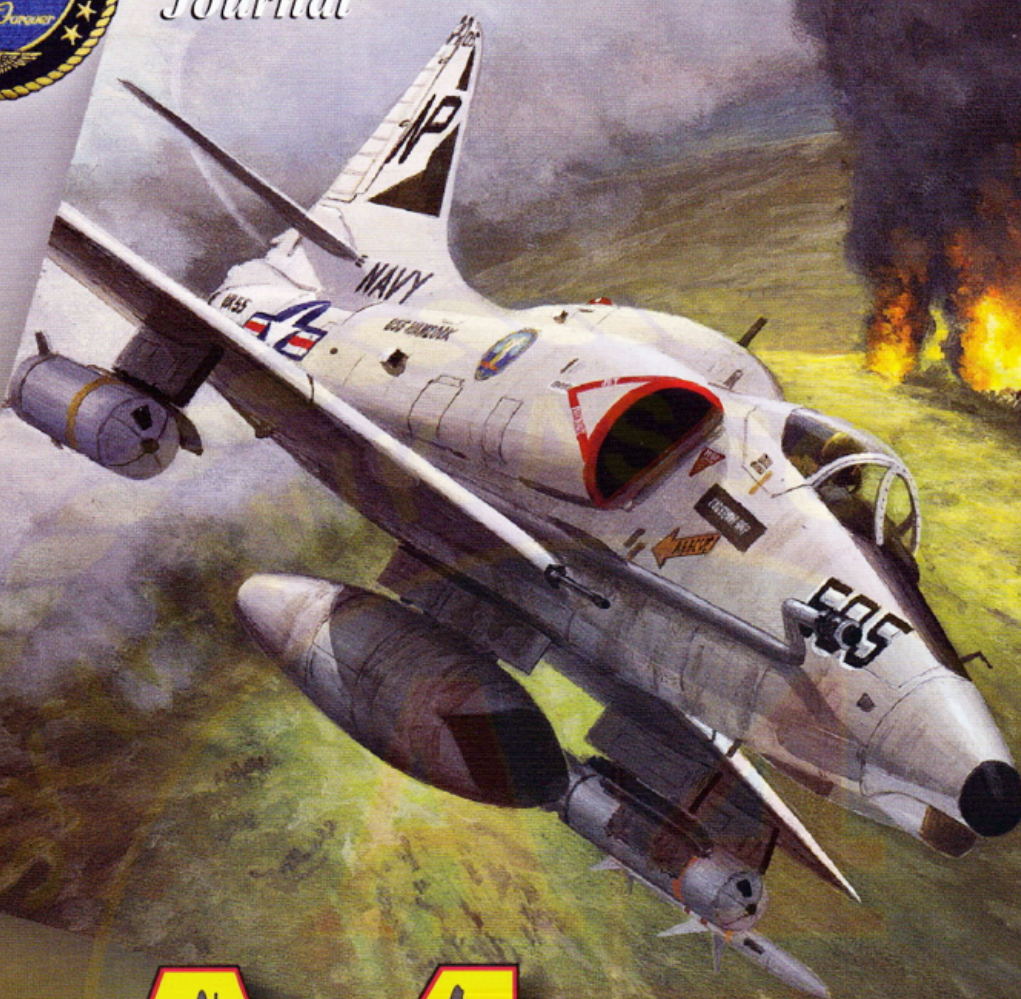




THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

Journal



1972 Iron Hand mission.
By Mark Postlethwaite

THE A-4 EVER

Spring 2012

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 18 • NUMBER 1

Contents:

The Nam Dinh Strike

Crashing the First TA-4F

Remembering Bob Rahn

Reflections - Vietnam From Then to Now

Skyhawks Still Slipping the Surly Bonds, Redux

★
MCAA Symposium & Skyhawk Reunion
May 17-19, 2012
★ Oxon Hill, MD ★



www.a4skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• From the Hun •



By Todd Frommelt

Hey Skyhawkers! Happy New Year! Hoping the holidays were good to you and that 2012 finds most everyone healthy, happy and enjoying a full life out there. Your Board certainly is and we've kept pretty busy with Association business in between our personal travels and family activities. We've got an exciting mid-year Board meeting planned for Lakeland, Florida; the Skyhawkers Marine subset is preparing a reunion to celebrate the Marine Air Centennial; our near new web site is improving daily; we're keeping tabs on some interesting "flying Skyhawks" developments; and our membership roster has never been healthier! (numbers-wise that is).

