Hyman Rickover, head of the Navy’s Naval Reactors Branch of BuSHIPS. Sit with the commanding officer as he takes USS *Enterprise* to Vietnam for her first combat deployment and as COMSEVENTHFLT calls for air support off Haiphong Harbor.



Then close the door and be a part of the many conversations and meetings as Vice CNO, then CNO wrestle with the myriad of problems of top leadership and the events that formed and “fought” the Navy through the final hours of the Cold War, all the while working issues that produced the F/A-18 *Hornet* and continued nuclear-powered aircraft carrier production. Finally, join in as the author takes the reins as Executive Director of the President’s Task Force on Com-

“From a first-hand account of manning a gun director in USS *Bennion* in a 1943 night engagement against Japanese warships in Leyte Gulf, to meetings and conversations with many national leaders as CNO and Presidential advisor, ADM Holloway puts the reader right along side--within earshot...”

bating Terrorism and a whole host of other pursuits that so well served our Navy and our nation.

Aircraft Carriers contains a wealth of information that adds significantly to the understanding of nuclear-powered carriers and the many, many facets of the Cold War. As former Secretary of the Navy John Lehman wrote, “Historians and a new generation of readers now have his reflections and literate commentary on those momentous times. It is an invaluable history and a gripping read.”

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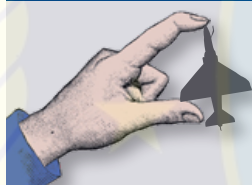
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SIZE DOES MATTER

• Modelers' Corner •

By Joe Turpen

This amazing model is the work of Ricardo Rodriguez Ramos of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Isles, Spain. Beginning with a 1/48 scale Hasegawa kit, he created this incredible reproduction of a VF-126 Bandit TA-4J in preserved status. All photos are the property of Ricardo Rodriguez Ramos and are used with permission.



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



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