



THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

Journal



*Skyhawk Ventures A-4C 149606
takes to the air on August 5, 2011.*

THE A-4 EVER

Fall 2011

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 17 • NUMBER 3

Contents:

Le Cielflaucon Francais

Skyhawk Ventures: Charlie Flies

Close Only Counts in Horseshoes

Puresome Unplugged: Viva Espana

Last Combat Cruise of the A-4 Charlies



www.a4skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• From the Hun •



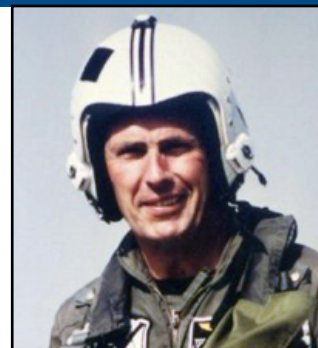
By Todd Frommelt

Good day to you, Skyhawkers! Hope your Summers have gone well and you're all back to less demanding times. It was busy here with family and friends, vacations and, just past, a great centennial Tailhook! Our Ready Room/Hospitality Suite was a beehive of activity around the Attack Bar (new banner sign honoring Ernie Laib—thanks Bear) and Senator's amazing and never-ending Skyhawk Slideshow. Our Board of Directors meeting was productive, and the annual meeting/luncheon was a great affair, with an Academy A4 Monument Restoration update from Capt Dutch Rauch followed by our headline presentation from CDR Paul Galanti. And the food was even great! Special thanks to both Dutch and Paul for honoring us with their time and great presentations. It was a record crowd at the event, by the way, with just about 100 folks in attendance!

Good intro to the Secretary's pronouncement on membership...905 on 1 September! That's higher than it's ever been, and we couldn't be happier about

it! Our "1000 by the 100's" campaign is getting up to speed! (That's 1000 member-level by the end of the Navy and Marine Corps centennials, in case you wondered.) Keep up the great work please! Keep checking those email address headers and making sure all your cruise books have been reviewed for folks still out of our fold. Send us some names and email addresses, and we'll be happy to do the rest with our very best smooth talking. We've also started to reap rewards from better use of our SDO team and better updating of the web site squadron pages with your inputs. Take a good look, please, and let us know where we can improve! And remember, if you're organizing a gathering of Skyhawkers, let us know if you'd like some extra Journals to pass around. We've got a stock of those set aside for recruiting duty and will get some off to you ASAP.

More old business: We've come a long way on the new website and are looking for your input on what you'd like to see in regards to public versus private sides of the house...what you think should be restricted to membership only versus available to the public browsing by. It's a little bit of a balancing act as we want to keep lots of traffic at the site to promote the Association, but



Todd "The Hun" Frommelt

we also want folks to know there's good stuff available only to members as well. Let us know what you think!

Since \$5000 of your dues money were donated to the Academy A4 Restoration (out of an approximately \$20K restoration budget), you need to know that Dutch was very pleased with the final product (see www.a4skyhawk.org for before and after pictures). Not that he was fully satisfied... One, the process was somewhat painful, as beauracracies tend to be, and two, the structural corrosion and decay was far more extensive than even the worse case estimates. There are some lessons to be gained for those of you with old A4's nearby needing care. Don't delay chief amongst them...the surface decay is only the tip of the iceberg! In the Academy's A4 case, bondo was king, but the long term solution may be too late in coming and too costly to be realistically available. Thanks again to VA-83!

As I mentioned in my last newsletter, we've also seen *continued on page 4...*



Pete Cole, Gene Atwell and Buick Eberhardt hard at work in the Attack Hospitality Suite.



The finished product – A-4A 139968 returned to its former glory.



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

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION, INC.
Officers and Directors

Todd Frommelt
President and Director (FY 14)
toddfrommelt@roadrunner.com

Dave Dollarhide
Vice President (Navy) and Director (FY 14)
davedollarhide@msn.com

Bill Egen
Vice President (Marines) and Director (FY 13)
zerocep@cc.rr.com

Terry Cooney
Secretary and Director (FY 14)
skyhawkasn@gmail.com

Mark Williams
Treasurer and Director (FY 12)
readyroomcoor@a4skyhawk.org

Gene Atwell
Webmaster and Director (FY 12)
geneatwell@gmail.com

George Blosser
Director (FY 12)
george.blosser@b2xonline.com

Pete Cole
Director (FY 12)
petecole@earthlink.net

Mike Eberhardt
Director (FY 13)
thebuick@aol.com

John Gabbard
Director (FY 13)
va43@a4skyhawk.org

Ted Langworthy
Director (FY 13)
FLYBEAR@peoplepc.com

Steve Linder
Director (FY 14)
steve.linder@1969.usna.com

Joe Turpen
Director (FY 13)
forrestal@fewpb.net

Skyhawk Association, Inc.
2421 Clubside Drive
Beavercreek, OH 45431
skyhawkasn@gmail.com
Website: www.a4skyhawk.org or
www.a4skyhawk.org
David Weber, Asst. Webmaster
a4web1@verizon.net

BOMBS AWAY!

• Fall 2011 •



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NEWSLETTER STAFF



Bob "Raven" Hickerson – Chairman and Editor.
Boom Powell and Mark Williams - Co-Editors.
Gene Atwell – Webmaster.

Feature Contributors: Ed "Viking" Jobin, Peter Mersky, Joe Turpen,
Gary Verver, David "Twidget" Weber, and Jack "Puresome" Woodul.

Published by the Skyhawk Association © 2011

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, skyhawk@ncflight.com. Printed by NCCOAST Communications, Morehead City, NC.

Cover: Skyhawk Ventures A-4C 149606 takes to the air on August 5, 2011, with Larry "Worm" Elmore at the controls. (Photo by Dave Dollarhide)

THE PREZ SEZ MORE...

some great A4 literature see the light of day this summer! A reminder, Tommy Thomason's **Scooter: The Douglas A-4 Skyhawk Story** should be on Amazon when you get this, and the New Zealanders Don Simms and Nick Frampton have their beautifully illustrated, coffee-table worthy **Skyhawks: The History of the RNZAF Skyhawks**, available at <http://www.willsonscott.biz/catalogue/military/skyhawks-the-history-of-the-rnzaf-skyhawk/>. Check our "Ships Store" for our comprehensive list of A4 oriented goodies available. And I'd be remiss if I failed to mention that Shar keeps finding new RG Smith art to make available at RG-SmithArt.com. And don't forget our own guys' **Duel Over Douai** (Amazon eBook) by authors Puresome Woodul, Boom Powell and Barrett Tillman. Please check them out!

New Business: We kicked out Buick Eberhardt as Navy VP and elected Dave

Dollarhide in his stead. OK, we didn't really kick the bum out, but when some dirtbag resigns his office because he's flying too much, even Skyhawks, you can understand my choice of words. And he never missed an opportunity to let us know he was busy flying the Keating or Collings A4. What do you do with such guys? Why, we accepted his demotion to director, that's what. Of course, now we've got Hide...who's ready to help fly the Carr/Spangler A-4C down in Florida! What is it with these Navy VPs?! A4 operators out there please take note...the Hun is available to fly your A4's. A Marine Skyhawker, enuf of this Navy stuff!

Speaking of flying A4's, we've got rumblings of another A4 being resurrected to flying status on the civilian side of the house. That's always good! But we can't firm up the final purchaser of the 9 New Zealand A4KU's that have been on the market until a rumored early Summer

sale. And we've got our doubts that Brazil is going to stay in the A4 business, and that's not good. We'll keep you advised. We're quickly approaching the day when it's going to be a pretty exclusive A4 flying club, I'm afraid.

Marines out there! The Marine contingent in the BOD is still working on a centennial Marine Skyhawker Reunion for next year. We'd love to do it in conjunction with the MCAA Symposium and Reunion in May 2012 at the Gaylord in Oxon Hill, MD, just outside the DC southern beltway. Our stumbling block is cost. It's a beautiful resort, but... Knowing you guys as we think we do, we expect a megabuck reunion just wouldn't draw as many folks as would something more moderate. Keep tuned for the latest news.

I think that's about a wrap for this issue. Remember to support the Centennials! We won't make the next ones! Membership! 1000 by the 100's! We can do that! Again, thanks for letting me work for you. It's an honor to keep such company, guys and gals.

Hun sends

LOCAL MARINE A4 BRUNCH

Early September saw a bunch of So-Cal Marine A-4 drivers get together in San Clemente. It was a great gathering of elder light attack statesmen, and we'd like you guys and gals to enjoy this sort of gathering in your own area regularly too. It doesn't take all that much to get one organized and keep it going!

Start out with a sort of the Association's roster for your local area, make a bunch of phone calls or emails, get a

first shot breakfast or brunch at a local favorite spot scheduled...and the rest kind of takes off on its own!

Get the guys and gals interested and you'll find that their contact lists contain lots of Skyhawkers not on the roster. Pretty soon you'll have a list of 50-100 folks. A good number of those will show up quarterly for sure! And it's often a different group that can make it each time, which makes it even

more fun. Up for trying one? Give Hun or Cardinal an email request, and we'll be glad to send you the spreadsheet roster...or even do the sort for you if you'd like. And don't forget to ask for some spare Journals we can make available in your recruiting efforts of the non-members that show. Trust me, it's a very enjoyable time and also very rewarding for the one who sets it all up. It's also what we're all about, Association-wise. Shoot, we'll even get your pictures in the next Journal!

Hun sends



Here're a shot from our last So Cal breakfast: Marv Garrison, Gordon Jefferson, Rich Donaghy, Norm Marshall, Gen. JK Davis, Gen. Dick Cooke, Doug Kirschke, Dave Kurner, Duke Lind, Hun, Gen. Hal Vincent, Hal Henderson, Bill Kogerman, Jack Enke and early departure by Rico Jones making it a fun show.