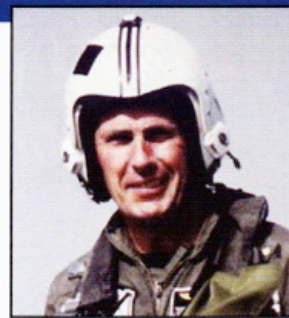
Let me use that 'healthier' note to go someplace not so comfortable. We are, of course, getting to that point in our lives where we hear of more and more comrades falling into the 'not so well' state of health. As a fraternal association, dedicated to maintaining that special camaraderie that has always existed amongst the Skyhawkers population out there, it is our special duty and privilege to facilitate and promote the support of our 'not so well.' If you hear of one of our A-4 folks out there in decline or the victim of some accident, let us know. We can help with letting folks know about it and sharing support information. We'll be happy to do so, and we want to do so. Help us do that please.

An unfortunate example...Marine Skyhawker and member Dave "Tater" Peeler suffered a major heart attack just before Christmas. He is still in intensive

care in Richmond, VA, and recovery is slow but steady. Wife Maureen is using the fine folks at www.CaringBridge.com to keep us all up to date. Do a search for David Peeler to get the latest info. As this is being written in mid-January, I'm hoping it will be way out of date with Tater recovering well by the time you read it. Between the email newsletters, the Journal, and more immediate email communications, we hope we can help with support of and through the Association resources. Let us know if we can do so.

Membership: The 1 January 2012 roster reads 927 dues paying members! Ooooooh Raaaah! (never did get the spelling of that down pat, but you get the idea). We ARE going to make 1000 members by the end of the second centennial year! Please, keep up the good work with your recruiting and member retentions! I WOULD, of course, like to see more local get-togethers and mini-reunions! You WILL enjoy them! And keep passing our message along too! We DO have lots to offer Skyhawker flyers, maintainers and our general aficionados!

Mid Year BOD Meeting @ Sun 'n Fun: Our mid-year Board meeting is just weeks away and we're still hoping for some great A-4s to be in attendance! Come on down and join us, 27 March thru 1 April, (no foolin'), Ramada Lakeland base hotel, Lakeland Linder Regional Airport for the Expo and show. Board meeting is 0900 on Saturday, 31 March at the Sun 'n Fun Museum Boardroom. See article inside the Journal!



Todd "The Hun" Frommelt

Marine A-4 Reunion @ MCAA Symposium: Marine Skyhawkers planning continues for a Centennial reunion in conjunction with the MCAA Symposium in Oxon Hill, MD, 17-19 May 2012. We'll be doing check-ins and a welcome reception on Thursday the 17th, squadron activities and the MCAA Flight Jacket Happy Hour on Friday, and a reunion tour of the National Museum of the Marine Corps and Skyhawkers Banquet (Globe and Laurel) all in Quantico, VA, on Saturday the 19th. Plan accordingly please, and start saving now. Rooms at the Gaylord National Hotel are expensive! (MCAA/reunion rate \$224+taxes per night).

