



THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

Journal



TA-4K 157914 passes Half Dome
in Yosemite National Park.

THE A-4 EVER

Summer 2011

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 17 • NUMBER 2

Contents:

Operation Riptide • Read?

Build Them Rugged • From the Attic

Letters From Yankee Station • R.G.'s Art

Puresome Unplugged: Reluctant Shellbacks

The Dollarhide Log: Restoration of A-4C 149606



www.a4skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• From the Hun •



By Todd Frommelt

Hey Skyhawkers!

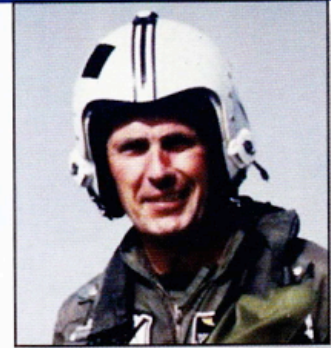
Welcome to the summer edition of the Journal! I know you'll enjoy another one of 'Raven' Hickerson's masterpieces! ...with extra credit to the fine job our new layout and finessing editor Stephanie is doing!

It's been a great few months for your Association, and we're hoping to keep that trend flying, of course. Our Corpus Christi Board meeting and weekend were both constructive and fun—as they should be! We even had several local members out and about participating in our activities. See my summary report in this issue.

Among the major items we covered was the new website progress. We're very pleased with it, and I hope most of you have discovered it already ONLINE. I'm pretty sure you'll be impressed at the new look and feel. All the legacy information is still there, but with an updated look and more efficient and easier to use interface. We all owe our Webmaster Gene Atwell and his team (David, Gabby, and Gary) our sincere and enthusiastic thanks for a tough job being very professionally well done! We plan on continued improvements for some time to come and hope

you'll help us with all your constructive comments. I want to highlight a couple special items. First, everyone with a current email on the roster will be getting an email soon containing your new password for sign-in to access some of the old 'Members Only' info (some is now available on the public side instead). For those without email addresses, we'll get a snail mailing out soon too. Second, the new page banners are all crops of RG Smith art. Thanks again to Shar for letting us use them! If you see any you like, get their full name in our banners listing under the Galleries tab. Third, Gary, Gabby and David have made a Herculean effort to flesh out and consolidate the A-4 loss and casualty lists in the Aviator's tab. Thanks guys. And, last but not least, we know the transition to the new site won't be completely seamless. It will take some time to get you all your new passwords for log in, but much of the site is available until then. Take a look at a good transition FAQ page at: <http://a4skyhawk.org/content/association-web-site-faq>. One other note, the site address is a4skyhawk.org and leaving off the a4 (by using an old link) can give you some trouble. And be patient with us while we work out any unforeseen glitches!

Seems like a flurry of research work requests for more info on the A-4 and its flyers, and queries on old operational issues, these past few months. That can be a bit of an email jungle sometimes, but it's also a great sign that folks are using us as we're designed...and that's a major good thing for the community, no? Some of the topics of the last few months....the Marine OA-4M, shipping a Pave Knife, finding lost pilot buddies, finding information to personalize (sadly) an A-4 pilot obit, and even one for a Cubi Point spaghetti recipe. Lord only knows where we sent that lady!



Todd "The Hun" Frommelt

While we take pride in being a 'go to' source for the Skyhawk community, we are primarily a "Social" organization. How's that saying go? "Our members are our most important asset." And we've done a lot there too. There was a good response to our snail mail to non-email address members urging them to get connected so we can communicate more easily. We're up to 888 members now and only 196 of them are still CASMAN's. (That's Cyber Apathetic Snail Mail Advocating Neanderthals—and we can thank member 'Hormone' Morgan for that beauty). That will help immeasurably in getting the word out about all kinds of stuff. Our 'Milk the Mail' efforts have also had some success. Please keep that in mind when you get a juicy email with lots of addresses showing—use them to nudge old A-4 acquaintances to membership. And don't forget reviews of cruise books for names from the past. They're great memory joggers.

Again, with this and next year's 100th Anniversaries of Naval and Marine Aviation, it's a great time to 'shoot for the moon' for membership. I'm saying that with your enthusiastic help, **we CAN hit the 1000 member mark before these centennials are over.** That's some 13% over current member levels, so let's just do it! As I've said before, we're not getting any younger here, and we're probably within a decade of the inevitable decline in Scooter driver availability. Make a list and try digging these old brothers (and sisters) out of their holes. And let us know what and how you're doing! Take pictures of any get-togethers you attend (see the February SoCal Marine A4 brunch pic enclosed), and we'll get them in the Journal. It's just a plain good time when you get together with your old Scooter friends. *continued bottom page 4...*



The "in" place to be – February SoCal Skyhawkers for brunch bunch. (Photo via the Hun)



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

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Summer 2011 •



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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.

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Cover: TA-4K 157914 passes Half Dome in Yosemite National Park. 157914 was the first of four built for New Zealand. (Photo courtesy family of J.J. Stedman, Douglas Production Test Pilot)

BOARD MEETING • CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS

• Semi-Annual Skyhawk Association Board Meeting – April 9, 2011, Corpus Christi, TX •

The Skyhawk Association Board of Directors met onboard the USS Lexington at 9 am Saturday the 9th of April. Being back on board the Lex sure brought back some memories! All Board members were in attendance, excepting Buick, Gabby and Joe Turpin. In addition, Journal Editor Raven and members Woodul, Crouch, Long, Wimberly, Reed and Horne were in attendance. (I know you're not going to believe this, but YP acted the perfect officer and gentleman the entire weekend!) After the usual great reporting by the Treasurer and Secretary, we had the basics down pat....we were still solvent and Senator convinced us that we no longer needed one of our many reports; and we were holding steady in membership at around 880 Skyhawkers. Our recent snail mail and Newsletter push for emails chopped our snail mail only

members by about 1/3... leaving us with still close to 200 members electronically challenged.

Probably the most exciting part of the meeting was the Webmaster's declaration that the new website was ready for take-over of the Association's internet presence. Several issues remained, but the Board felt confident that Blade and his team had the new site ready for business and authorized the transition. This is a truly remarkable effort by these volunteers, and the entire Association needs to gratefully acknowledge their tireless efforts. Our sincere thanks to Gene, David, Gabby, Gary and the host of other contributors to this effort.



The Board in session in the Lex wardroom.

Please check my notes on the subject in the Prez Sez section of this issue and get into the site at A4Skyhawk.org!

Additional items covered that may interest the general membership and our readers: Raven is investigating the

THE PREZ SEZ MORE...

Trust me on that! You KNOW they'll thank you for the effort.

Okay, Raven's editor grimace is starting to show so I'll wind this up with just a couple of quickies. First, Dutch (Rauch) reports a successful completion of the Academy's A-4 Monument restoration. He didn't get all the repairs done he had hoped for, but

with a super rework crew from VFA-83 (Oceana), the A-4A, 139968, is looking great. Thanks guys and gals! Be sure to check it out next time you're in Annapolis. I'm hoping we'll have room for before and after pics in the next Journal. Second, I have my pen in hand ready to up our A-4's Still Flying numbers to 98 1/2! That's right, we gained a half

since the last Journal. By the time you read this, the Skyhawk Ventures team should have already had A-4C, N2262Z airborne. We were giving them half credit last quarter, but with high speed taxi checks complete in May, first flight is probably about to take place as I write this article. Congrats to Porter and Dan! The other half aircraft



The Hun works the A-4 static display on USS Midway Memorial Day 2011. (Photo via author)

A-4's Still Flying!

as of June 2011

79 Military

15 1/2 Contract

4 Private

Total: 98 1/2



on our list is very close. Rich Sugden is waiting on some nose gear parts and seat pyros for his TA-4.

Finally, spent a gorgeous San Diego Memorial Day on the USS Midway flight deck, manning a platform next to A-4F, 154977, talking to an endless line of fascinated and curious kids, parents and grandparents about our Skyhawk and its proud and distinguished legacy. Not a bad way to spend Memorial Day! Thanks for your service, guys and gals. It was an honor to serve in our A-4 community with you all.

Always check six...and be careful out there.

Hun sends

possibility of getting a 4th issue of the Journal back in our operation...this extra one, if it happens, will be strictly an electronic/web version. We'll keep you posted on that research. We received mostly highly favorable feedback on the President's 'between the Journals' newsletter...so we'll try to keep that idea on the front burner. We also intend to push for more international participation in the Association, and you'll see the results of that in future Journal issues and Newsletters. Ms

Stephanie Davis has taken over for Margaret 'Bone' Hamer and is turning out quality work on Raven's Journal staff. Thanks Steph for jumping right in. For insurance purposes, the Board considered the recommendations of its insurance reps and now has Cardinal working on Bylaws adjustments to allow us to designate support staff as 'officers' of the Association to ensure their coverage while doing Association work. Look for the verbiage to come out before the Annual Meeting for Membership approval. We prioritized a short list of great potential guest speakers for the Annual Meeting luncheon (and have since confirmed the Association POW Coordinator, Paul Galanti). Finally, we presented (via Marine VP Egen) Margaret Hamer a token of our appreciation for all her Journal work on our behalf, and ditto for Raven, several tokens of our sin-

cere appreciation for all he's done, and continues to do, for the Association...as a Director, as a LONG-term President, and as a (4) ever Journal Editor. Thanks Margaret...and thanks much Raven!