HOOK 2011 BOD & ANNUAL MEETING

Your Board of Directors met on 9 September at the Reno Tailhook 2011. Not much turnover, thankfully, and your Board remains the same...with the exception of Dave Dollarhide replacing Mike Eberhardt as VP, Navy, due to Mike's increasing workload. Our finances remain strong and membership has ticked up nicely this year. Despite some serious problems with our ISP, the web site has remained stable, and now that the ISP problems are mostly behind us, site improvements should be forthcoming at an even better clip than during our major upgrade. We did some good work on more effective use of our Squadron Duty Officers and hope you'll see some better responsiveness to your squadron web page inputs. We also

worked on some smoothing of procedures in several areas to let us work better via our main communication channel, the infamous email chains. We're looking at two venues for our mid-year meeting; one possibility being the Fun 'n Sun gathering in Florida the end of March (possibly featuring several A-4 fly-ins); the other being in conjunction with the Marine Corps Aviation Association Symposium in Washington, DC, in mid-May (Marine aviation centennial). Look for updates on the website and newsletters to come. We're also working to get your membership expiration dates back on the Journal address labels. Check the cover! The Annual Meeting took place right after the

BOD meeting and was a super affair! Just about 100 folks attended and were treated to a nice dog and pony show regarding the Academy A-4 restoration effort by Capt. Dutch Rauch, and then a very enjoyable talk about characters and character building by former POW Cmdr. Paul Galanti. If you weren't there you missed a super meeting!

Hun



The Nugget provided a superb buffet luncheon for the Annual Meeting.



Buick Eberhardt thanks CDR Paul Galanti for an outstanding luncheon speech.

Fact or Fiction?

Has anyone really accomplished an inverted plug, or is this just another sea story aided by Photoshop? If you've ever done this or seen it done, send me an email at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.

PS Include photos if you have them.



TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

To the Editor:
Bob

Read the Misty History with interest in the SA Summer edition. Here are my recollections from bygone VA-94 Shrike days (probably 67 from Hancock in A4C, but perhaps 68 from Bonnie Dick in A4E - things blend together..).

ROE for Laos:

- 1) Always work with a FAC;
- 2) AI briefs included 10 km circles that were "no drop" zones - never explained why but we supposed "special ops" or other spooky stuff.

After a mission we returned to the ship to be greeted by a cryptic cable from the Embassy in Vientiane: "Te-cumseh weeps!" Turns out the target we hit WAS in one of the mystic circles. After confirming we had followed rule 1, the topic was not further discussed; Scuttlebutt was that Ambassador Sullivan had some ties to the Naval Academy and was aware of the legend that the big statue wept with embarrassment - example: like losing to Army in the big game.

Fast forward to 1974 and passing through Colorado Springs to visit with a Navy spouse whose husband had been declared MIA up North on an A6 night mission. She was supported by both cadets and faculty from the USAF Academy while raising her kids. One of the faculty members, LCOL John Pratt, stopped by, and we talked about SE Asia. He told me he had written a book, "Laotian Fragments," about some of his experiences, then gave me a signed copy. His novel is about the loss of Raven 1, and according to the author it had some impact; his assessment is attached. (Ed. Note: see www.skyhawk.org).

Long story short - the 10 km circles or no strike zones were "sometimes" safe havens, not for special ops but were incentive zones in recognition of villages that had paid taxes - also known as protection - to the Laotian government (sic). In writing this e-mail, I looked up some of AMB. Sullivan's postings and duty assignments. He was in the midst of things, participated in the "peace talks" in Paris to end the Vietnam

conflict, left Laos to be AMB in the PI before/during the fall of Marcos, had the same AMB job in Tehran when the Shaw was deposed.

(partial bio at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_H._Sullivan)

/s/ Paul Barrish

[barrish@verizon.net]

Tailhookers have fun during day traps and work at night.

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

I went to Iwakuni in August 1966 with VMA-121. Later I was transferred to VMA 211 and went South for the winter in November 1966. The story about Memories of High Jinks made me think about something that happened at Iwakuni. We heard stories about something that scared workers on the flightline late at night. It was called "The Benjo Monster". It was about 8 feet tall and sort of resembled a human. The barracks scuttlebutt had it as a pair of officers in a chemical handling suit out causing trouble for lonely flightline workers late at night. My question is if anyone else remembers this and maybe what the heck it really was.

Nick Colletto

nmcol1@cox.net

♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

I joined VA-192 / CAG-19 / USS Ticonderoga in the summer of 1967 and subsequently made two Viet Nam combat cruises with them - one on Tico in 67/68 and one on Oriskany in 69. As I neared completion of my 6 1/2 year Vans RV-8A homebuilt aircraft project (note for those contemplating such an effort: it always takes 3 times longer than planned - and costs twice as much), I decided to try to replicate the Golden Dragon A-4 paint scheme on my RV. Although not an exact fit (I intentionally made it a lighter grey for better vis), the end result does honor a great squadron and a great airwing that operated prior to the current PC era.

Yes, there are stories to tell! The RV project was fascinating from the start. For example, the avionics - for roughly

Share the wisdom:

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Please note email address!

\$25K - are orders of magnitude more capable than the A4F, which had only a UHF radio, IFF and Tacan. I've got dual radios, Mode C transponder, an Electronic Flight Information System (EFIS) with ILS, engine monitoring system, two GPS displays, moving map with synthetic vision and a dual axis autopilot. If I upgraded the autopilot, I could do coupled approaches to mins. Amazing what's available in the experimental homebuilt world.

She likes to go upside down and pull g's. Although there's a g readout on the EFIS, I have a separate G-meter on the panel - just because. And her endurance (5 hours) is much greater than that of my bladder.

Paul Valovich

(Booger)

Ridgecrest, CA

pvalovich@dcscorp.com

4500+ A-4 hours

VA-192, VT-21, NWC China Lake, VA-127, ATSI



♦ ♦ ♦

To the Editor:

I've been reading and enjoying the adventures of Youthful Puresome since about the time Jack Woodul began writing them, first in The Hook and now the Skyhawk Journal.

I especially enjoyed YP's latest A-4 Journal entry, Reluctant Shellbacks, because of the Puresome Glossary. I hope the glossary becomes a regular addition to his "Unplugged" adventures.

Semper Fi,

Bob Duerden

Masta Guns (Ret)
Green Valley, AZ
[marieandbob2@cox.net]

(Ed. Note: we'll try to keep the glossary coming, but interpreters that speak Pure-some are hard to find!)

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Scooter fans:

A belated Birthday wish to the venerable, versatile *Skyhawk*. Yesterday (June 22, 2011) marked its 57th anniversary of flight.... And counting. Here's to the Scooter, its builder & designer, drivers, maintainers, restorers, preservers, friends and fans!

SKYHAWKS FOREVER!!

Cheers

Buick Eberhardt

[TheBuick@aol.com]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

For all Spad, A-4 and A-7 drivers - here is an opportunity to give your old stained coffee cup a permanent home in a secure spot in a coffee mess soon to be built in Midway RR3 - if this sounds like something you'd be interested in, please respond to this message so I'll know how many to count on, and arrange to have yours shipped to: 15150 Andorra Way, San Diego, CA, 92129 - please pack it well so it will arrive in one piece - all the best to everyone and I'll send a picture to everyone who participates in this project.

Bill Gilchrist

[a4fdriver@gmail.com]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Even though the Navy at China Lake is known for research, development, test and evaluation of weapons and weapons systems, the military and civilian employees teaming together, equip the Navy's aircraft of every decade with effective weapons so the user can be confident in its capabilities.

This year marks the 100-year celebration of the birth of naval aviation when in 1911 a barnstormer pilot, Eugene Ely, departed in a Curtiss Model D from the San Francisco Bay on his historic mission to land an aircraft on the USS PENNSYLVANIA.

In recognition of this essential stepping stone and innovative achievement, Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division China Lake, California, dressed

up the post-World War II attack A-4 SKYHAWK in the 1960's paint scheme representing its earlier flying days.

As a side note the A-4 was "shrink-wrapped" similar to how race cars are now covered so it will last longer, and it actually costs less; just an interesting factoid.

Doris Lance

Naval Aviation Centennial Coordinator
NAWC Weapons Division

C: 760-382-3560

E:doris.lance.ctr@navy.mil or

avidhiker2@yahoo.com



◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

I came across your web site and thought you might be interested in seeing this. I was a class mate of Dan's in high school. He had been buried at sea off California on his carrier's return to CONUS. As a former Navy officer, I pushed for a memorial, and we got it done with the help of his Academy classmates. Perhaps some of his squadron mates would be interested.

Best regards,

Tom McMahon

(Ed. Note: see www.usna63.org/ship-mate/columns/NovDec2009.html).

Gary Verver provided this information from the Skyhawk Association database:

Lt(jg). Daniel Hagan Moran was killed when his A-4E was hit by AAA while he was participating in a strike on the Qui Vinh railroad yard about 10 miles SW of Van Yen. Although the *Skyhawk* had a large hole in the starboard nose under the cockpit it remained flyable - and Lt(jg). Moran took it out to sea. Escorting aircrewmembers saw him move in the cockpit, but Moran was flying erratically and did not respond to radio or hand signals. Moran took his aircraft to the North SAR destroyer and ejected close alongside, but he was dead when a boat crew from the destroyer pulled him from the water. Aircraft: A-4E 151168 VA-23 NE-346.

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To the Editor:

Hi, Bob. Hope you are OK. Just finished the new magazine. Looks good,

as always. I was particularly interested in the story from Bob Hoch, "Operation Riptide."

I am pleased to say that Bob was my CO in the mid-70s, in VFP-306. He is and remains a fine, decent man, and was one of the squadron's best pilots as I recall. His mission film was always first rate, with targets and checkpoints spot on. He is also a very good raconteur so I am glad he finally wrote a story for you. In turn, I have a brief "Leaky" story for you.