A-4s Still Flying: If you read the email newsletter, you're aware that there are some major changes going on here! We've found that a Singapore 150 (training) Squadron, previously thought decommissioned, is actually still flying their A-4s out of Cazaux AB in Southern France. They flew a pair, including one of their unique TA-4s, to a French air show, and we've got a great current picture in the main article within. Brazil contacts confirm that their numbers should stabilize at about a dozen upgraded (A-4KU and TA-4KU) AF-1s and AF-1As (9-3) over the next year or so, and that the carrier San Paulo is back on line as well. Our contract flyers lost an A-4C at Fallon last year, but despite some engine/operating limit adjustments, we'll leave those numbers almost alone. Privately, the Sangler and Carr Skyhawk Ventures A4C has been flying since August and will be showing off at Sun 'n Fun as well. There's also been positive movement in the last of the New Zealand A-4s, for sale for about a decade now! See the update article for details, but contrary to my rosy forecast in the December Newsletter..... lots of changes but numbers pretty much the same!

continued on page 4...





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

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Spring 2012 •

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Gary Verver, David "Twidget" Weber, and Jack "Puresome" Woodul.

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Contributions

We actively seek contributions from members, including news, photos, historical documents, anecdotes and other items of interest. Submissions may be edited due to space limitations in the newsletter. Contributions may be emailed to the Newsletter Editor at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org or mailed to Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624.

Stephanie Davis, graphics, skyhawk@nflight.com. Printed by NCCOAST Communications, Morehead City, NC.

Cover: Cover artwork by Mark Postlethwaite depicts 23 May 1972 Iron Hand mission flown by LT Dennis Sapp and LT Ken Bray of VA-55. Photo was used as cover art work for Peter Mersky's Osprey Combat Aircraft #69 *US Navy and Marine Corps A-4 Skyhawk Units of the Vietnam War*. (Used with permission of Osprey Publishing (all rights reserved), with appreciation to John Tintera and Sara Batkie of Osprey.)

THE PREZ SEZ MORE...

Tailhook '11: Still a little after-action work to be done here. We're working on ways to keep the Ready Room bar bill from going over budget next time. I'm thinking we'll work with our Intruder partners to politely ask for more consistent donations from our crowd of folks... like maybe really loud signs and a little less hard stuff.

Tailhook '12: Expect us to work on a tentative list of guest speakers at Lakeland. Your suggestions will be appreciated! And it's not too early to start planning on coming! Reno's Nugget Hotel, 6 to 9 September!

Alameda and Flying Leatherneck Museum Static Displays: I suspect most of you got the email chain showing the NAS Alameda A-4 remounting disaster? After a 2-year rework, the crane hoisting the A-4 back on its display pillar slipped in soft soil and not only jammed the belly on the pillar but collapsed, with its boom going through the A-4. The really amazing part of the story is that repairs were made and a successful remounting took place in early December. Amazing recovery and **our hats off to the Alameda restoration crew!** And as noted in my Between the Journals Newsletter in December, I mentioned that the Flying

Leatherneck Museum at MCAS Miramar is reworking one of the more famous of our Skyhawks...the very last A-4 off the Douglas production line, 160264. It has received special permission to rework it to the famous "Easter Egg" paint scheme it had off the assembly line; blue longitudinal stripe, flags of all the nations flying the A-4, etc. We have promised to help the museum raise the funds necessary for this project, estimated at about \$5000. Your support is strongly encouraged as this is truly a great and important memorial to the Skyhawk's history. You can donate on line at www.flyingleathernecks.org or by mail to *The Flying Leatherneck Historical Foundation, PO Box 45316, San Diego, CA 92145-0316. Please note on your check or web site contribution "For the A4M 160264 Easter Egg restoration project" or something similar to ensure proper direction of your contribution.*

www.A4Skyhawk.org : I sure hope you've been digging in to the web site some these days. The data available is just mind boggling. We want to go on record here publicly thanking our Web team...Gene Atwell, David Weber, Gary Verver, Gabby Gabbard and their support staffs. Nice job guys! Here's a January quote from 'Blade' Atwell; "In case you were wondering where we are

today, on our website there are presently 45,902 individual entries showing the birth, retirement and every thing in between that the Navy has to offer of every Scooter ever rolled off the assembly line, and we need to thank Gabby for that information and, in addition, we now have 9120 individual photos of myriad Skyhawks in action thanks to David, Gary and too many others to mention. Those numbers increase every day of the year." This is an amazing asset of the Association. Make sure you check it all out!