And then there was the rest of the weekend! Friday had most of the Board down to Kingsville for both lunch (El Dorado Mexican) and dinner (Kings Inn for gulf fish) and managed to squeeze in a 4 hour tour of NAS Kingsville to boot! The tour was great, organized by their PAO Jon Gagne, kicked off by the Station Commander, Capt. Mark McLaughlin, and closed with our attendance at a very impressive "Winging Ceremony" for a large class of some 24 new Naval Aviators. They did a class act, and we were all quite impressed. If you're like most of us, we may have had our wives come into the Skipper's office and slam/bam we were one of

them. Things change I guess! For the better in this case! Saturday afternoon had us attempt to watch the Blues show (this WAS a Tier One Centennial event, you know), but, alas, the winds were whipping over the Gulf. They launched a solo to weather recce, and the show was cancelled. A tough year it's turning out to be for the team... So, we headed off to member Harv Crouch's where he hosted us all to a great Happy Hour at his waterfront home! Life is Good on the Gulf Coast and Padre Island! We finished up with dinner on the river at "Docs" place and closed the show down Sunday morning. All in all, a great AND productive weekend. Come join us next time! Don't plan on losing weight if you come....

Respectfully submitted,
Hun

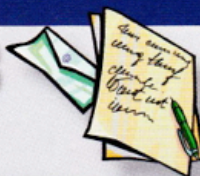


Dinner at Doc's on Padre Island: Just about all of us!

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:

(Ed. Note: while not strictly a letter to the editor, this email forwarded by Bear Langworthy seemed appropriate as I worked on this issue over Memorial Day weekend.)

Do One More Roll For Me

Capt Jerry Coffee, USN (Ret) [a Vietnam POW] wrote:

One night during a bombing raid on Hanoi, I peeked out of my cell and watched a flight of four F-105s during their bombing run. As they pulled up, it was obvious that lead was badly hit. Trailing smoke, he broke from the formation, and I watched the damaged bird until it disappeared from sight. I presumed the worst. As I lay there in my cell reflecting on the image, I composed a toast to the unfortunate pilot and all the others who had gone before him.

On New Year's Eve 1968, Captain Tom Storey and I were in the Stardust section of Hoa Lo (wa-low) Prison. I whispered the toast under the door to Tom. Tom was enthralled, and despite the risk of terrible punishment, insisted that I repeat it several more times until he had it committed to memory. He then promised me that when the time came, and they were again free men, he would give the toast at the first Dining-In he attended. For you civilians, a Dining-In is a dreary formal affair with drinks, dinner, and forced joviality and comradeship where officers get to dress up like the head waiters in "The Merry Widow" -- that's the American version; I've heard that the Brits, who created the damn things, have a rollicking good time. Tom's first assignment following release in 1973 was to the U.S. Air Force Academy. During that same year the Academy hosted the Annual Conference for General Officers and Those Associated Dining-In. The jovial clinking of glasses accompanied all the traditional speeches and toasts. Then it was Tom's turn. Remember-

ing his promise so many years earlier, he proposed Jerry's "One More Roll." When he was finished there was total silence.

We toast our hearty comrades who have fallen from the sky, and were gently caught by God's own hands to be with him on high. To dwell among the soaring clouds they have known so well before, from victory roll to tail chase at heavens very door.

And as we fly among them there, we're sure to hear their plea: Take care, my friend, watch your six, and do one more roll for me.

A toast to all our comrades -- POWs, missing in action, living or dead, whatever their duty, whatever their war, whatever their uniform. Bless them all.

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

My father was CO of VA-76 in 1958, and I was trying to determine the significance of the "E 'subscript' B" designation on BuNo 144348 that was assigned to him during his command, which I believe would be an F9F-8 Cougar that he flew prior to receiving Skyhawk BuNo 145000.

In my search, I ran across your VA-76 Spirits web page at <http://a4skyhawk.org/3e/va76/va76.htm> and saw the request for Skyhawk photos and information.

Having just finished scanning some of my father's slides, I thought you might be interested in his photo of BuNo 145000 taken during his command. I enjoyed seeing the photo of 145000 <<http://a4skyhawk.org/5e/g144868/html/145000.htm>> from 1968 and thought the earlier photo would be a nice addition to your collection.

Of course, any info on the E-B designation would be much appreciated. I noticed similar markings

(I believe an E-G) on some of his older Corsair photos. Unfortunately, he passed away in 2006, so is no longer with us to explain.

Also, I do not know who else is in the group photo [see image], so if you can identify anyone, I would like to make that photo available to the families. I'm not sure, but that photo may have been from when he was in VA-106 (XO, I believe). I also have a few VBF-4 photos from 1946, but they are a bit rough.

Thanks for making the Skyhawk and squadron history available! If you do use any of these photos, please credit Capt. Harlan R. Cheuvront, as these are from his personal collection, not official Navy photos.

Best Regards,
David L. Cheuvront
[david.cheuvront@comcast.net]



♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

The report on surviving flyable A4s fascinated me (*Skyhawks Still Slipping the Surly Bonds – Spring 2011*). I got very interested in the 1/2 shown at Teton Aviation Services, Driggs, ID. <http://www.tetona-aviationsupportservices.com/downloads/TASS1.doc.pdf>

Looking it up on the Internet, I discovered the fine pictures and specs attached. I guess it needs a full Estimate: 1. They say it is flying and available by contract. I hope we can get them to bring it to Reno in September. Maybe we could auction off a ride?

That Scooter 154306, is shown in

Navy Training Command Red/White as a TA-4J. I was there when it was flown back from Palmdale, to VMT-103 at MCAS Yuma, Az. It was a TA-4F, in Marine Grey. It was about the 8th new TA-4F, and arrived in October 1967. I got my first hour in it on November 15th. There it was used in A4 transitions until January.

In January, we TransPac'ed 6 TA-4Fs to Danang, via El Toro, Hawaii, Wake, Guam, CubiPt, Danang. That took as many C130s as TA-4Fs, with refueling and sometimes hanging around the hose part of the way. There were two 6.5 hour legs. I flew it's older brother, 154304 on that character building delivery. 154304 came up a bit short. Loss of a seal and oil pressure about 200 miles short of the Philippines at 34,000 feet, invited a very long fixed power cruise decent, and allowed me to perform one of my (3) dead stick landings, reopening Sangley Pt. to Skyhawk traffic for a few days. I was trained in the proper wire/twist technique by the plane captain and PW rep, as we changed engines.

Bruce Corbett
[TA4F@comcast.net]



◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

(Ed. Note: while on a trip to the D.C. area, Skyhawk Association Director Bear Langworthy stopped to see how the restoration of the A-4 at the north gate of the Naval Academy was coming along. He filed this report with two photos.)

What a surprise! When I got to the bird Friday, April 29th, they were working on it. The guy in civies is a chief from Pax River. The body/painters are from Adm. Holloway's squadron, VA-83 at Oceana, so they are taking pride in doing a great job.

The chief described one of the crew as "the best painter in the Navy." Had a long talk with friend and classmate, Bob Hoffer, and he assured me it will be done right!

As the pix show, it's in bad shape suffering from years of neglect. Hopefully, Adm. Holloway will be proud of it when finished.

"Bear"



◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

It's great that you bomber pilots are keeping the flame burning! Some of my best friends were attack pilots

... On a serious note, George Shattuck mentioned my new book on p. 8 of the Fall issue of your journal. Some of your readers might enjoy it, as it details many incidents in the 1966-68 time frame involving A-4 stuff. It's available on amazon.com, barnesandnoble.com, and other booksellers. All author profits go to a top-rated military charity, the Special Operations Warrior Foundation (www.specialops.org), which funds education for the children of fallen special ops personnel, plus treatment for those who were badly wounded.

I recommend that you check it out at the following link on Amazon, and read the various reviews. You guys will probably recognize the names of a few of the reviewers: http://www.amazon.com/Contrail-Chronicles-American-Familys-Journey/dp/1432755048/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1295013517&sr=1-1

www.amazon.com/Contrail-Chronicles-American-Familys-Journey/dp/1432755048/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1295013517&sr=1-1

The Contrail Chronicles---An American Family's Journey Through War And Peace, Outskirts Press, 2010, 308 pp., paperback (7x10), Kindle, and E-book versions.

Best regards and check six,
Dick "Hot Dog" Nelson
VF-194

[RJLN@aol.com]

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To the Editor:

I am hoping that one of our members might have the answer to this question:

What does it mean when there is a "G" after the bureau number?

This question came to me from a former Whale pilot, and I had no idea...

Thanks,
Dave "Mad Dog" Reed
[w5sv.dave@gmail.com]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Raven-

Thoroughly enjoyed the Skyhawk luncheon this Sep at Tail Hook. Great seeing and meeting the SkyHawkers again, especially the Hun (boy has he gotten old). I write in response to several of the Pervert's (never a more appropriate call sign) epistles as regards the grand Brazilian Adventure of the Millennium.