While on a cross-country on July 14, 1973, Hoch had a flameout, and after several unsuccessful attempts at a relight, Bob punched out of RF-8G 145615 over Arizona. (I am writing this on July 15, just 38 years later! Oy!) His wingman and close friend, Bob Norrell, orbited him as he came down in a fairly deserted area. After landing and taking stock of his situation, Bob heard the sound of approaching motorcycles. A man and his son were out dirt biking and were approaching Bob just as a reserve Air Force C-130 flew low for the crew to kick out a six-pack of beer. Bob climbed aboard one of the bikes, holding onto the driver with one hand and the resuscitative can of beer with the other. Ahhh-hh!

His rescuers took him to a military hospital where Bob had to explain the alcohol that showed up in the blood test. Somehow, he got through the doctor's exam.

As the CO, Bob was always upbeat and understanding, whether dealing with most junior enlisted or one of his pilots or ground officers, of which I was one. I have very fond memories of my time in this reserve squadron and Bob as the skipper.

All the best,

Peter Mersky

[airwriter@comcast.net]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Jim Roth's well written article on Special Weapons Delivery brought back memories! I was aboard Saratoga at the same time flying A4's with VA-34 Blue Blasters. It's interesting to note, in the picture of the A4 landing, that Sara at that time had six wires and had the mirror positioned on the starboard side (the source lights are visible in the photo).

Dick Pottratz

[pottratz@sbcglobal.net]

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continued...

LETTERS

Continued...

To the Editor:

Bob,

If you are collecting call sign stories, here are mine:

The first one, started as a nick-name while a ground pounder; "Tasty". Because I over used the word to extremes; anything I liked, taste wise, aesthetically, functionally, girls, it didn't matter, they were all "tasty". It followed me until the arrival of the new improved call sign.

The second one, "Mad Dog" came during a deployment in VMA 311 at Bien Hoa. I got bit by a dog, shot him in the head, and by the time they recovered him, there was no way to determine if he had rabies. So I ended up getting the whole series of rabies shots (in the solar plexus). The corpsman who administered the injections started referring to me as "mad dog", and from then on I was "Mad Dog." Naturally, the more I tried to shake it, the better it stuck. I started getting gifts from mystery donors, like wallets, belts, all sorts of stuff with "Mad Dog" embossed or painted or engraved on the gift.

Dave Reed

[w5sv.dave@gmail.com]

(Ed. Note: this exchange started when I mentioned that Rich Dinkel is writing a book on call sign stories. If you've got a really good story (believe me, he's already got some great ones!), email Rich at [rich-arddinkel@bellsouth.net].)

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Dear Dave Weber,

Can you please help me get in contact with Dave Leiber? I am doing some research on VMA-225 during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Regards,

Ronny Svendsen

[ronnysvendsen@hotmail.com]

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To the Editor:

Block Designation Letter

Occasionally, someone notices that the Bureau Number marked on some Navy aircraft is followed by a letter, often lower case, and wonders what that is all about. This practice dates back to at least the late 1950s.

U.S. Navy aircraft were usually

purchased in annual batches. There were almost always changes (improvements, problem fixes, different avionics, etc.) from batch to batch or even within a batch, which meant that there were groups of aircraft that were slightly different configurations, but not so different as to justify a change in the designation dash number. From a manufacturing configuration control standpoint, these were referred to as blocks. The maintenance documents provided to the Navy provided a cross reference of Bureau Numbers for each block for initial configuration definition and subsequent control. For convenience, the blocks were designated by letters, with A being assigned to the first one, B to the second, and so forth. Although not the usual practice in these matters, the letter "O" was not necessarily skipped for the 14th block.

However, aircraft were updated and improved during the periodic overhauls and aircraft from the same batch did not necessarily go through overhaul at the same time. Since changes continued throughout the life of the aircraft, that meant that the configuration of aircraft that had been produced in a particular block began to diverge from others in that block. As a result, the block designation letter was not as meaningful from a configuration definition standpoint after the first overhaul or so and not necessarily put back on when the aircraft was repainted.

Also, not all manufacturers seem to have followed this practice with delivered aircraft. However, it was common on those from Douglas and McDonnell.

Tommy H. Thomason

6 October 2011

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

See attached photo. It was taken in April 2002 at Ohakea Air Force Base, in New Zealand, when I worked for Safe Air and we were trying to sell the aircraft to potential buyers (ATSI and ATAC). BuNo would have been either 157915 or 154911 (they were the 2 T-bird demonstrators).

Regards,

Don Simms

don.simms@xtra.co.nz



Don Simms shows off Skyhawk Association patch while he cared for NZ Skyhawks that were placed in storage awaiting sale.

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

David,

On this past Memorial Day we had a VA-55 reunion in Millville, NJ, for our 1970-1972 pilots. We dedicated the Skyhawk that was in the museum, bureau number 154200, to a deceased squadronmate, LT John Born, a New Jersey resident. It was attended by 17 of us, and I have enclosed the picture we took at the ceremony. If you would like further details, I can email them back to you. I thought it would be good press for the Skyhawk journal.

A4S4EVR,

Denny Sapp



VA-55 reunion, L-R on wing: Rich Navickus, Jim Merizan, Eric Burns, Skip Stoner, Larry Hallett, Jack Zerr, Lee McTaggart, Chip Dury, Terry Wolf. L-R on ground: Denny Sapp, Bob Warrenton, Tom Latendresse, Jack Calhoun, Rich McCreary, Chuck Carrol. Missing, Lee Griffiths.

"SKYHAWK VENTURES" A-4 "CHARLIE" TAKES TO THE SKY

By Dave "Hide" Dollarhide



For the past couple of years, you've heard us talking about the progress of the **SKYHAWK VENTURES** A-4C restoration in Sanford, FL. It's now a reality and the Skyhawk has taken to the air for the first time since 1969. By last count this is the 98th flying Scooter in the world...and probably the only "Charlie!"

By this time, you may have read about the first flight in *Warbird Digest* magazine, or some other flying publication. However, those of you with email addresses on file with the Skyhawk Association saw the **Breaking Skyhawk News** email first from our President, Todd (Hun) Frommelt. Dan Carr and Porter Spangler of *Skyhawk Ventures* wanted our association to have the

"scoop," and held off the magazines for a while. Now it's our pleasure to bring you more details and flying photos of this beautifully restored Scooter.

Known as BUNO 149606, the airplane is actually three different A-4s. The front half gets to sport its bureau number, while the rear is from 148576 and the wing, 145131. 149606 was in service with the Navy a mere seven years, from '62 to '69, but if you were a Scooter driver, check your logbook. Maybe you have some cockpit time...or flew the tail or wing when they were whole airplanes.

Dan Carr and I first met in the early '70s, flying A-4Ls with VA-203, a reserve squadron located in Jacksonville, FL. Dan had been an A-7 Corsair

II pilot on active duty, and this was his first experience with our maneuverable "Scooter."

It was around 2003 when Dan reacquainted with Porter Spangler, a former high school classmate. Finding a common interest, they hatched a plan to restore an A-4 to flying condition. They purchased a collection of neglected Skyhawk parts from a private source and set about the task. None of the parts had been preserved, so every piece of the airplane needed attention.

All unnecessary military equipment was removed and remaining systems renewed. The aluminum structures were refurbished or replaced. The best one of several J-65-W16 engines was sent out for overhaul. A complete and correct wiring harness was installed. The autopilot components were removed, saving almost 200#. They've left the armament panels in the cockpit for the original look, but nothing works on the weapons panel except for the seat adjust switch. Porter tells me he's seen every nut, bolt and part over the past eight years. It's like a new airplane through and through!

continued...



Downwind again. (Photo by Alex Beatty taken from back seat of Dollarhide's RV-4.)

SKYHAWK VENTURES

Continued...

With the military equipment and wiring removed, the airplane became very light, especially compared to when it was configured with armor plating. Referring to my old 1966 NATOPS Pocket Checklist, the airplane now weighs about the same as the A-4A, with pilot and two drop tanks, at 10,000#.

As you check out the photos, some of you old heads will pick up on the fact that this VA-86/USS America paint job doesn't represent reality. The fact is...Dan's old squadron, the "Sidewinders," was not flying Scooters aboard America. They were operating the A-7 Corsair. However, when you're shelling out the bucks, you get to paint it any way you want. ...and it looks very cool!



*Not a bad landing considering a 40+ year layoff!
(Photo by Alex Beatty taken from back seat of Dollarhide's RV-4.)*

Larry "Worm" Elmore was also in VA-86 with Dan and is now the primary pilot flying the A-4C. With 2,600 A-4 hours in his younger years, he spends

a lot of time with his eyes glazed over, trying to adjust to the euphoria of having a Skyhawk strapped to his back again.

The first flight day arrived on August 5, 2011. I flew down to Sanford with two friends in our experimental RV-4s to observe and take air to air photos and video. Since Worm would re-qualify by making three landings, the brief was simple, "Don't exceed 150 kts. so we can keep up." The airplane was beautiful as we flew close formation around the pattern. I was elated to be flying wing on a Scooter once again. According to Worm, it flew perfect, and back on the ramp, with the engine winding down, he opened the canopy and said, "It was just like the old days, Hide."

We captured some great photos and video. After eight years of work, the Skyhawk Ventures team of Dan, Porter, Larry, Phil, David and Tom were elated at the first flight success.



Close parade. (Photo by Alex Beatty taken from back seat of Dollarhide's RV-4.)



Clean as a whistle, and light as a feather. (Photo by Dave Dollarhide.)



Larry Elmore in 149606, chased by Bob Wooley in his RV-4.
(Photo by Alex Beatty taken from back seat of Dollarhide's RV-4.)

Now for a fun twist to this story. The FAA designee who checked out Worm was Rick Millson, who actually has time in his logbook flying the very same airplane, 149606. Making it even more significant, in 1965, Rick took a 37mm AAA round through the left wing and made it back to his ship of the coast

of Vietnam. Rick was invited to take his old bird around the patch at Sanford and his big grin after landing said it all. See the sidebar for his story.