One final note: As I'm sure you're noticing, I'm kind of torn between keeping the Prez Sez of the Journal and the 'Between the Journals' email Newsletter exclusive content-wise. It's a bit complicated when you look at the advance timeline for the Journal (this being submitted mid-January). That means that I'm composing for the Journal Prez piece just a month or so after sending out the last email newsletter. And then there are some 200 members that don't receive the emailed newsletters due to technological challenges or plain druthers. So...I'll do the best I can for balance, but you're going to see plenty of duplication. Bear with me, and let me know what you think. Hope you think the Newsletter is worth the effort, but if not, we can shut that effort down easy! Regards to you Skyhawkers. Have a super 2012!

Hun sends

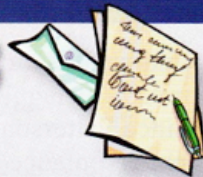
MID-YEAR MEETING AT THE SUN'N'FUN

Our Mid-Year Board Meeting is just weeks away and we're looking forward to a great gathering, a super expo, and for some great A-4s to be in attendance! We'd love to see some members here... attendees can be assured of a professional Board meeting, a special A-4 segment of the Expo, and some fun social gatherings with your Board. Come on down and join us! 27 March thru 1 April (no foolin'), Ramada Lakeland base hotel, Lakeland Linder Regional Airport for the Expo and show. Board meeting is 0900 on Saturday, 31 March at the Sun 'n Fun Museum Boardroom. Let us know if you can make it!



TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •



sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

(Ed. Note: we got many compliments on Dave Dollarhide's article "Skyhawk Ventures" A-4 Charlie Takes to the Sky, A-4Ever, Fall 2011, especially on the photography. Dave wrote to let us know that some fantastic video has been posted on YouTube.)

To the Editor:

My handle on YouTube is Pennyskin....just posted this new footage of the A-4C featured in the Skyhawk Ventures article. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UHW-TA2ePXQ>
Hide
[davedollarhide@msn.com]

◆ ◆ ◆

To the Editor:

Hello fellow Skyhawker. I received your card and request for my email address, and thought that I would pass on some other interesting information. Enclosed are photos of the *Constellation*, the *Hancock*, officers of VA-216, the officers of VA-134, and one of yours truly.

Of special note are three photos of my special project to honor all of us who had the opportunity and pleasure

to fly the wonderful Tinkertoy. My artist friend, who normally decorates vehicles for businesses, and I came up with this rendition of a great way to celebrate our freedom and at the same time, give a great tribute to a wonderful aircraft.

(Ed. Note: see *From the Attic*, this issue, for a photo of Glen's Dodge Ram. Glen also provided photos of the officers of VA-134 and VA-216, which will be posted on the squadron web-pages.)

Just for the fun of it, during the shakedown cruise (Ed. Note: USS *Constellation*, VA-134) we were all in the pattern doing touch and goes off the southern tip of Cuba. All of us were aware that the 25,000 landing was coming up very shortly. The CAG of CVW-13 was in the pattern, and with an obviously pre-arranged frequency, the air boss let him know that the third trap coming up would be the 25,000th. So with skill and rudeness, CAG cut right in front of me. I didn't have any idea why he did so, but instead of pulling out I simply slowed a little and made my downwind longer.

Share the wisdom:

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Please note email address!

The fun started when CAG bolstered, and I caught the #3 wire and captured the 25,000th landing on the U.S.S. *Constellation*. Being that I was CAG's personal First LT., he had the good-hearted nature to harass me about it for the next four or five months, but all in good humor. I gave it right back.