The adventure began in the fall of 1999 with about 10 guys arriving in Rio de Janeiro, all employees of Kay and Associates of Ill. 9 technicians/maintenance instructors and 1 pilot, me. This brought our group to a total of about 20 individuals with a variety of skills. About half the group had worked on these a/c, on a previous contract, during and/or after Gulf War I. The Kuwaiti's had managed to get most of the a/c down to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia during the invasion but almost none of the maintenance folks made it out. Kay had acquired a support contract for during the war and after the war continued to maintain them until the KAF

continued...

LETTERS

Continued...

decided to sell them and acquire F/A-18's. McD made the deal with the Marinha Do Brasil for the a/c, and they were disassembled (more about this later) and sent by ship to Brasil. All spare engines, parts, benches, etc. were included in the deal. However, the spares arrived with no inventory nor semblance of order. Additionally, the Iraqis, in all their brilliance, had randomly shot up some of the engines in their cans. The parts inventory required 3 guys working almost 3 months to accomplish.

The Marinha Do Brasil had been restricted from flying fixed-wing aircraft since 1965. Interservice rivalry takes on whole new dimensions in Brasil. The Air Force owns all the airspace and gets a cut on all operations. The Air Force had operated some S-2's off of the Minas Gerais into the 1980's, perhaps 90's. The Minas Gerais had started life as a Royal Navy light carrier in 1944, was utilized by the Dutch as the Karel-Doormann and eventually ended up in Brasil as the Minas Gerais. The ship design is what determined the type of aircraft obtained by the Marinha do Brasil. The Minas Gerais has 2 centerline elevators and is too small to take deck edge elevators. At 695 feet in length, the ship is really small for modern jet aircraft. The Skyhawk, however, fits nicely on both elevators. The Royal Canadian Navy had operated A-4 (A's or B's) in a test program on their light carrier in the 60's. The Australians had very successfully operated A-4G's off of the HMAS Melbourne, a ship of the same class as the Minas Gerais. Anyway, the mission was to train the pilots, maintainers and ship's company to operate the Skyhawk on the Minas Gerais.

After checking into our pousada (Brazilian b&b), our merry band of Skyhawkers went to survey the aircraft and maintenance spaces. The new A-4 squadron, VF-1, hangar was still under construction. This was not too bad as we shared adequate space with one of the helo squadrons. The

big gotcha was the runway was not going to be finished for 5-6 months. Not a morale builder for anyone, but especially the pilot, me!

The maintainers and maintenance instructors got down to it. Classroom followed by a lot of OJT putting the aircraft back together. The aircraft had been disassembled by McD in Kuwait and were put back together in Brasil after offload from the ship. Unfortunately, the slats had been removed from the aircraft and not identified to match a specific airframe upon reassembly. As all Skyhawkers know, no two slats are ever alike once they have been on an aircraft. Two Navair reps, Randy Owens and John Chastain, were invaluable in helping work this problem. I flew all the initial test hops on the re-assembled Skyhawks and all of them required slat adjustments prior to general use. By now I'm sure all the slats have been re-bent to match their wings.

I have chosen to stop here for now. If these reminiscences are worthy of publication great, I have a lot more to say. If not, no problem. Please let me know if you want me to continue. Cheers,
"Ugly" Rogers
[blabs2@msn.com]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Good news - my contact in the Belgian Mirage Pilot association found in BAF archives the report made by major P.Declercq after the visit in USA. The Yuma plane is definitively identified as being (A-4E) Bu. No. 152080.

I will adapt the article for your site ASAP.

Have a nice day.

Bob Verhegghen

Glidingbob <fa062130@skynet.be>

(Ed. Note: 152080 is the 'missing' Skyhawk that Bob referred to in his article *A Skyhawk for Belgium*, The A-4Ever, Spring 2011).

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

(Ed. Note: I intercepted this email from Gary Verver to the squadron SDOs. As you can see, he is asking for everyone's help in correcting er-



rors in the loss database. If you can supply missing data or spot an error in the data, please contact Gary at the address below.)

The spreadsheet of Skyhawk operational losses has been uploaded to <http://www.sashare.a4skyhawk.org/lossdata/loss-spreadsheet.html> and is in order by custodian and date order within custodian. It may take some time to download depending on your internet connection as it's about 10x the size of the Excel spreadsheet it was generated from.

Again, your help related to losses from units you're the SDO for, or were associated with, is requested. In particular:

- Corrections for any errors that have crept in.
- Missing information related to each loss ... the who, when, where, what.
- Losses that aren't listed... many of the history cards are dead ends... the record just ends without any info about the SOC date, location, reason or disposition.
- There also are a number of losses (BuNo unknown) that I can't match to a known Skyhawk loss and any help with those would be appreciated.

If you need to enlarge the type size Internet Explorer (version dependent) has a ZOOM function in the VIEW dropdown menu... thanks Gabby.

Gary Verver

[gverver@earthlink.net]

◆ ◆ ◆



BUILD THEM RUGGED

• Ed Heinemann's Vision •

By Tim Sele, printed with permission.

He was a self-taught engineer who joined Douglas Aircraft in 1926 as a draftsman. But Ed Heinemann developed into one of the world's best known and most respected combat aircraft designers.

"Be practical," he would say. "Build them rugged. Keep things simple."

Heinemann's commitment to that vision left Boeing and its heritage companies a lasting legacy of accomplishments—and groundbreaking airplanes such as the SDB Dauntless, backbone of the U.S. World War II carrier-based bombing fleet; the D-558-2 Skyrocket, the first airplane to reach Mach 2; and the F4D *Skyray*—an achievement that earned him the 1953 Collier Trophy.

During his early career at Douglas, Heinemann developed mentor-type relations with Donald Douglas, James "Dutch" Kindelberger, Jack Northrop and others that lasted many years and helped shape Heinemann's vision.

The development of two airplanes in particular, the A-3D Sky Warrior and the A-4D *Skyhawk*, reflect Heinemann's commitment to simplicity, ruggedness and practicality.

In 1947, the U.S. Navy issued a re-

quest for a carrier-based attack bomber with a gross weight not to exceed 100,000 pounds (45,360 kilograms). Curtiss proposed an airplane close to 100,000 pounds while North American dropped out, believing the requirements could not be met at the requested weight. Heinemann and his Douglas team proposed an airplane at 68,000 pounds (30,840 kilograms), just light enough to operate on the Midway-class carriers of the day.

After studying the A-3D drawings, the Navy reset the requirements. Douglas won the contract.

By the early 1950s, Heinemann had become concerned about the growth in size, weight and cost of contemporary combat airplanes. On his initiative, Douglas funded a study for a light combat airplane. The Navy was interested, but it already was committed to a fighter and asked him to adapt the design to a carrier attack aircraft. Heinemann was back in front of the Navy within two weeks with a preliminary design for a plane weighing 14,600 pounds (6,620 kilograms), less than half the weight requirement initially set by the Navy.

The proposed Douglas design would allow for a fighter 20 percent faster with 30 percent more range than the requirements.

Intrigued but skeptical, the Navy contracted for only two prototypes. The result was production of more than 2,900 A-4D *Skyhawks* from 1954 through 1979.

In 1978, Heinemann was awarded the Guggenheim Medal—established in 1929 to honor notable achievements in aeronautics. The citation issued with Heinemann's Guggenheim Award was for "outstanding achievement in the innovative design of military airplanes which are noted for longevity of service, versatility of tasks, simplicity of design, high performance and elegance of line."



The A-4 Skyhawk provided the U.S. Navy and Marines, as well as a number of allied nations, with a highly maneuverable and powerful attack bomber. Between 1974 and 1986, the Skyhawk also was flown by the U.S. Navy Blue Angels flight demonstration team. It was replaced with Boeing's F/A-18 Hornet. (BOEING ARCHIVES)



Ed Heinemann on the Douglas flight line with his A-4D/A-4 Skyhawk. The attack jet was often referred to as "Heinemann's Hot Rod." (BOEING ARCHIVES)

Others from Boeing and its heritage companies who have won the Guggenheim Award include Bill Boeing, Donald Douglas, James Kindelberger and Joe Sutter. In 2010, it was Bob Liebeck, a Senior Technical Fellow and program manager with Boeing Research & Technology, who was cited for his work on the company's Blended Wing Body aircraft concept.

Ed Heinemann was inducted into the Aviation Hall of Fame in 1981, and in 1983 he received the National Medal of Science from President Ronald Reagan. tim.sele@boeing.com

LETTERS FROM YANKEE STATION

• Summer 1966 •

By Pete Munro



Hit During Egress

USS Oriskany, VA-163

Gulf of Tonkin, July 23, 1966

Letter home, July 23rd

What a day today was! But not too good for the "Saints." Skipper Foster (our Commanding Officer) got hit – it went thru his arm and across his chest. He ejected over a destroyer and was picked up quickly – but they had to amputate his arm four inches below the shoulder. The war's over for him, he'll be leaving in a few days for home and a medical discharge.

(Ed. Note: Captain Wynn 'Capt. Hook' Foster was a founding member and officer of Skyhawk Association)

Then I flew on a big re-strike to the Dong Nhom POL that you've been reading about. This time we finished the job. Bill and I were flak suppressors to hit anything firing at the strike group.