Meanwhile, Elmore has been flying off the required five-hour test program, and the airplane continues to work like a Swiss watch. At last count, Worm had seen the "speed meter" on 400kts, verified required aerobatic maneuvers and fell in love with the incredible A-4 roll rate all over again. "It flies like a dream," he says. Larry is very comfortable in the antique Skyhawk, but admits he's still working on his skills with the modern Garmin 696, which replaced the old "B scope" RADAR.

A couple of weeks after the first flight, I met Worm in the designated flight test area with some more of my RV buds. There was a need for photos of the airplane in a clean configuration. You can't see the grins in the cockpits, but the cool photos tell the story. The past comes alive as we Scooter lovers watch it fly. Look for the "Charlie" at future flying events.

For video of the first flight, go to
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1dWvEJImc0>.

AAA HIT PULLING OFF TARGET

Another sturdy Skyhawk takes its pilot back to the boat

By Dave Dollarhide

*USS Bon Homme Richard
Gulf of Tonkin, December, 1965*

LTJG Rick Millson usually flew "Iron Hand" missions with Shrike missiles, but today he would go after a North Vietnam bridge with his "World Famous Golden Dragons" squadronmates of VA-192. He manned his Skyhawk, BUNO 149696, which was configured with two drop tanks and a load of iron bombs on the center rack.

Arriving over target, the flight of A-4s rolled in with heavy flack in the air. Rick released his four bombs and had begun the pullout when an explosion "knocked the plane upside down." There was a "hell of a noise, and I immediately righted the aircraft and headed for the water."

With fire trailing from a large hole in his left wing, Rick continued toward the safety of the Tonkin Gulf. His wingmen had serious doubts, but the Skyhawk continued to fly and was soon clear of the coast with the fire out.

Realizing his loss of wing fuel, Rick activated the Fuel Transfer Bypass Switch to bypass the wing tank and began calling for a tanker. It was his squadronmate and friend, Mike Allum who arrived with a tanker package on his centerline to save the day. Rick plugged into the "basket" behind Mike's A-4 and managed to maintain formation with full right trim and both hands on the stick to keep his wings level.

The "Bonny Dick" was turned into the wind as Mike maneuvered the two Scooters to final. "You're on the ball," Mike broadcast on the radio as they disconnected. Mike added power and went around to allow Rick to fly his pass. "I landed hot and took the three wire and that was that. I must admit, I almost fainted when I got out and saw the damage."

The 37mm round had glanced off a drop tank, then

blasted through the left wing. There was a huge hole, with the surrounding skin peeled off. After a photo of both Rick and Mike standing through the hole to document the occasion, it was over. ...time to launch on another mission.

Leap forward to 2011, and 149606 has been restored to flight status. The owners, Skyhawk Ventures, LLC, let Rick take his old ride around the pattern a couple of times. It was just like the old days, but this time, the Skyhawk was flying straight.



Rick Millson following his August 5th flight in Skyhawk Ventures' A-4C 149696. More than 45 years had elapsed since Rick's last flight in that aircraft.
(Photo via Dave Dollarhide.)

LE CIELFAUCON FRANCAIS

• 1963 •

Via Boom Powell



~ Le Cielfaucou Français ~

That's French Skyhawk for those who don't parlez. After an item appeared in the Skyhawk Association's journal, A4Ever, Tom Myers who was head of the Carrier Suitability Branch at Pax River, wrote and turned a TINS into a true tale of adventure.

We were tasked to fly two A-4M's to France in September 1972 and operate off their carrier *Foch* (R99). I learned the Marines were taking a squadron of A-4M's over to Norway for an exercise at the same time so we had a meeting to see if we could tag along and use the same SAR forces on the crossing from Argentia to Iceland. The Marines said it would be OK to add ourselves to the end of the line. The navigation would be all dead reckoning after Newfoundland and the Scooters would be tight on gas. I had arranged for the Recce RAG's (RVAH-3) TA-3 to go with us (ed: trainer *Skywarrior*, not a tanker.) When the Marines found out we had a pathfinder they asked if we would please go first and call back wind corrections, etc.

At the flight briefing I made some smart remark about if you have to eject, just before you hit the water you should raise your arms over your head. The rescue folks wouldn't come get you unless they saw body movement. With your arms frozen in that position the Atlantic waves would make it seem you were waving. The young Marines didn't see the humor.

The leg from Pax to Argentia was my first flight in an A-4M. The next day the weather was near zero-zero and solid to 30,000 feet. We lined up and requested a section takeoff with our pathfinder. Not approved. Asked for the two A-4s to go in section. Not approved. So the TA-3 went first, then me, and then the second A-4M. Their radar was good only out to fifty miles.

It took 100 miles to get on top of the clouds and another 100 miles of direction finder cuts to get the two A-4s together only to learn the TA-3 had climbed slower and was now behind us! After much praying in the cockpit, God put the three of us together just as we approached the no return point.

We could hear the Marines talking as they climbed and got their flights together. The pathfinder crew would call back winds and recommended headings which would be radioed back to each flight. Everything seemed to be settling down except the weather was still solid below us.

As we got to Greenland, the clouds looked like they had been cut with a knife, a perfect sharp line, and from that point on it was sky-blue perfect. The TA-3 passed the word back, "You can see Greenland" You could hear it being relayed back to each flight, "You can see Greenland. You can see Greenland" Probably from the last flight to get airborne, a nervous voice filled with relief said, "Thank God!" The BOQ bar in Keflavik was pandemonium that night. And the TA-3 crew didn't have to pay for a single drink.

The two A-4M's we took over looked identical from the outside, but one aircraft had an internal self-starter while the other needed the standard ground gear. The first night at the French air base in Landivisau, the Douglas factory crew changed the 300 gallon fuel drop tanks for 300 gallon water tanks which look exactly like the gas tanks except for a small vent line that allowed you to blow the water out quickly when you pressurized the transfer system. Inside, a system of baffles stopped the slosh of water during a cat shot if only partly full. You would take a cat shot at a certain gross weight, turn down wind, blow the water out and land, fill them up again to the desired weight.



The French carrier Foch steams in support of Operation Dragon Hammer 1992. During November 2000, the Foch was sold to Brazil and operates today as NAe São Paulo.

In the morning when the French saw us filling the drop tanks with a garden hose the word spread and soon a large crowd was watching sure that either the Americans had learned how to burn water, or they were going to see a crash at the end of the runway.....in either case they wanted to watch.

The French line personnel looked like they had a new piece of yellow gear—the hose was pure white without a mark on it—and came over to start me. After I started, my wingman used his self-starter and was up and running within seconds. The French stared with amazement and you knew they were thinking, *Sacre Bleu, you start the lead and it's good for everyone else. What a wonderful A-4M, we need this aircraft.*

The object of the tests was to get as high a gross weight cat shot and the fastest engage speed on landing as possible. We had our own LSO, USN maintenance chief and plane captain plus several Pax River Carrier Suitability engineers; the rest were Douglas contractors for maintenance. Great team of folks who really wanted the aircraft to give its best show. My wingman was LT Myrden Pelligrin who was on the team because he was from New Orleans and understood some French. The Douglas folks really wanted to sell the aircraft, but the USN in the form of me as a LCDR was in charge.

As we increased the launch weights we started seeing some strange effects. The catapults were made by the Brits and not reinforced as frequently along the track as ours are. With the steep angle of the bridle and the heavier weights putting more and more downward pressure on the nose wheel and the track itself, the track deflected and didn't have time to flex back up by the time the shuttle got there. Metal was shearing off the underside of the track. At those heavy weights we could have had a bridle failure and gone off sideways or something equally unpleasant. The simple fix would have been to rotate the nose tire forward to give the track time to rebound. But since the French didn't buy the A-4...

Our impression when we flew out to the *Foch* and landed was the deck was small, really small. Also, that the lens setting put us a little short. Since they wanted to get closer and closer to the theoretical max engaging speed, we were given exact speeds to hit the wire. Because of having to fly within one knot on approach and the wind over the deck determining the actual engaging speed, it was only after landing that we knew how it went. Somehow we hit every point on every landing we did. Their own development folks onboard thought we walked on water... so they



LCDR Tom Myers, project pilot; CAPT Jack Chalbeck, head of the Flight Test Division at Pax River; and LT Myrden Pelligrin, project pilot; in front of one of the two A-4M Skyhawks used in the *Foch* (R 99) carrier suitability trials. The Skyhawk, BuNo 158148, is now on display at the Quonset Air Museum, North Kingstown, R.I. (Photo via Boom Powell.)



Tom Myers (left) and Myrden Pelligrin with A-4M Skyhawk BuNo 158148 on board the French aircraft carrier *Foch*. Photo via Boom Powell.

kept pushing us to go faster and faster. Twice we upped our own limits. Finally, we said, "That's it. Buy the aircraft and you can do your own tests". After that I flew to Paris to debrief the higher-ups, shake hands all around and went back to Landisau.

We were not looking forward to flying the Skyhawks back across the pond against the wind in even colder weather and learned that JFK was in the North Sea and headed back to Norfolk in a week. We had the Test Center get permission through what we thought were appropriate channels to land and have an A-7 squadron take care of the aircraft while we COD'ed off and went home in airliner comfort. We were given radio and tacan frequencies, a PIM, an overhead time and off we went. On first contact, the ship asked, "Who?" We said, "Us." They said "Wait One" This was repeated several times, until, "Say intentions." We said, "Landing." They said, "Wait One". So it went back and forth. We just knew that no one had told the ship we were coming. Finally, from our six o'clock, two F-4's slowly came up, one on each side, to confirm we were just two American *Skyhawks* looking for a home plate. After landing and a tricky dismount without a ladder, I naturally was invited to the bridge for a chat. The captain was even unhappier about his unexpected visitors when I requested a COD ride to the beach because we had a flight to catch in London.