Sincerely,

Glen Fox

[spadmankey@msn.com]

(Ed. Note: Glen asked about the disposition of A-4C 149620, the aircraft assigned to him in VA-216. That Charlie had a long history, later serving with VA-22, 195, 112, 873, 125, VMA-214, VMAT-102, MARTDs Memphis and Jacksonville (converted to an A-4L during this period), prior to entering storage at Davis-Monthan in May 1976. Interestingly, it was one of the A-4Ls which ended up at Marana Airport in Tucson. However, it wasn't the A-4L used to assemble the "McDougall - Douglas" TA-4 N518TA, featured on the cover of *The A-4Ever*, Summer 2010.)

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continued on page 6...

SOCAL MARINE A-4 GUYS AT IT AGAIN



OK, I know you all may be tired of seeing our SoCal crew's picture in the Journal, but there's a point here! We need to do more of this around the country! (and beyond!) See those smiling faces? They're having a great time! It's part and parcel of the camaraderie we keep touting. We can help you here with contact lists to get started too! Give us a call/email and we'll get you going. 'Nuf said. Hun sends

LETTERS

Continued...

To The Editor:

I flew the "wing" of the Skyhawk Ventures A-4C several times in October 1965 when it was an integral part of A4C 145131, belonging to either VA-95, or the West Coast A4 RAG, VA-125.

VA-95 was in the process of transitioning from the A-1 Spad to the A-4 Scooter...we worked closely with VA-125...but my log book does not clearly indicate who owned the A/C at that time...but I believe it was VA-95 (The Green Lizards).

Ron "Banty" Marron
[rondebmar@comcast.net]

(Ed. Note: A-4C 145131 was assigned to VA-95 in August 1965 and later transferred to VA-125 in January 1966. Aircraft history by bureau number is available to all members on the Skyhawk Assn. website. After logging in, go to Galleries, Temporary Menus, BUNO History.)

To the Editor:

I don't have any knowledge of this (*Ed. Note: referring to the inverted plug photo*), so I won't say it couldn't be a true picture, but I'd be skeptical at best until someone could verify it.

We were limited to ten seconds of continuous inverted flight due to the gravity fed oil system in the engine. I'd be hard pressed to believe that someone hanging in the straps inverted could keep the plane steady enough to plug in less than ten seconds. Maybe if he was able to plug and then do an aileron roll; but I'm not sure if you could rotate the refueling probe inside the basket and that would seem even more improbable.

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

Please note email address!

Thanks, it is an interesting picture.

Lance Patterson
[pattersonlance@yahoo.com]
VC-5, 85-87, 90-92

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To the Editor:

Relative to J.J. McBride's A-4C & 27 Charlie article, I think we need to show a little more respect for the Shang. She was a WWII Essex class aircraft carrier with a fine history. She fulfilled Roosevelt's mythical attack source for Doolittle's Tokyo Raiders. She was Admiral Bull Haley's flagship. She sacrificed many a yard period so that other carriers could be more capable of doing their duties. Never mind that a Navy shower on the Shang consisted of soaping up and wiping off the soap, minus water for either part. Never mind that on one beautiful moon-lit night in the Caribbean we didn't need to use the standard night let down scenario, we just followed the moon lit oil slick and it took us right to the Shang. Never mind that on an unusually beautiful day in the Mediterranean two A-4Bs were launched to find the oiler because the Shang had no radar. Never mind that on at least two separate occasions the Shang tried to conduct flight ops in 50' seas. Well actually the launches went fairly well, but the 35' deck movement and the Scooter's 14' hook to ramp clearance made recovery a bear. And on one particularly cold and nasty night the whole air wing got bingo'ed to Palma, the Mediterranean's own tropical paradise. Does anyone have any idea how cold it is in Palma in January when wearing only long johns and a poopy suit? And can anyone imagine how bad one stinks after three days in said long johns and poopy suit? But once back aboard we got one of the Shang's own patented waterless Navy showers, really neat!!!

So let's show a little more respect, the USS Shangri-la (CVA-

38) has earned it.
Steve Pollock
BlueHawk A-4B driver 1968
Mediterranean Shangri-la cruise
[Steve.Pollock@myfuelmaster.com]

(Ed. Note: watch for more Shang stories from Steve Pollock in the Summer 2012 edition of The A-4Ever.)