Well, nothing opened up so we dropped our bombs on the target. A tremendous secondary explosion was seen with both Bill's and my bombs right on target. The main group had already left. We flew out low level in the hilly back country. As Bill and I started to climb crossing the coast, I took a hit right in the nose gear under my seat. It was a loud "thunk," and no disputing what it was. I lost most of my electrical gear except for my radio (thank goodness). It tore into the hydraulic actuating cylinder and started a fire – the fire was short-lived as I lost all the hydraulic fluid. It felt like the plane was coming apart but that sweet engine kept running. I finally cleared all the numerous unfriendly islands just off the coast and breathed easier.

I took some much needed fuel from the tanker – lowered my gear by the emergency means and made a no-flap approach to the ship. Everybody thought the nose gear would collapse on landing, as we didn't know for sure if it

was locked, and the chances were that it wasn't. But it held up, and I made a beautiful landing if I do say so myself. The Captain of the ship also said so to me later.

Wet-Wing Tanking Recovery

USS Oriskany, VA-163

Gulf of Tonkin, August 8, 1966

A-4E 151086

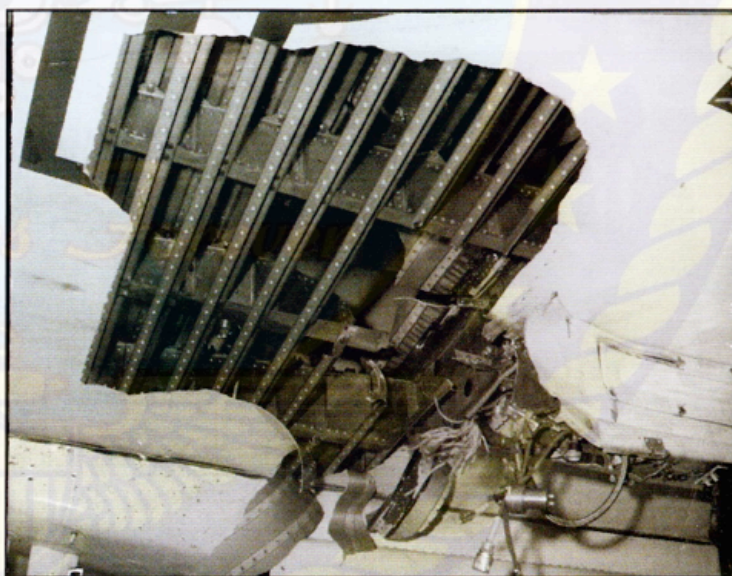
Taken from a letter home, August 10

Returned to the line after a buying spree and some relaxation at Cubi Point. There've been some action-filled flights for me lately. The day before yesterday, on our wedding anniversary, Bill and I were looking the coast over for some good targets. We found a couple of big barges and dropped a couple of bombs on them, damaging them both. We moved on down the coast and found a bunch more (at least 50). Bill sunk two and I sunk one with 1000# bombs. Then we found some trucks hidden along side of a road and we think we damaged, if not destroyed, a few of them.

I had one bomb left then and Bill had none. We found "our" train in the Qui Vinh rail yard. We've bombed this train before in different locations as it's slowly worked its way down south. I rolled in and pickled my last bomb as Bill flew cover above me – just a



Wing damage from the top of the wing. (Photo via author)



Wing damage to Pete Munro's A-4E 151086, underside. (Photo via author)

second or two after it released, a 37MM shell exploded just below my right wing. It tore a hole in the wing as big as a garbage can 3 ½' by 2 ½' and flipped the aircraft upside down! That's the fuel cell and the explosion was immediately followed by a large flash fire – but it went out!! That's the second time the fire went out – The Good Lord is my Fire Extinguisher. I lost all my wing fuel, of course, and experienced some control problems – but they were minor and everything held together. Bill, having seen the hit, didn't think I would be able to keep it flying so – he broadcast

“Mayday” several times. We got over that BEAUTIFUL water, so I breathed easier knowing that if I had to get out I'd be picked up soon after.

(This paragraph was added later)

After we were ‘feet wet’, the reality of how little fuel I had left set in. I relayed to Fish 1 that it looked like only about 10 minutes left, and he called for any tanker on station. There was an immediate response from an A-3 circling near the ship, and we set up an intercept via TACAN radials. The sight of that A-3 with his drogue extended was like seeing an angel of God. After executing

one of the quickest plug-ins, our tanker brought me back to the ship and started the straight-in landing profile. After we ‘dirtied up’ together, he broke to the right leaving me on a perfect final approach, and setting up in case I missed and needed him again.

...As I had lowered my gear, the utility hydraulic system was lost as a bunch of landing gear lines were severed in the explosion. So it was another no-flap landing like before – just a little control problem when slow – but I made an “OK” three-wire pass (perfect landing). Happy Anniversary!



British artist David Bright captured Pete Munro's A-3 tanker-aided, wet-wing recovery aboard Oriskany on August 10, 1966.

Used with permission of the author.

OPERATION RIPTIDE

• 1963 •

By R.G. "Leaky" Hoch



Here is my recollection of what took place on the afternoon of August 19, 1963.

Independence (CVA-62) was operating in the Bay of Biscay, and VA-72 and VA-86 were flying long-range high/low strikes into Belgium as part of Operation Riptide. The flights were scheduled as double cycles with inflight refueling about 30 minutes after takeoff. I had made the pre-dawn launch and completed a 3.4 hour flight in A-4C148579. Then, as LTJG's were prone to do during exercises, I went back to bed. My aircraft was "up" when I landed and Herb Recktenwald was assigned the aircraft on the next launch. His mission, and that of Duane Tuttle, his wingman, was essentially the same, with refueling after airborne and recovery a little over three hours later.

While I slept, the ship steamed into a fog bank that reduced visibility to nearly zero. After a couple of hours sleep, I got up and wandered down to the ready room where I watched on the PLAT the recovery prior to the one scheduled for those on the double cycle. The LSO's talked the pilots down the glideslope using the sound of their engines and their landing lights. An RF-8 (I believe it was flown by John DeChant) from VFP-62 simply appeared at the ramp and was into a wire. He said he had let down until he could see the wake and used it for lineup.

The next launch was canceled and the ship steamed around looking for better weather for the next recovery, that of the 4 A-4's.

In those days, divert fields were picked without any liaison between the ship and the field - someone just looked at a chart and selected a

runway that looked as if it were long enough to accommodate the aircraft. We seldom spent any time studying the IFR approach to those fields - mostly we carried sectional charts and the European IFR Supplement and approach plates. We had created a kneeboard card with some codes that were allegedly all one needed to obtain altimeter settings and clearance to land in any country.

This day the divert field was Lann-Bihoué at Lorient, on the south coast

"The ship allowed the four A-4s to get nearly overhead before they were instructed to divert because the weather was WOXOF."

of France. The airport is a couple of miles inland with an east-west runway. The Germans had built the field to be hard to see, so the tower was not located by the runway, and the runway itself, when wet, looked like a canal. There was a TACAN, but it was not located at the field, and the approach was non-precision with relatively high minimums. As I recall, there was no English-speaking tower operator or approach controller on duty that day.

The ship allowed the four A-4's to get nearly overhead before they were instructed to divert because the weather was WOXOF. At this point, the divert field was not too far away, probably less than 100 miles, so they had a good TACAN signal and the ship gave them the weather as 2 miles visibility with about a 1000 foot overcast. Fuel was adequate for the divert, but not much more than that.

Bill Sallada and Bill Hall, as I recall, made a section TACAN approach and were unable to find the field. They were still in the clouds at minimums, and Hall told me that he

was flying a tight wing when he saw a church steeple go by. Anyway, they separated, and Sallada eventually found the field. However, Hall wound up ejecting over the water. He spent the night in the water (in and out of his raft because of the waves) and was spotted the next day by the crew of a Willie Fudd during the search for him. He was very lucky because the weather was still low clouds and the search was very near to being called off.

Recktenwald and Tuttle separated for the approach and neither was able to locate the field. Low on fuel, Tuttle turned the aircraft toward the sea, climbed until the engine flamed out, then ejected. Tuttle had just bought a brand new 35mm camera which he had taken on the flight to snap some photos during the low level over Belgium. As he floated toward the sea, he deployed his raft with the intention of trying to land in it and keep his camera dry. With the raft hanging below on its strap, he experienced some pretty large swings, and he wasn't even close to the raft when he hit the water. He splashed down in the vicinity of a group of fishing boats one of which dragged him aboard, dried him off and began pouring red wine into him. By the time he got to the Lorient police station, he was pretty well sloshed. The camera, of course, was a goner.

As Herb Recktenwald's roommate, I got to hear every detail of his adventure a number of times.

He made the TACAN approach, did not break out, but had enough

fuel to try it again. After the second approach with no better results, he climbed back above the undercast and flew back to the TACAN with the aircraft heading out to sea. He engaged the autopilot and ejected at station passage, figuring that he would come

police drove him to the site.

At this point, Herb, standing on the wreckage in flight suit and boots with his .38 strapped across his chest, had his picture taken by the local newspaper photographer. (Herb brought a copy of the paper back to

flew into a mountain on one of the strikes. We were told very little about that accident except that he was in the clouds under the control of a forward air controller who gave him an altitude that did not provide terrain clearance. Since it happened the day before Herb's, we were pretty busy with AAR's and never spent much time researching what took place.