(Ed. Note: this article was originally published in *The Hook*, Summer 2007. Used with permission.)

CLOSE ONLY COUNTS IN HORSE SHOES, HAND GRENADES, AND NUKES

• Close to What? •

By Mark "Senator" Williams



VMA-324 did nuke training at NAS China Lake in July 1971. It was an excellent place to qualify for MOS 7592 (*Ed. note: Special Weapons Delivery Pilot*). Some of us took the time to visit the "Charlie" Tower near the nuclear target we used for lofts, 90 degree pull-ups, and over-the-shoulder deliveries. The tower tracked the weapon with theodolites and its path was plotted real-

time on graph paper on the wall, both in the vertical plane and horizontal plane. Most deliveries were "ho-hum" routine. But once while I was there a tower observer suddenly leapt to the horizontal graph and with a straight edge quickly plotted a line and called out "600 feet," or something similar. I thought, well that's better than an 800 foot qualifying score. But what he meant was that the

shape would miss Charlie Tower by only 600 feet.

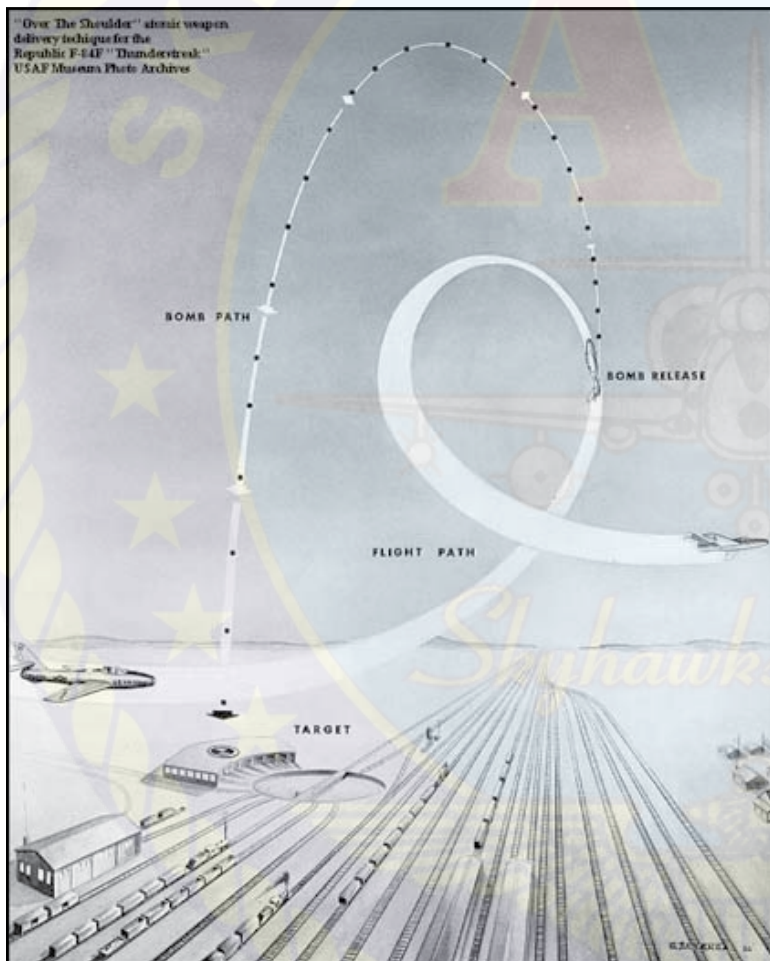
Asked what the closest hit to the tower was, he took me down to the parking lot and showed the hole to me (see the attached photo I took). It was a MK-76 hit in the parking lot, a hole through the asphalt 75 feet from the tower. The closest hit winner was a VMA-331 pilot who accomplished this feat earlier in July 1971. We watched another over-the-shoulder delivery of a 2000-pound shape from the railing outside



The "Near-miss" record – VMA-331 July 1971

the windows of Charlie Tower. Amazingly, as the shape reached its apogee, it appeared to make a 90 degree turn towards the tower. It was an illusion, of course, as the shape was dumbly following the trajectory imputed to it on release. However, when the delivery aircraft dipped a wing near release, it meant that the weapon wasn't going to go straight up on the run-in heading, but would be off to the side, and the effect seemed to be magnified as it reached apogee and started back down. What the observer had plotted was the horizontal path of the bomb right after the apogee to see how it lined up towards the tower. The one I watched that appeared to make a 90 degree turn came hurtling down, sounding like a freight train as it buried itself in the desert floor barely on the other side of the fence surrounding Charlie Tower.

I believe that the observers could drop down to safety, just under the tower, if it looked like a weapon might hit the tower. I don't recall if hiding from a 2000 pound shape was feasible. I hope they got hazardous duty pay.



Over-the Shoulder bomb delivery diagram from publications of Republic Aviation, F-84 during Cold War era. Image via USAF Museum Archives.

THE LAST COMBAT CRUISE OF THE A-4 CHARLIES

By J.J. McBride



In my *SHANG LOG* book, I wrote about the experiences of the last USS *Shangri-La* cruise to WestPac in 1970 and my A-4C Skyhawk squadron, VA-12. I believe this cruise was the last combat mission for the A-4Cs, assigned to VA-12 and VA-172. There was another light attack squadron assigned to CVW-8 for this 9-1/2 month deployment, which went from Mayport, Florida, to the Vietnam War. This was VA-152, an A-4E West Coast squadron, which had the misfortune to fly across country to board the old carrier for the cruise. The *Shang* was originally scheduled to make a Mediterranean cruise in 1970. However, we were told our carrier was needed over in WestPac so some of those hard working carriers could take a rest, meaning get some needed yard work.

For most of the pilots from the two A-4C squadrons, this would be their first combat cruise. Some, however, such as LCDR Ray Lodge, our Maintenance Officer, had flown off the first East Coast carrier, USS *Independence*, to WestPac with VA-72 in 1965, flying an A-4E. I happened to be on board for that cruise flying an E-1B Willy Fudd with VAW-12 Det-62. I transitioned to jets in the T-2B of VT-4 (1967-1969), so I was delighted to get orders to a Skyhawk attack squadron. It is noteworthy the VA-12 Kiss of Death pilots had made a June 1966-Feb 1967 WestPac cruise on board the USS *Roosevelt*, flying the A-4E Skyhawk.

Needless to say, our old A4-Charlies were in keeping with the old 27-Charlie

aircraft carrier. The *Shangri-La* was truly a Mediterranean carrier, where the in-port periods were longer than the at-sea flying times. We were rather surprised when we learned it was going to the Pacific. Fortunately, in so many ways, we were going into combat during the period when the powers to be in Washington, DC, stopped Rolling Thunder and the bombing of the North. Our missions were primarily concerned with bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail and other interdiction routes south.

The *Shangri-La* had so many problems keeping her readiness commitments that our squadron made up a CASREP 70 patch. For us attack pilots, outside of the VA-152 guys in their A-4E Scooters, the big worry was the *Shang* getting enough wind over the deck to launch our bombers. With little wind in the Gulf of Tonkin, the *Shang* really worked her engineers to get 20 knots of wind over the deck, which was considered minimum for launching. I will never forget the first day of combat operations, with five Mk-82 500 pound bombs strapped on the center line, being launched with just enough wind. The flight deck personnel told me they could see my rooster tail of sea water behind my Skyhawk as I dropped to the water after the launch. It felt like forever before the old bird started her climb. When the ordnance crew downloaded one of the bombs it helped a bit, but it was still an exciting ride.

The Air Wing lost eight aircraft during the six-month line period on Yankee Station, six of them A-4C Skyhawks. One was written up as a combat loss, but we figured the pilot flew into the mountain on a night bombing hop. Two losses really got our attention because they happened during the catapult shot. Each of the two A-4C squadrons lost an aircraft, but fortunately the pilots were fast enough to eject before their planes went into the deep water. The cause of these accidents and the grounding of our A-4 Charlies on 25 September 1970, four days before the end

of our fifth line period, was launch hook failure. The Navy Supply folks had to go to Davis-Monthan, Arizona, to get replacements hooks off the A-4B and C aircraft in the bone yard and express ship them to Japan and the Philippines. We flew half our aircraft to NAS Atsugi, Japan, to have the hooks replaced during the in-port period.

The USS *America* was making its first WestPac and Vietnam combat cruise while we were over there, so we got to see the A-7E *Corsair II* in action occasionally. I remember one four-plane flight I was leading when the FAC asked if we had 20 mm to strafe some oil barrels being floated down the river. I had no sooner reported we had around 200 rounds, when a section of A-7Es from the *America* called in to say they had 2,000 rounds. We carried only one gun per A4 with 50 rounds and the A-7E had a M61A1 rapid fire canon with 1,000 rounds. It was not a hard choice for the FAC. It was something to orbit the river and watch the Corsairs make one run each to tear up the water and set dozens of oil barrels on fire.

Perhaps the real big gift for all the sweat and tears of the cruise was the fact Rolling Thunder was not resumed, and we were not sent into North Vietnam. It would have been sending lambs to the slaughter. The deployment did have some sad results as the USS *Shangri-La*, after a long and distinguished career, was decommissioned following the cruise. Two of the attack squadrons, VA-172 and VA-152, were also decommissioned. VA-12 lived on to fly the A-7E Corsair II. Roby Day and I transitioned to the new aircraft and made a Mediterranean cruise with CVW-7 on board the USS *Independence* in 1971. I went on to become a production test pilot at NAVPRO Dallas for the A-7E and Air Force A-7D aircraft. Then I finally got to the West Coast and NAS Lemoore to fly with VA-192, the world famous Golden Dragons.

But even with over 1,500 hours in the A-7E, those 452 hours in the A-4C Skyhawk, most logged on the *Shangri-La* cruise, remain the most memorable. Likewise, after a 24-year career in the Navy, I am closest to the Clinchers of VA-12. A-4s Forever!



147698a A-4C circa '68 VA-216 NL-605 Yankee station CAPT DL-Clarke.

TINS

By Editorial Staff

Parachute Fails to Deploy, ~ Twice. ~

In 1964, on a training flight from NAS Lemoore above California's Sierra Nevada mountains, Lt. Ed Dickson experienced engine failure and was forced to eject from his A-4 Skyhawk. Dickson's rocket seat fired normally, and there was a good seat separation, but the parachute did not open.

In a hard-to-believe scenario, Dickson landed on a steep slope in a heavy drift of soft snow. Cushioned by a soft impact and, after many yards of free-style snow sliding, the pilot was able to walk away from his unusual landing with only minor injuries.

When a rescue truck and crew arrived to transport Dickson down from the mountain recovery area, the malfunctioning parachute was tossed into the back of the truck. As the rescue vehicle worked its way back down the mountain trail and passed 10,000 feet of altitude, the dormant parachute surprised Dickson and his rescue crew. Performing as designed, the barostatic sensor popped and the chute deployed. Needless to say, parachute barostatic sensors for aircraft operating over the mountainous Continental U.S. were subsequently reprogrammed to open at 14,000 feet, higher than most mountain peaks.

Sadly, a year following his miraculous survival in the snow-covered Sierras, Lt. Dickson was killed in action while assigned to the VA-155 Silver Foxes flying from USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43). During an early (7 February 1965) strike mission over North Vietnam, Dickson's A-4E Skyhawk was hit by anti-aircraft artillery. Although his aircraft was on fire, Dickson, with determined effort, completed his bombing mission and subsequently nursed his wounded aircraft toward relative safety of the Tonkin Gulf. He was seen to eject about half a mile offshore but, coincidentally, his parachute failed to deploy.

Only the second Naval Aviator to be lost during a strike mission over North Vietnam in that long ago war, Ed Dickson was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross.

(Ed. Note: this account was published in March 2009 in the *Hannah News*, journal of the U.S.S. Hancock (CV/CVA-19) Association.)

The Skyhawk Association has dedicated its *Skyhawks on Display* section of the website to the memory of Lt. Dickson. His Navy Cross citation is quoted there:

"On Sunday, February 7, 1965 Lieutenant Dickson flew his A-4E Skyhawk NL 503, BuNo. 150075, with Attack Squadron 155, from the USS Coral Sea (CVA-43), during a strike against the Dong Hoi staging area in North Vietnam. When his Skyhawk was struck by intense enemy anti-aircraft fire on a low-level run-in to the target area and burst into flames, Lieutenant Dickson elected to continue his run with his burning aircraft until he released his bombs on the target. Following his attack, Dickson headed toward the sea where he ejected from his burning Skyhawk. Unfortunately, he did not survive and was listed as Killed in Action.

By his inspiring and courageous devotion to duty, Lieutenant Dickson upheld the finest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

The Daily

★ ★ ★ SERVING SOUTHERN ALAM

Vol. 71 — No. 159

Jefferson 7-5310

HAYWARD, CALI

His First Jump

Pilot Never Knew Chute Didn't Open

OAKLAND (AP)—For all Lt. Edward A. Dickson knew, his first bail-out from a plane was routine.

The doubts began coming when he plummeted four feet into a deep snow drift — and bounced back out about 30 feet in the air, skidded along the snow and slammed into a pine tree.

That was Thursday. The 26-year-old Navy flier from Wyoming, Pa., had just fallen 1,000 feet after bailing out of his disabled A-4 Skyhawk jet over a desolate area of the Sierra Nevada about 60 miles northwest of Bishop, Calif. He didn't realize the parachute hadn't opened.

RECUPERATING

Saturday, he commented from a bed in Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, where he's recuperating from a broken right leg:

"If I'd known, it might've scared the hell out of me."

The speed of the fall, estimated at 120 miles an hour or five seconds from ejection to impact, didn't alert the pilot to his predicament.

"Who knows what a 'chute is supposed to feel like? To me, this was the normal reaction. I'd never bailed out before."

Lt. Col. Robert Schweitzer, commander of the training flight from Lemoore Naval Air Station in Central California, was circling overhead and saw Dickson's fall and bounce.

Dickson continued:

"When I saw the plane, I got up and took a few steps and waved to tell them I was all right. His right leg hurt, so I sat down in the snow again, then reached for my survival kit, in the 'chute seat' I was sitting on."

"As I turned, I noticed the parachute was still strapped to my back, still in its pack."

"I thought, 'The damn thing didn't open.'"

"For a moment I was curious, wondering why it hadn't opened, but only for a fleeting second. I had other things to do right then."

"I looked to see what time it was, but my watch had broken on impact. I got out a marker, an infrared red strobe we carry for the purpose."

"Then I got out the parachute and wrapped myself up in it to keep warm and waited."

Two hours later, four men from the June Mountain Ski thought then was to get over the dangerous



LUCKY JUMP ... Navy Lt. Edward A. Dickson, 26, has something to smile about in his bed at Oakland's Oak Knoll Naval Hospital. He survived a 1,000-foot fall into a snow bank after his parachute failed to open after bailing out of his aircraft over Badger Pass last week. Dickson, whose home is in Wyoming, Pa., suffered a broken leg in the fall. —AP Wirephoto

Lodge — four miles from the mountains to land the aircraft

zone — clugged up in a snow vehicle, expecting to find a body, along with the wreckage that came down close to the flier.

They found a very live Dickson, who admitted Saturday he realized his luck. "The nurse tells me a fellow once slipped and fell off the bottom step of the porch out there and got hurt worse."

The accident occurred almost over Badger Pass, Dickson explained. "Paul is. I was supposed to be skiing today, up on Badger Pass."

15,000 FEET The young pilot recalled that his plane was at 15,000 feet over the mountains at 11 a.m. Thursday when:

"I saw I was losing altitude — dropping below the formation. I tried to rectify it. We have back-up systems for that purpose — to inject fuel or air. My thought then was to get over the dangerous

area. I can't wait to get back in a cockpit. While I'm waiting, I may have to do a bit of driving. You know, I really older people driving a car. It's damn stopped take his

Police Radio Systems

R.G.'s ART

• High Flight •



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

No one painted clouds better than R.G. Smith. Here he depicts a Marine TA-4 with an unusual ordnance load.

*Courtesy of
Sharlyn Marsh.*

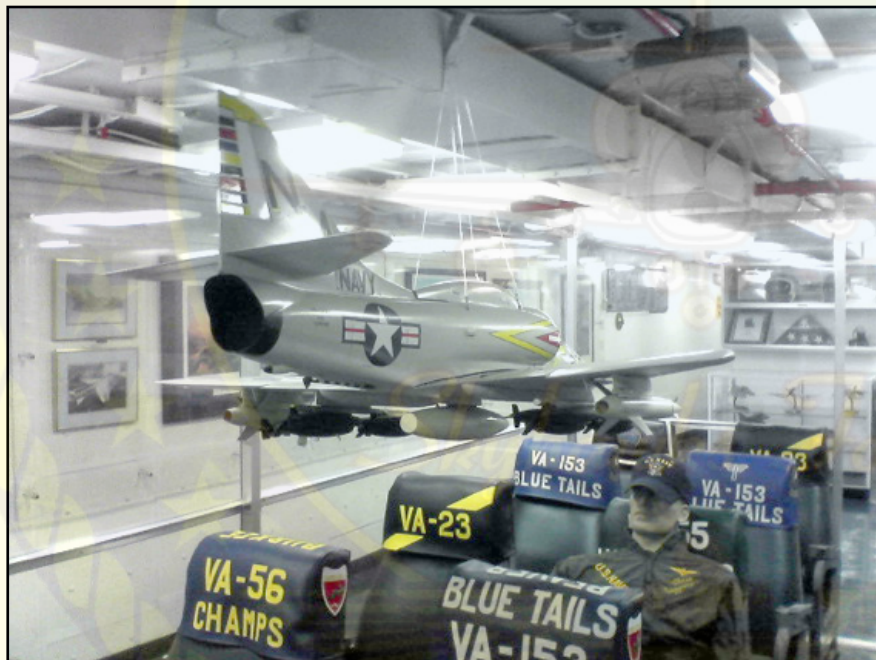


FROM THE ATTIC

• Mailbag •

Before they fade and crumple,
share your photos.

email to
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org



64" long, 46" wing span A-4F model recently acquired to hang in USS Midway RR3. The model was a gift from the A-6 RR coordinator, Capt. Larry Yarham. Photo via Bill Gilchrist.



VA-55 squadron patch dating from 1955 to 1958 period (top). At bottom is very rare VA-55 cruise patch commemorating 1958 cruise on USS Bennington. Images via Denny Sapp.

READ? YOU THINK WE READ?

TRIPLE STICKS:

Tales of a Few Young Men in the 1960's

Bernard Fipp, Outskirts Press,
2010, 421 pp
(no Illus. Maps, Index)

Reviewed by R.R. 'Boom' Powell,
CDR, USN (ret), CVW-10, USS Intrepid, 1967

As an old A-4 pilot one look at the cover of Bernard Fipp's *Triple Sticks* with a set of Gold Wings and a nose-on Skyhawk superimposed over the insignia of VA-34 ensured the book was a must-read. Better still, the "Tales of a Few Young Men" (the subtitle) is during Intrepid's 1967 Vietnam deployment and YHS was there. Therein lies the problem with the book. While much of it is evocative of the air war and will bring back memories for veterans of the era, other parts of *Triple Sticks* fall in the I-didn't-see-it-that-way category.

Is it worth buying a copy? Yes, if only for the good parts and the chance to find your own pet peeves and annoyances. (Trust not SpelChek; "ordinance" and "site picture" are used throughout.)