Then, on August 23, about 2230, LT Steve Kadas hit the ramp and was killed. He was a dear friend whose wife had planned to come to the med to follow the ship until she got pregnant and decided to stay home.

So there we were, not even having passed the Straits of *continued...*

"So there we were, not even having passed the Straits of Gibraltar, having lost 3 A-4Cs and 2 A-4Bs. It was a harbinger of an awful cruise."

down over land, but the plane would go out to sea. He had climbed above the altitude at which the chute would automatically deploy, so, until it opened, he said he practiced free falling because he would probably never have that opportunity again.

The autopilot disengaged at some point, because the aircraft did not go out to sea, but circled around and impacted a house with three people, father, mother and child, in it. Miraculously, all three were in the one corner of the house that remained standing, so their injuries were minor.

After the chute opened, Herb could hear traffic noises below, so he knew he was over land. As he broke out of the overcast he saw he was coming down in a forested area, so he crossed his legs and waited to hit. He missed all the trees, but his chute tangled in the branches, and he stopped with his feet just touching the ground. Forgetting the weight of the seat pack, he unbuckled his Koch fittings, and that weight promptly flopped him onto his back. No injury, except to his ego.

After pulling his chute down from the tree, he found a road and walked a short distance to a car parked with a man and woman inside. They were engaged in amorous activities, and when Herb knocked on the window, they were startled to say the least. Herb could speak some German and, after explaining the situation, was able to trade the parachute for a ride into town. They took him to the police station where he learned that a house had been destroyed by an aircraft. Believing that he had sent his plane out to sea, Herb asked to go to the scene to ascertain whether it might contain the remains of Tuttle or one of the two VA-86 pilots, and the

the ship, and he kept it for years.) With his thinning blond hair and blue eyes, and speaking German to anyone who would listen, it suddenly dawned on Herb that he might not be the most popular person with the crowd of onlookers being kept away by the police. The parish priest approached and was able to communicate with Herb and explain to the onlookers what had taken place. Meanwhile, Herb found a piece of the plane that identified it as his, and he returned to the police station where he was eventually reunited with Tuttle.

The pilots were taken to the military base where Herb acquired some stitches on his chin after he fell from a table demonstrating to the French pilots how he had been free falling prior to chute deployment. I packed up some clothes and his wallet and sent them ashore, but they did not get back aboard until August 30.

Regarding the other two aircraft, Marine Captain Skinner was killed on August 18 when he

A House Is Not



U.S. Navy pilot Albert Rektenwald looks at what was left of a house in Carnac, France, after it was flattened by his Skyhawk jet fighter. Rektenwald, lost in a fog with three other Skyhawks from the aircraft carrier Independence, bailed out. No one in the house was seriously injured. (UPI Photo)

VA-86 pilot Herb Recktenwald surveys damage following crash. (Article courtesy of Gary Verver)

OPERATION RIPTIDE

Continued...

Gibraltar, having lost 3 A-4C's and 2 A-4B's. It was a harbinger of an awful cruise.

We lost another Marine A-4 the night of August 30. I believe it was Captain Mize, but Riptide was over, and we were in the Med by this time, having turned over from Enterprise (CVAN-65) on August 24. He disappeared after a practice inflight refueling and was never found. We delayed our first port call one full day conducting a search.

Ed. Note: when researching this story, we received this email from Gary Aaron:

I joined the 'Sidewinders' (VA-86) just after this incident---it was still the main topic during safety briefs. Four very important actions or non-actions occurred that had a profound impact on future briefs!!

- 1) We were not required to carry our 38's before this but the Bill Hall crash proved that a 38 w/tracers or flare shot would have made his rescue quicker. 38 carry became SOP.*
- 2) We were told to deploy our sea anchor after water entry to stabilize the raft to prevent the Bill Hall in and out of the water.*
- 3) After John Harper made a zero zero landing in the 'Scooter' it became mandatory on an IFR CCA to turn ALL lights on including the TAXI light. The LSO's caught the glimmer of the Taxi light and gave him a couple of last second 'corrections' to glide scope. He "never saw the ship" so success is walking away from the crash.*
- 4) Divert info became a priority for the wing and squadron. Every approach was briefed and appropriate comm was briefed as well.*

Bill Sallada became a Commander shortly after this and became PCO after Bill Burgin became XO/CO under Fred Koch. The approach plate for this TACAN approach did



VA-86 A-4E traps aboard Independence on a later cruise. (Gary Verver collection)

not even have a final bearing from the TACAN to the field which was a WWII field disguised to look like a canal. On a personal note Bill Sallada was, to me, the finest example of a Naval Officer—over the years I tried to model myself after him. The finest traditions of the Naval Service.

This was a highly charged atmosphere for a new nugget Ensign to come into, but Sgt Montleone (sp?) and all drill Sergeant's would have been proud of the attention to detail this incident created.

*Gary Aaron aka ALPHA
[alphanavy@msn.com]*

From the Records of Gary Verver:

18 August 1963

A-4B 144945 AG-5...VMA-324 Captain Wilbur E. Skinner flew into a mountain on one of the strikes.

19 August 1963

A-4C 148579 AG-3...VA-72 LT(jg) Herbert "Hot Guns" Recktenwald ejected, and his A-4 crashed into a house in the village of Plouharnel, France.

A-4C 149512 AG-3...VA-72 Lt(jg). Duane "King Tut" Tuttle ejected and parachuted to the French coast near the Gavres Peninsula.

A-4C 149631 AG-4...VA-86 LT William R. Hall ejected and was rescued in a life raft 30 miles from the Brittany coast.

A-4C 14xxxx AG-4...VA-86 LCDR William F. Sallada made an emergency landing at the French naval base of Lann-Bihoué near Lorient, France.

23 August 1963

A-4C 148568 AG-3...VA-72 LT Steve Kadas hit the ramp and was killed.

30 August 1963

A-4B 145054 AG-5... VMA-324 Captain (Mize?) disappeared after a practice in-flight refueling and was never found.

THE DOLLARHIDE LOG

• Restoration of A-4C 149606 •

This from Skyhawk Association Director Dave Dollarhide:



Dave Dollarhide with 149606 and his RV-4.

Pilot Larry "Worm" Elmore performs a takeoff abort on runway 9L at Sanford, FL.



L-R Dave "Hide" Dollarhide, Larry "Worm" Elmore and Dan Carr, co-Managing Partner of Skyhawk Ventures, L.L.C.

I flew my RV-4 down to Sanford yesterday to hang out while "Skyhawk Ventures" performed another run up and taxi test on their A-4C (149606). Dan Carr, Porter Spangler and I watched as Larry Elmore (Worm) exercised the machine.

The tower let Worm perform a takeoff/abort on 9L, and it really brings back memories to see that thing blowing oil smoke out both sides. He said the acceleration was pretty exciting, even with the J-65-W16. They were to weigh it after I flew back home, but expect the airplane to weigh less than 10,000#.... getting down to A-4A weights. It won't be long before this cool looking "Charlie" takes to the air.

It's a thing of beauty! ...great way to spend a Saturday.

Hide

Ed. Note: see www.skyhawkventures.com for more information on the company and 149606.

Skyhawk Ventures A-4C 149606 rolled off the Douglas assembly line on August 2, 1962. It was subsequently delivered to VA-216 at NAS Lemoore, CA.

SPECIAL PILOT

• Special Weapons Delivery •

By Jim Roth



My military flying experience to this point had been involved with training, first as a student pilot followed by two years as a basic training flight instructor. The time had come for my first fleet squadron assignment. I would be flying from the aircraft carrier USS *Saratoga*, CVA- 60, as a special weapons delivery pilot with Attack Squadron 36, the Roadrunners. VA-36 flew the Douglas A4D Skyhawk: a single engine, single piloted, delta-winged jet aircraft. The Skyhawk was capable of speeds to 550 nautical miles per hour (knots), from sea level to 40,000 feet altitude. Its maximum weapons load was 6,000 pounds of ordnance. In 1957, as a reserve officer in naval flight training, I had extended my obligated service two years to ensure a fleet jet squadron assignment. This was it; my contract had been honored.

The Roadrunner's mission was delivering strikes on designated targets, dropping conventional or nuclear weapons, according to the battle plan. Pilots were trained and qualified to conduct strikes on targets on land or at sea; day or night; in visual or instrument flight conditions. Having the "right stuff" made it possible for pilots to consistently meet the challenges of a war-fighting carrier pilot. "Flying on the edge" best describes the demands of carrier flight operations, weapons delivery, close formation flying and maneuvering tactically to evade the opposition's aircraft, missiles, anti-aircraft gunfire and radars. We were known as SPECIAL weapons delivery pilots – the word "nuclear" was not used.

Attack squadron pilots had an additional responsibility involved with special weapons delivery. Comprehensive ground training was required to ensure pilots understood thoroughly the weapons functions and safety features. Carrier attack squadron aircraft were never launched during peacetime with "live" special weapons. Simulated strikes were

flown with "shapes", sand-filled replicas of special weapons. Loading drills were conducted on the carrier's hanger deck with live special weapons. They were scheduled frequently to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. There was no room for error or uncertainty when dealing with weapons of destruction of this magnitude.

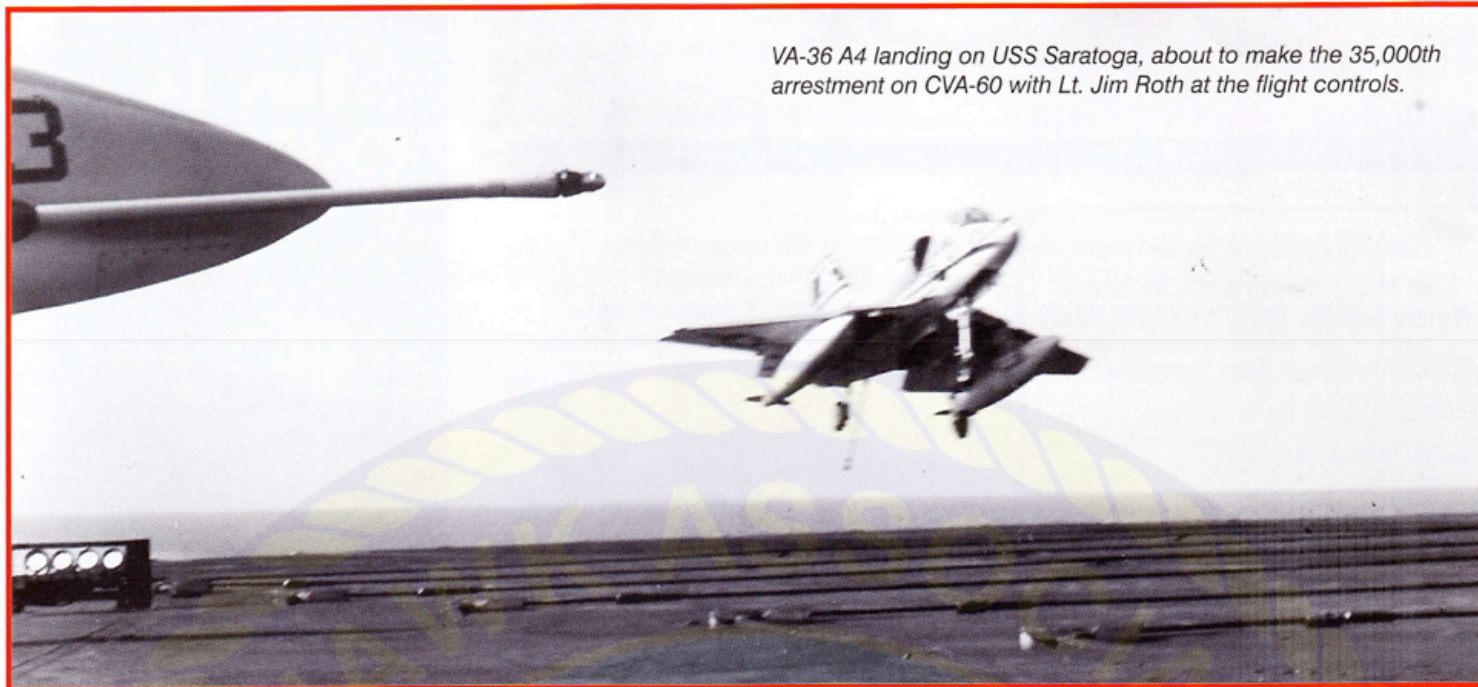


"Special pilot" Lt. Jim Roth posing by his VA-36 Roadrunner Skyhawk circa 1960.

Before an attack pilot arrived on the carrier for duty there were major requirements to be fulfilled. First was getting certified for access to secret classified material. Pilots did not receive orders to an attack squadron until their clearance for classified information was approved. Securing a Secret clearance was based on an extensive background check conducted by the Naval Investigative Service that traced back through your childhood, family, friends and activities prior to entering military service. Following receipt of a Secret clearance was orders to External Delivery (ED) School.

ED School was held in a secure compound surrounded by high wire fences with armed guards at the gate. A special security badge was issued to gain entrance. Entering and leaving, I was subject to search. Examinations were complex; held daily and more difficult than anything this jet jockey had seen before. Successful completion of the course of study was not optional. The handbooks, diagrams and other instructional materials were restricted to the compound. Extra instruction was available, but on your time, evenings and on weekends. The special weapons syllabus covered nomenclature and function of three types of weapons. The two-hour final examination required pilots to accurately sketch and fully explain wiring diagrams and weapon functions. There were few, if any, pilots who did not struggle attempting to accurately draw the wiring circuits while articulating all of the sophisticated functions of the world's most destructive weapons. The ED School allowed pilots two chances to pass the course; some pilots used both. Failure meant disqualification and reassignment, which was a "black mark" on the performance record of an officer. This was an academic challenge for a country boy from South Dakota with a degree in Agricultural Journalism. I sweated bullets every one of the five days I was in that compound. I qualified on my first try, not by much, and my career cleared another hurdle. I was so proud of myself I felt like writing to my hometown paper, The Estelline Journal, but I didn't. Home seemed a world away at this point in my life, and beside that, we were not to discuss what we "did for a living."

Returning to flying duty in the squadron, I was given my strategic target assignment by the Air Intelligence Officer. It was explained that few people knew my target assignment, and that I was to treat it as a highly secret matter, discussing it with no one other than air intelligence officers assigned to my air wing or ship. I was given two weeks to complete my navigation planning and to present flight data from three potential aircraft carrier launch points at sea to my assigned target. Aeronautical navigation charts and flight logs were required to provide distance on each leg of the flight, time of flight and fuel consump-



VA-36 A4 landing on USS Saratoga, about to make the 35,000th arrestment on CVA-60 with Lt. Jim Roth at the flight controls.

tion from launch points to the target and return. Heading to fly and turning points were also plotted on the charts. I highlighted anything I could find on the route that might help keep me from getting lost. Once my planning was complete and placed into the overall battle plan, I would be allowed little leeway in flying the plan. Time on target allowed plus or minus one minute of error. Professional airline pilots seldom achieve such precision. I knew my challenge. Lives, including mine, depended on my professional ability to carry out the timing of my attack plan.

My mission was a distance well beyond the range of the Skyhawk; refueling in flight from an airborne tanker aircraft would be required in order for me to be able to return to the aircraft carrier after the completion of my strike. Half the distance would be flown over-water; after landfall the route was mostly through mountainous areas, and the last third was in hostile territory. To avoid detection, my flight plan called for descent from high altitude prior to landfall, so as to be as low as I dared to go before leaving the over-water segment. Scooting low over terrain (flying below ridges and as deep as possible in the valleys at "tree tops in your face" level) was the safest place to be. Visual low altitude navigation required checking landmarks on the chart, such as rivers, bridges, railroads, intersections, towers and

mountain peaks, and demanded full attention. Traveling at a speed of six miles per minute just feet above solid objects allowed no room for complacency. Our daily prayer was for no rain, fog or other low visibility weather. There were at least four risk considerations: colliding with the terrain, being detected by the enemy, getting lost, or missing the time on target. Pushing those thoughts from my mind required the "right stuff," and I hoped I had it.

Once deep into enemy territory and approaching the strategic target, I would accelerate to 500 knots in preparation for the overhead loft delivery maneuver, affectionately referred to by attack pilots as an "idiot loop." While on the run-in, still at tree top level, identification of the pull-up point was critical. It was measured from a charted landmark in order to calibrate correct weapon trajectory and release point, thus ensuring weapon impact accuracy. Missing the pull-up point during the attack run equated to mission failure. Weapon blast would be so massive that delivery aircraft survival required heading away from the impact point at low altitude and maximum speed, achieving 15-20 nautical miles from the point of weapon detonation. For further protection, I would have my cockpit blast shield in place and dark goggles down to prevent radiation and blindness from the weapon's flash. Heading outbound from the target

area at Skyhawk's maximum speed, a safe place to recover would be my next consideration while continuing to avoid detection.

The major part of two years were spent with the Roadrunners on USS Saratoga in the vicinity of one of the three potential carrier launch points. Although I dreaded the thought, I believed I could do the job, if and when ordered to do so. I was not yet thirty years old and hoped I would see the day! My two young daughters and their mother were at home in CONUS, waiting and wondering as I did, "Was the Cold War suddenly going to get HOT?" I lived my life as if I was going to launch and be part of World War III; it was the only way to remain professional and ready for the challenge.

Thankfully, I did not! No one ever did, for that matter. When I detached from the Roadrunners, my strategic target was assigned to a replacement pilot, and I went to shore duty. Rejoining my family, we traveled to a new duty station, and I was assigned to a shore-based training squadron as an instructor pilot. I often thought about my strategic target, the fate of the people who lived in that industrial complex and the pilot now assigned to destroy it. It took a while to get that mission out of my mind. The Cold War went on for many more years.

That's how I remember it.

READ?

YOU THINK WE READ?

Bury Us Upside Down: The Misty Pilots and the Secret Battle for the Ho Chi Minh Trail

Rick Newman & Don Shepperd

2006: Presidio Press; 453 pp.

ISBN 978-0-345-46538-2

Reviewed by Bob Hickerson.