Fipp's descriptions of a JO's life in training are some of the best. He does occasionally come up with apt phrases: "Some of our daily mission names must have been picked by the interior decorators in the White House." (e.g. Mission *Teacup*)



Bombing practice: "The target having all the characteristics of some lost civilization's attempt to communicate with a higher order."

Duty assignments: "We thought (the senior watch officer) wasn't being 'fair' with watch assignments. JO's have a heightened sense of what 'fair' is."

During a transit, no fly period: "Ours were idle minds locked in intelligent brains and high-energy bodies."

A glossary would have helped this book by eliminating awkward parenthetical explanations and defining a multitude of arcane terms and slang. Most of all, *Triple Sticks* needed an editor; not only for grammar, usage and punctuation technicalities, but to provide a much needed, dispassionate critique.

Fipp refers to Intrepid as "Atlas", the carrier's callsign, so much that one thinks there must have been a USS Atlas. Among other goofs this reviewer noted are:

1. Aircraft designations have a hyphen after the letter
2. B4 bag is not a parachute bag
3. "New nugget" (is there an old nugget?)
4. MCAAS Yuma in 1966

5. The first word of FCLP is Field, not Fleet
6. "Sea showers" = navy showers?
7. Ship's "vortex" vs burble
8. "Neckerchiefs" blowing in aircraft slipstream
9. C-1 COD aircraft going to full power on landing
10. Setting toe brakes in A-4C
11. Old Cubi club was not a Quonset hut
12. "Bagged" means shot down, not just hit
13. Victoria Peak, not Mt Victoria, is in Hong Kong
14. Poopy suit is not a term for flight suit
15. "Conning tower" on a carrier!!

Fipp is not kind to officers senior to him to the point where he gives everyone an alias. Despite being his CO's wingman on most missions, Cdr "Frog" is subject to particular ridicule. The overall impression is of an unhappy junior officer with no grasp of the big picture. The squadron next deployed to Mediterranean. If Fipp made that cruise (a logical assumption) he does not mention it or how it affected his attitude before bailing out of active duty.

Triple Sticks is a cut above the usual Vietnam memoir. There is only one way to learn what affect the book will have on you and that is to read it.

PS Fipp confused squadron callsigns, (usually shortened to one word) and nicknames. The A-4 squadrons in CVW-10 in 1967 were: VSF-3 *Nevada (City)*, VA-34 (*Fighting*) *Tiger*, and VA-15 *Active (Boy)*. The photo F-8's of VFP-63 were *Corktip*, F-8C's of VF-111 *Old Nick*, and one of the last Skyraider squadrons, VA-145 *Electron*.

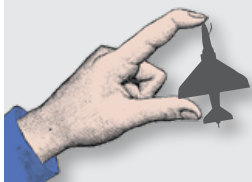


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Got a buddy who tries to leave with your copy of the *A-4Ever*? Got a pal who flew the Scooter but never reads about its illustrious history? Got women around you that think you're making up all those war stories and flying tales? Got kids who ask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

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SIZE DOES MATTER

• Modelers' Corner •

By Joe Turpen

These photos display the new Trumpeter 1/32nd scale Adversary A-4E kit #02266. The photos were provided by Ross MacMillan of Scale Aircraft Conversions, and the model was built by Brian Wakeman, a modeler who is a contributor to the British publication Scale Aircraft Modelling (British spelling).

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



BOOM-BOOM ROOM

• Question from Tommy Thomason •

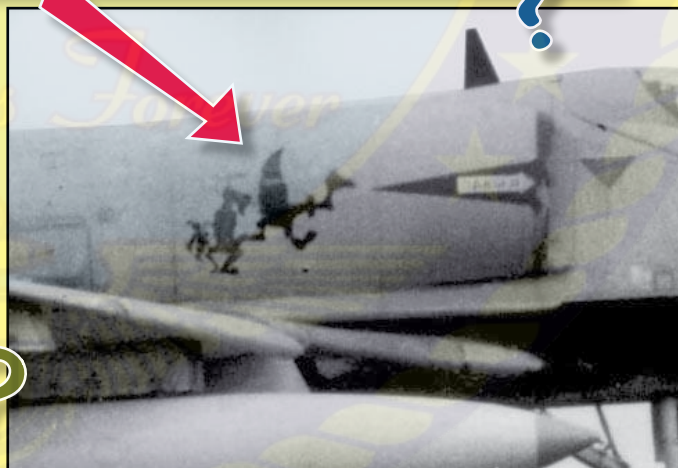


Here are some puzzlin' photos and a question from one of our readers. Can you answer it?



Question: Please find the attached two photos: does anyone know the meaning of the "condor" design applied to A-4Es from VA-12 as well as VMA-311, sometime in 1966, during Vietnam War?

Ed. note: If you know the answer, write me at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.



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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.



Tailhook Symposium 2012, Reno, NV, September 6-9, 2012.



Skyhawk Association 2012 Annual Meeting and Luncheon at Tailhook: 12:00 noon, September 7, 2012, Nugget Hotel.

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



TAPS

★ Alexander, William - St. Louis, MO

★ Poerwoko, Djoko - Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia



From Skyhawk Association President, Todd Frommelt:

"It is with deep regret that we received word of the passing of our only Indonesian Air Force member, General Djoko Poerwoko, this past August while still serving his country."

TAPS notices may be emailed to Bob Hickerson, Newsletter Editor at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

or mail to Bob Hickerson,
1222 Balcones Drive,
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For TAPS lists, members may access these links: www.a4skyhawk.org/2D/KIA.htm • www.a4skyhawk.org/2E/ops_losses.htm

PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul

~ Viva Espana! ~

Way back before cheap airfares enabled the Birkenstock Brigades to shoulder their backpacks and invade Europe, the only way an ordinary mortal could enjoy such exotic climes was to "Join the Navy and see the world!" True, the odd Air Force chap could expose himself to a few spots "Over there," and Elvis could get drafted into the Army and drink beers in Germany. But nothing compared to the Big Cookie Jar that was a Med Cruise on one of the Senior Service's Big Iron Boats, particularly if their tops were flat and the vacationer could fly off them. All the exotic countries that rimmed the Mediterranean beckoned, and Puresome licked his chops.

Squadron wives, wise creatures that they were, licked their chops as well. A great oral tradition had sprung up and been passed on to succeeding generations of shoppers that had joined their husbands across the Pond. The secrets of the best little hotels or pensiones, and the joys of lace, marble fruit, leather, and exotic perfumes in each liberty port were cataloged and amplified, and "must pump" lists were made. They, in fact, had the gouge, and those that were able arranged passage and got set to follow the ship.

So, Puresome thrummed across the Atlantic, deep in the bowels of the U.S.S. *Independence* (CVA-62), enduring two-a-day AOM's and planning for a Master Nuclear Bomber dissertation on two SIOP targets he had been assigned. Eventually, the ship slud by Gibraltar and arrived off Cannes, just in time for Bastille Day festivities. It was filthy work that had to be done, so Puresome steeled himself into watching tan made-moiselles in mono-kini's cavort on the beach, sipping Beaujolais, and ordering what turned out to be Pancreas a' la Orange off menus on chalkboards. Tunita, who had thrummed her way across the North Atlantic in an ancient chartered turboprop, got to stop briefly in picturesque Iceland while an errant part got re-duct taped. Finally arriving in Frankfurt, she picked up a shiny, red Triumph Spitfire sporty car, and she and Nurse Kathy, another squadron wife, pointed south through several different countries, currencies, and languages. As a tribute to what two pretty females in a red convertible can do, they chuffed into Cannes and the Medeterraneo Hotel before the ship was to go away. Word was passed to the ship, and Puresome managed to expedite a running rendezvous without overshooting. It was rather a good thing.

But keeping the world free for democracy was not all Liberty Call, and the Boat soon got underway and flight operations commenced. This being a peacetime cruise, the CAG had decided it would be a feather in the Air Wing's cap to bag more night traps than any other Air Wing in the history of Med Cruises. To foster a jolly competition between squadrons, The Golden Hook Plaque would be awarded to the squadron with the best cumulative landing grades each at-sea period, as well as an Empirical Airwing "E," which had something to do with grades assigned for napkin ring etiquette, or such. Puresome thought this was Real Good, but his main concentration was trying to bag at least as many traps as Worm, who had the unfair advantage of being Schedules Officer. So he happily bombed smoke lights in the wine dark sea, toted buddy stores on boring tanker hops, and tried real hard to stay out of all the polyglot restricted airspaces that seemed to cover the whole Med.

So when word filtered down to the Snake's Ready Room that the CAG was looking for a Spanish-speaking officer, Puresome's ears perked up. It seemed that, prior to the next port, which was Barcelona, the Air Wing wanted to use some feet-dry bombing targets that were outside Zaragoza, Spain. While volunteering was always an iffy thing, and leaving the ship would put him temporarily behind in the race for traps with Worm, it seemed an early opportunity to hook up with the Child Bride, who was going to meet the ship in Barcelona. So he humbly petitioned the Skipper, Buffalo Bill, who allowed the squadron's merry pranksters might be a little quieter without Puresome for a while and gave his blessing. It turned out that LT(jg) Youthly was the only Spanish speaking officer in the Air Wing, and he got tapped for the job, much to the envy of a couple of evil CAG staff weenies, who had hoped that groping and pointing counted for fluency enough to get off the boat. The knob on the Ready Room door did not hit him on the hiney enroute to pack up his ceremonial whites, and he was soon catapulted off in the bowels of a Willy Fudd enroute to Zaragoza Aerial Force Base. Since the Fudd's main job was to anchor overhead the ship

continued...



USS *Independence*

and provide shade, Puresome hoped its stately lack of airspeed would give him enough time to study up on Spanish military rank structures and unfamiliar military nomenclature not native to cattle ranching in New Mexico.