I didn't expect to like this book. I'm not sure why, except that I've been naturally suspicious of all books written about the Vietnam air war. After all, the record has clearly shown that there are only so many *Streetcar 304's* or *Rampant Raiders* out there. Without question, most of us shouldn't be trying to write a memoir of that period; unfortunately, many who shouldn't do.

However, I'm glad that I picked up this tight, fast-paced narrative of a fascinating program to which all Vietnam era aviators will relate, especially the Marines who flew with Playboy. Retired Major General Don Shepperd (Misty 34), who flew 58 missions with Misty in 67 – 68, and Rick Newman, an experienced journalist with *U.S. News and World Report* who has covered the Pentagon and military affairs for years, have done a very credible job of weaving together a compelling narrative that is factual, informative and entertaining. Newman clearly has a knack for teasing the real story line from hundreds of interviews with former pilots whose "memories don't always align with facts." According to Newman, "Turning a bunch of exaggerated war stories into a meaningful narrative can be a tricky business." "It is probably inevitable that mistakes have crept into this work. For that we blame fighter pilots who have left too many brain cells on barroom floors." Amen!

Misty was the call sign of Detachment 1 of the 416th Tactical Fighter Squadron, originally a top secret outfit stood up at Phu Cat Air Base on 15 June 1967. Officially named Commando

Sabre, Det 1 was the pet project of General Momyer, Commander 7th Air Force and started in response to an unacceptable loss rate of slow Forward Air Control (FAC) aircraft over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Flying two-seat F-100F aircraft from Phu Cat (later Tuy Hoa), Misty pilots pioneered the Vietnam version of the Fast FAC, forward air controllers who used speed and on-board weapons for survival while reconnoitering high-threat areas and controlling jet fighter-bombers when targets were located.

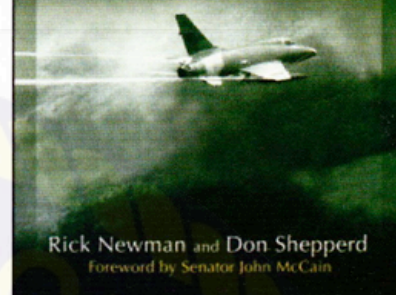


The Detachment's first commander was the legendary Bud Day who was shot down and captured on a Misty mission just over two months after assuming command, a preview of things to come. Between 1967 and 1970 157 pilots were qualified for the Misty mission. 34 were shot down, two of them twice. Seven were KIA or listed as MIA and later declared Killed in Action. Three were captured and imprisoned in Hanoi, including Day who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions in captivity.

Newman's descriptions of the missions are vivid, highlighting the routine as well as the heroic, laced with descriptions of the occasional, incredible folly of which we were all guilty. Every day, Misty pilots conducted low-altitude, visual reconnaissance missions along the trail in southern NVN and Laos, battling bad weather and restrictive rules of engagement hoping to control fighter-bombers interdicting the supply of material flowing from north to south along the trail. Knowing that any success they had led only to re-routing of material by the North Vietnamese, they pressed on out of a

Bury Us Upside Down

The Misty Pilots and the
Secret Battle for the
Ho Chi Minh Trail



Rick Newman and Don Shepperd
Foreword by Senator John McCain

sense of professionalism and love of flying, often "trolling" at low altitude to draw the fire of enemy gunners in an attempt to locate lucrative targets.

Bury Us is also a concise history of the larger issues which dictated the way in which the Vietnam air war was prosecuted. From grand strategy originating in the White House to the petty jealousies of intermediate commanders suspicious of "prima-donnas" flying a special mission controlled by higher headquarters, the air operations in country are put into a context largely unknown to us at the time. Newman's description of the North Vietnamese logistic units and their operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail is first rate, as is his accounting of how the major offensives, peace initiatives and changes in American public opinion affected the air war.

Interwoven into the entire narrative is the story of one pilot, Howard K. Williams, who was shot down and declared MIA in 1968 and not declared KIA until 1978, despite the fact that U.S. forces had clear evidence that he died in the crash. Because that evidence was based on highly-classified signals intelligence, Williams' family was not informed of his fate for over a decade. Williams' story is carried to its logical conclusion through an accounting of efforts by U.S. investigators to locate his remains (culminating in the return of those remains in 1992) and his eventual interment at Arlington National Cemetery on 24 July 1992.

R.G.'s ART

• A-4 •



R. G. Smith,
(1914-2001)
Named Honorary Naval
Aviator Number 11.

A4
spotting
on the
Waist cat.

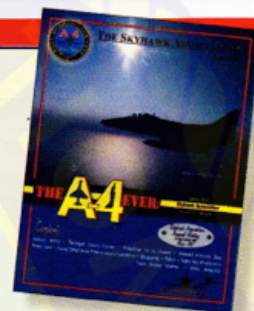


Go Ahead, Give A Guy A Gift

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.

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READ? continued

→ *Bury Us* covers Misty operations in 1967 and 1968 prior to the November 1968 bombing halt in North Vietnam; however, Misty continued to work in Steel Tiger (Laos), overlapping with the operations of the H&MS-11 Playboys throughout 1969. For that reason, it was natural for a close relationship to develop between the two units. As related by Col Larry Adkinson in his A-4Ever article about Playboy (see *Who Were Those Guys: the Playboys in Vietnam*, Winter 2005), "Playboy began an in-country exchange program with the Misty FastFACs to swap a pilot for 5-7 days between Phu Cat and Danang. This provided a minimum of five

flights for Marines in the F-100F and a comparable exchange in the TA-4F for the F-100F pilots. The exchange, which continued through the summer of 1969, improved the performance of both services *on the trail*."

Col Adkinson participated in the Misty exchange in April 1969, flying five missions with four different Misty FACs, including Tony McPeak (Misty 94), who went on to serve as Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

Anyone interested in the air war over Vietnam will find plenty to fascinate them in this book. It's a worthy addition to any enthusiast's library, and it's a must read for those who flew with Playboy.

If you're wondering where Newman and Shepperd got the title, it was from this fighter pilot toast (source unknown):

*"When our flying days are over;
When our flying days are past;
We hope you'll bury us upside down,
So the World can kiss our ass."*

That's pretty much the way we felt about it.

(Ed. Note: Anyone desiring to learn more about Misty should visit their excellent website at:
<http://www.mistyvietnam.com>.)

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• Reunions & Requests •



PLAN AHEAD

★ Skyhawk Association 2011 Annual Meeting and Luncheon at Tailhook: 12:00 noon., September 9, 2011, Nugget Poolside Terrace, Tailhook Symposium 2011, Reno, NV. Paul Galanti will be speaker at the luncheon which is \$30. RSVP to TheBuick@aol.com; see www.a4skyhawk.org for details.

★ VA-86 Reunion, September 29 – October 2, 2011, Pensacola, FL. Contact Worm Elmore at theworm61@peoplepc.com.

★ Marine Corps Aviation Association Symposium, May 16 – 19, 2012, Gaylord National Hotel, Oxon Hill, MD. MCAA 2012 will celebrate 100 years of Marine Aviation. An All-Marine Skyhawk reunion in conjunction with MCAA is under consideration. Watch the Skyhawk Association home page (www.a4skyhawk.org) for more information.

List your reunion or event with Skyhawk Association, print journal and website. Contact the editor at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.



★ R.M. Eddy - Oak Harbor, WA

★ Richard Harris - San Diego, CA

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FROM THE ATTIC

• Mailbag •

Before they fade and crumple,
share your photos.

email to
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

YA4D-1 137814 conducts air-to-air refueling tests from
AJ Savage tanker circa 1955. Note that the FJ Fury style
under-wing refueling probe was being tested as one
alternative configuration.

Photo from Bob Lawson's collection via Gary Verver.



Three generations of Black-
sheep in skies over Yuma.
(Photo © Ted Carlson of Fotodynamics.)

More Blacksheep: A-4N of
ATAC and current VMA-214
steed, the Night Attack Harrier.
(Photo © Ted Carlson, Fotodynamics.)



PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul

~ Reluctant Shellbacks ~

With the Operational Readiness Inspection in the seas and skies south of Puerto Rico a done deal, the big gray boat left the tropical paradise of banana daiquiris and thrummed south. Headed for Cape Horn, the Indian Ocean, Singapore, Cubi, and Veet Nam, Puresome settled into a routine of no flight operations, two-a-day A.O.M.s, volley ball in between aircraft stuffed on the hangar deck, and being a Naval Officer first and an aviator second. Since there weren't going to be two hops a day to hide behind until the ship reached Cubi, Puresome, who was the designated Squadron SLDO (Shitty Little Duty Officer), actually had to put X's in each of his highly responsible collateral duty boxes.

Which wasn't too bad. Puresome's role as Lawrence Legality was greatly diminished at sea, since the Ship's law firm took care of most legal stuff; as Information and Education Officer, no rating exams for sailors were forthcoming. Puresome had long since bribed ship's company types with aviator sunglasses to weld new hooks in the ready room for the squadron's arrogantly obnoxious orange flight helmets, so the only thing he had to do as First Lieutenant was to wander up to the crew compartment and smoke a cigar with Ladd, the Aviation Boatswains Mate that was in charge of crew spaces. Since there weren't swept wing jits whanging onto the flight deck just overhead and tugging out the local arresting cable, the crew head had not filled up with hydraulic fluid lately, and it was the spiffiest aboard ship.