When he crawled outside into the blazing, bright sunlight of Zaragoza AFB, Puresome was met by an.... Air Force **Colonel!** Despite being somewhat gummy from his Fudd trip, Youthly managed a proper stomp-and-salute, and got into the waiting staff car. Amazingly, there was not another aircraft on the entire ramp. The Colonel explained that some of the normal tenants, Aluminum Overcast B-52's, had tumped into each other a bit while flying along in flight, and had sprinkled Doomsday Devices around the ocean off Palomares, Spain. The Spaniards had gotten cross about this, and invited USAF to go far, far away for a while. So the COL ran a care-taking unit of about fifty men to keep the infrastructure ticking over until management wrote "We won't litter Spain with atom bombs any more!" on the blackboard enough times to make the locals happy. And, would the LT(jg) care to occupy one of the furnished base houses during his stay?

The three-bedroom house's interior was NOT painted battleship gray, and the reefer was stocked with alcoholic beverages. While Puresome was trying to figger out how to deal with these hardships, a squeal of protesting brake-pads trying to decelerate a red sporty car from terminal velocity announced the traditional automotive arrival of the Child Bride! True to the effectiveness of the pretty-girls-in-sporty-car protocol of European travel, Tunita had been directed from Cannes to Zaragoza AFB by legions of hopeful, dark-eyed hombres destined to be left in the dust with a smile and a wave. She had blown onto the base the previous evening and had been taken under the collective wings of four lonesome Air Force Snuffies, who lent her a room in their house for the evening. Word traveled fast on the empty base, and the rendezvous was expeditious. Puresome

did not even think about Worm bagging traps back on the Boat.

Eventually, it was time to get back to business. Puresome made arrangements to meet the proper Spanish Air Force brass. He put on his whites, shined up his I-been-there Olongopo belt buckle, and stapled on some ribbons. Eyeing his massive stripe-and-a-half shoulder boards, Puresome wished he had brought his sword or something more impressive than his black name-tag with the stylized Snake on it. But, since Tunita didn't have any red sashes, he would just have to go with native Attack Puke panache. Some sight-seeing and a huge lunch was obviously in

"This being a peacetime cruise, the CAG had decided it would be a feather in the Air Wing's cap to bag more night traps than any other Air Wing in the history of Med cruises."

order after the meeting, so Tunita went along as navigator and to help evade the goat flocks that often periled transonic road traffic.

Headquarters turned out to be located next to a park in downtown Zaragoza, and Puresome left Tunita to its pleasures while he did business. Sure enough, the Comandante was of imposing rank and uniform, but arranging for using the targets turned out to be surprisingly easy. A Spanish officer would pick him up each morning and take him out to the range and back in the evening. Puresome would act as radio contact with the Air Wing flights, and Spanish Air Force personnel would spot the hits. When the details were finished, he saluted with great dignity and respect and left, fairly optimistic that he had not insulted the milk of anyone's mother and his New World accent had been tolerated.

Outside, Tunita was waiting at the car with big, round eyes. "Am I glad to see you!"

"Why, yes, everything went fine, now that you ask. But enough about me—what happened to you?"

"Well, I was sitting on a park bench, minding my business, when this man came along and sat down by me and started talking. I explained to him that I didn't speak much Spanish, but he kept talking. I think he wanted me to go

swimming with him, or *something*, and I kept telling him no, no, no, but he was very insistent. So, finally, I told him, "Mi esposo is in that edificio, and he is is muy, muy grande, and **he'll beat you up!**"

I think he understood some of that, because he went away."

Puresome was not muy, muy grande, and he was rather glad he did not have to beat up some Spaniard, especially when he was in his Ice Cream Suit. But they decided that, just maybe, sitting in a park in a red dress when respectable Spaniards were doing siestas or something was like wearing a placard with price quotes.

Came the dawn, and Capitan Panza of the Spanish Air Force came by and picked up Puresome for the

long drive out into the Spanish boonies where the bombing range was located. The Capitan was an F-86 driver and a good sort, and he and Puresome talked shop and traded nomenclatures. "Ejection seat" was "Asiento Lanzable," or "launch-able" seat in Spanish, which invoked images of some living room artifact being fired down a catapult track. They drove by ancient brown castle ruins out into desert country that looked very like New Mexico, complete with mesas poking up out of the flat. The range shack was built on top of one of these mesas for good visibility of the targets, and living and support facilities for personnel were down below. Puresome and Capitan Panza chuffed up the many steps to the top of the mesa and settled in for the Yankee Air Pirates to come and drop bombs.

Several flights from "Guntrain" checked in during the day, and Puresome cleared them on the range. Skyhawks, Intruders, and even a flight of Phantoms arrived in orderly formation, sorted out into interval, and screamed down in steep dives, their bombs pulverizing the yellow desert. No Gomer gunners filled the air with tracer, no SAM's sailed by madly jinking airplanes, but Puresome's heart beat faster watching them work, glad not to be on the receiving end and remembering that thumping something with

bombs was not always so easy. About 1600, there were no more planes, and two enlisted men made the long trek up the mesa carrying a huge lunch on a stretcher. With **wine** in leather bags called "Botas!" Puresome was not unfamiliar with squirting and drinking from these implements, because they had briefly been a staple of the Beatnik crowd at University. But his stain-managing efforts brought laughs from the Spaniards, who fired great, acrobatic jets of wine into the wind that invariably landed smack in their mouths. Happily stupefied by the food and wine, Puresome remembered that he could be eating New England Boiled Dinner and drinking Bug Juice back aboard ship.

Some days, he picked up Capitan Panza in the Red Sporty Car for the ride to the Range. Since it was British-made, it had a large "GB" on its boot, which was a constant source of amusement for the Spaniards. First, it provided an opportunity to kid Puresome a little by loudly noting the "Gran Britannia!" which sounds rather more pompous than "Great Britain;" and, secondly, there had previously been a British Officer out to the range, who, noting the large number of rabbits around, mistakenly remarked in Spanish that "Hay muchos cojones por aqui!" Since "cojones" meant "canugies" rather than "rabbits," the locals enthusiastically agreed, "Si, muchos!" and never tired of the story. They were almost as enthusiastic when Puresome told them that the jets were coming one evening to drop flares and bomb by their light. The range people brought their wives and children, and they enjoyed the fireworks immensely. Puresome, who didn't like fireworks he wasn't causing, remembered other nights with Uncle Gomer and didn't spoil their fun.

So it went. Most nights and weekends were spent with Tunita, seeing the sights and trying hard to adjust to the late chow hours. They were invariably the first in line for restaurants to open in late afternoon for lunch, and at 2200 in the evening. Since Puresome loved the food, having never met a crustacean he didn't like, and his idea of a great wine was one that did not take the enamel off his teeth when he licked the screw top, he was in gustatory heaven. Tunita was mildly pregnant and often could not

bear garlic fumes and watching wiggly creatures in her Paella, so Puresome ended up eating her food and drinking her wine, too, since his Mommy and Daddy had taught him that wasting food was right up there with abusing machinery and original sin. Dehydration seemed a small price to pay.

Finally, the planes stopped coming to the Range, and there were no messages from the ship. U.S.S. Boat seemed far, far away. In the absence of further orders, Puresome kept on keeping on, having a real good time. But, after several days, he started twitching a little and looking over his shoulder for large, burly Shore Patrollers who might be looking for Skaters. It was clear that he had dropped through an administrative crack, and, while it was tempting to go native, Portsmouth Naval Prison wouldn't even have New England Boiled Dinner, and, worse, he would never catch up with Master Bagger Worm. So he got the Aerial Force to send a message to the ship. After an interval suitable to his lack of importance in the grand Administrative scheme of things, he got a terse message: MEET THE SHIP IN BARCELONA. So he and Tunita stuffed the boot and back seat of the Red Sporty Car, arranged for Capitan Panza to get a tour of CVA-62 in Barcelona, and said "Adios!" to the personnel of the "Muchos Cojones" Bombing Range. They did not hit a single burro or goat on the drive to Barcelona.

Shortly after he had saluted the poop and saluted the deck, Puresome got hit squarely in the face with the carrier's mess-deck-and-jet-fuel smell that let him know he was really home, and he scuttled down a ladder and through passageways to Ready Room Four-Starboard. An unhappy Ensign Peartree was stuck on board with the Duty and logged him in. A good many of other ship-following wives had made it to Barcelona, and most of the rest of the squadron had left for Liberty when the anchor dropped. The few mates required to be on board were busy being invisible until their turn came to get the hell out. The Squadron's airplanes seemed to be properly chained down, so his Line Division was either doing a good job of guarding the Skyhawks or had stolen enough chains beforehand to



make up the difference snuck off by the other squadrons. And, so far, none of his sailors had needed to destroy a bar or obviously rape and pillage enough to need Puresome's intervention. Nobody had pranged during his absence, but bachelor Ensign Peartree was in too much a funk for flying stories. So Puresome figured correctly that "there was no cure like see-cure!" and caught the next liberty boat back to the Child Bride, the Admin, and a rendezvous with his squadron mates. The joys of Squadron Duty Officer, Integrity Watch, and Boat Officer could wait their turns.

But, finally, too much time in port might get a carrier aviator mistaken for a Shore Duty Puke, and it was time to go flying. The day before the big ship was to slide back out to sea, Puresome drove Tunita out of town to familiarize her on the route that would eventually take her to Camp Darby, near Pisa, Italy, which was the wife's orbit point prior to Napoli, the ship's next port. And when next he saw her and the Red Sporty Car, he learned that, leaving Barcelona, the rear bumper of a Mercedes had unaccountably leapt out of traffic and smacked the shiny nose of the Triumph. Puresome was relieved that Tunita was not dented herself or had done nothing serious like hit a tree or a farm animal and have to pay for succeeding generations. The Red Sporty Car's snoot now had a certain character that showed that it had lived some. Lots of arcing around Autopistas, Autostradas, Autobahns, and insane city centers were left in Tunita's tour, and, like the sea and the sky, Europe could be terribly unforgiving. Puresome was philosophical about the whole thing. Now, they both knew they had to expect some losses in an operation like this.





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