The one collateral duty that was a real, constant arsepain was that of MOVIE OFFICER. Puresome took hits from everybody for everything, from the movie choice du jour to the quality of training for the enlisted projector operator, who had to be drafted, trained, and certified by some ship's company ENSIGN. The fact that the Squadron movie projector regularly ate film, and, once, a reel had come off the machine, bounced down the deck to the front of the ready room by

the Skipper's feet, just proved demonic possession to Puresome. Since the movie was the most important event of the day, Puresome was regularly pelted with popcorn for not being able to bribe Brand X Squadron for their Cinemascope lens or for being slow in hot-reeling "ALONZO, WILD STAG OF THE NORTH" from Ready Room One. Had he been slightly more sensitive than a train wreck, Puresome might have despaired.

Another jolly activity that occupied Puresome's long days in the deeps of the Iron Anthill was SIOP planning. Just what a LTJG might have to do with the nation's Single Integrated Operational Plan of nuking commie furriners into quietly glowing happy particles was this: A4 and A6 crews were assigned two targets each to obliterate in case the balloon went up while they were stooging around Westpac in order to prevent dominos from tumping over, thus keeping a tiny, Asian country safe enough for its premier to wear yellow flight suits and lavender scarves - or lavender flight suits and yellow scarves. Each target had to be meticulously planned for navigation, weapons delivery, and especially timing, in order to avoid being fried by B-52's, ICBM's, and the Doomsday Machine. But mostly, meticulous planning was needed because the pilot had to brief the CAG and the Flag on his particular targets, a dog-and-pony show Puresome particularly dreaded. So he spent hours in IOIC, the "integrated operational intelligence center" making fancy strip charts decorated with tic marks to the second and cryptic notes about bomb stuff, while Phantom pilots exercised their wrists and watched the coveted "Gidget Gets Gross" fifteen or twenty times in their ready rooms. To the immense disgust of bespectacled intelligence types feeding punch cards into banks of computers, Puresome and Weed sang the happy jingle "You'll wonder where...the yellow went.....When we atom bomb..The Oh..Re..Ent!" at least twice a day.

So time zones loped by like slow horses. Candy Andy had already figured out that the Black Shoe Pukes had arranged for all to lose an hour of sleep per zone on the way over and on the eventual way back.

"How do you know?" asked Puresome, who was chronically, grossly unaware.

"If it was up your pachunga, you'd know," came the sly, enigmatic answer.

It was after a particularly enlightening intelligence brief made by Better-Fred-Than-Dead, the Squadron Air Intelligence Officer, concerning a recent "coupe in Thiland," that LT Loose was granted the podium during the second hour of the morning A.O.M. LT. Loose was the "Senior Boat-Schooler Present Aboard" the squadron, and, as such, was in charge of volunteering junior officers for such career-enhancing programs as J.O.O.D. (Junior Officers of the Deck, Underway) boat drivers. Puresome himself had been volunteered for this program, but interfacing with Black Shoe ship's company pukes proved difficult, and the fear of stumbling on weird circular activities in some of the darker Snipe spaces certainly shivered his timbers..

But today's subject was the ship's scheduled crossing of the equator the next day. In Navy tradition, a ceremony must be held, in which those who had previously actually survived such a ceremony, called "Shellbacks," got to wail on all the Frabbing New Guys who had not. LT Loose had suffered exceedingly as Midshipman Loose and had seen to it that subsequent pollywogs suffered maximum humiliation permissible under the laws of King Neptune. While the heart of the ceremony was to be conducted by the ship's enlisted company as a legal opportunity to whomp up on officers, LT Loose had his own program at the squadron level. Since practically everybody below the rank of LT was to be initiated, and especially the insolent members of the Reserve Junior Officers Association, Loose was in his glorious bull Rutenant-hood, prepping plebe pollywogs on their obligations on the morrow. Rockets One, Two, and Three looked on indulgently.

As Loose finally finished his instructions and Rocket Three, LCDR Paganuch returned to orchestrate the third hour of the AOM, Weed looked at Puresome. "Surely he don't mean us."

"Naaah," came the non-prophetic answer.

It wasn't that Puresome and Weed were basic anarchists, it was just that being a "Rutenant" wasn't like being an LCDR or Skipper or XO--a "Rutenant" was kinda a less junior junior officer, and seniority among junior officers was like purity among nasty girls. So the two figured they could fart off his program, wake up at their leisure, and show up after a good breakfast to be whacked by the Snuffies. Besides, Ensign Weed had just turned LTJG, leaving Candy Andy behind as the sole brown bar, and he was feeling the power of less visibility.

So it was that when the phone in their stateroom began to ring about midnight, a sleepy Weed fumbled for the phone, rendered less than required military courtesies and hung up. When it rang again, some "frabbs!" were said, and this time, Weed left the receiver off the hook. Puresome thoroughly approved and went back to sleep.

The situation escalated when someone started whanging on their door and hollering. Since Puresome and Weed had had the foresight to barricade their door, they knew they were safe and just hushed up until the whangers and hollerers got tired and went away. Then, because of clean living and pure hearts, they slept like large rocks.

In the head the next morning for showers, other junior pollywogs had tales of a sleepless night of horseshit and humiliation in the ready room rendered by LT Loose and his cohorts.

"You guys are in a world of doody!" was the word. "Loose is going to make you guys wait until we come back from WESTPAC to go through the ceremony. There won't be many wogs, and special attention can be rendered to your beautocks."

"I have trod upon my manly parts with golf shoes yet again," wailed Puresome, who, as usual, had not foreseen any way he could have been had.

But Weed had figured. He had not been invited to seek his fortune outside the ivied walls of Aggieville because he was a dumb child; his solution was simple and direct. "Let's just put on our grubbies and get in line." Puresome, who never should have doubted, agreed there was salvation in numbers, and they joined the long lines of initiates in shorts and T-shirts.



What fun the Snuffies had that day! Pollywogs crawled on their hands and knees through double lines of sailors with paddles. Beautocks were smacked hard. It was Enlisted Fu. The journey involved traversing half a jet engine container filled with water and slops from the galley. Puresome was especially thrilled to kiss the slime-covered beer-belly of the "Royal Baby." Finally, King Neptune and his court were passed and Puresome and Weed were pushed out of the process by those behind them. Covered with slime and crud, they crept off to the showers, disgusted but successful Shellbacks.

Better Fred was already under a shower when Puresome started detoxing. Being a pink-cheeked, fair-skinned sort who had taken more than his share of hits, there was a glow below like a neon light. "Hey, Better Fred," Puresome submitted, "if you ever get tired of the coupes in Thighland business, you could probably sign on as a replacement for the ship's port running light with them bunnis!"

Unfortunately, Better Fred didn't see the possibilities of Puresome's suggestion, probably because he was major tired of Puresome's lewd questions about Thigh food and interest in just exactly what kind of Coupes those guys drove. Also, he had never had the opportunity to join the J.O.O.D. Program, which was where Puresome had learned that the left light on the pointy end of the boat was red.

The good news was that Puresome and Weed stayed one step ahead of LT Loose until the ship dropped anchor at Singapore, where the matter was forgotten in the mad scramble to be the first down the chain for liberty. Later, at the ADMIN, with the help of lots of whiskies, Puresome was able to successfully plead temporary insanity and being mistaken for someone who gave a shit. As comrades in the great adventure, the issue quietly

dissolved in the frantic possibilities of the great candy store of shore liberty.

The better news was that, on the way home under a wide and starry sky, nobody whacked on their door or phoned them when the ship crossed the equator.



Ed. Note: Several readers have asked us: "In what language does Puresome write his stories?" We honestly don't know, but have decided to provide a glossary to help with translation of this article.

Puresome Glossary

arsepain – an uncomfortable feeling in the general vicinity of the buttocks (see *beautocks*) brought on by any duty not welcomed by a junior aviator, the presence of a senior officer (O-3 or above – see *Rutenant*) or the absence of ones name on the flight schedule.

Veet Nam – a small, once-contested country in Southeast Asia. In 2011, less than 5% of American high school seniors have ever heard of it.

furriners – persons without U.S. citizenship and perhaps some with.

Stooging – in the context of this article, any general cruising around by an aircraft carrier and its air wing with the general mission of burning fuel and preventing nuclear war initiated by furriners who also subscribe to the notion of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

Doody – the issue of a common biological substance sometimes known as #2, crap, sh**t; alternate form suitable for use in polite company.

Pachunga – related to doody; the far south end of the digestive tract.

Rutenant – see story attached for context. A rank held by Navy officers which occupies a no-man's land between junior (*ensign, Ltjg*) and senior (*Lcdr and above*) officers.

Thighland – another small, South Asian country much admired for its cultural tourism opportunities during liberty periods circa mid-20th century.

Beautocks – particularly good-looking buttocks (see *Thighland*).

Frabb – unable to translate in PG-13 edition.

Aggieville – unremarkable village on the Brazos River 100 miles east of Austin, Texas. Referred to as "hallowed ground" by practitioners of semi-ancient, quaint rituals.





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