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To the Editor:

I found this web site you may be interested in:

http://joeidoni.smugmug.com/Aircraft-Crash-Sites/Skyhawk/9545193_ZXn-RNb#654250508_w82DC

It details Lt Ed Dickson's ejection from an A-4E without a parachute deployment.

I myself have many flight hours in A/C TA-4F 152102 as a civilian flight test engineer. We called it KNOZY and used it to test HARM AGM-88 Seekers mounted in the nose. It is now on display at the China Lake Museum Air Park. Grew up loving A-4s and was lucky enough to have some flight time in one!

Skyhawks Forever!
Jerry Senn
[Jerry.Senn@PACCAR.com]

(Ed. Note: see the link above for a fascinating photo slide show depicting the high-Sierra crash site of A-4E 150077, the aircraft LT Dickinson ejected from on February 20, 1964.)

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Bob. Gene. Todd:

The RNZAF flight demonstration team performance included a plugged barrel roll with a TA-4K Skyhawk refueling from an A-4K Skyhawk as seen in the attached photo. I may have others, but this is the only one that turned up when I did a search for plugged.

If I recall correctly they lost one A-4 while practicing this... too low when they started the maneuver.

BTW... there seems to be a

typo in the sidebar to the Skyhawk Ventures article, it uses the Bu. No. 149696, and it should be 149606 as the story reads.

Gary

(Ed. Note: Several readers noted the mistake in the bureau number of the Skyhawk Ventures A-4C in the sidebar article describing Rick Millson's fateful mission during December 1965. Though the Skyhawk Ventures A-4C sports major pieces of three different bureau numbers, 149606 is the correct identification of its present incarnation. The error belongs to the editor, not the author.)

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To the Editor:

I am looking for info on an incident involving an A-4 Skyhawk during the first or second week of the Tet Offensive, 1968, in the IV CORPS South Vietnam city of Vinh Long. I know the aircraft was a Skyhawk, built many Navy planes as a kid. The aircraft was giving us air support on the town, had already dropped all ordnance and had started gun runs. When it approached (from the SE I believe), I saw smoke coming from behind the cockpit and green tracers following it from ground-fire. When the plane turned and started a gun-attack, two streams of green tracer caught the plane in crossfire. I saw the rudder shot away and fall from the plane. The plane, smoking worse then, flew out toward the South China Sea.

I always wondered if the pilot made it out ok. I thought he might have bailed out after he cleared the coast because I could not see him landing on a carrier without the rudder. I always wanted to thank him for helping save our bacon that day. I only saw one aircraft from my location and was too busy to notice if it was Marine or Navy - but it was a Skyhawk, no mistake. Any info you might have would be deeply appreciated. If the pilot is still alive and remembers, I'll try to send him a bottle.

Thanks!

Sgt Freddie Web

formerly

300th MP CO, US Army

Initial responses from Bill Egen (Jigger):

Considering TET 68 started 31 Jan, MAG-12 Command Chronologies for Jan, Feb, Mar of '68 show no losses in IV Corps- all losses were in I Corps (mainly at Khe Sahn) or N. Vietnam. So it was not a Marine A-4.

Looking at the KIA, OL, POW, WIA, CR lists doesn't offer much either. There was a Lt Curtis from VA-144 flying off of the USS Kitty Hawk 13 Mar of '68- he was a CR in 152088. No indication he was down south - did the Kitty Hawk work Dixie Station???

Jigger

Sent 10/23/11... Further research on the VA-144 page puts the Curtis shoot down in Laos; only other possible is CDR Shropshire with VA-163 as WIA in 1968- no

date and nothing on the VA-163 page to pin it down.
Jigger

(Ed. Note: please pass any information on to David Weber at A4web1@verizon.net).

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*(Ed. Note: Mark Williams' story, **Close Only Counts In Horseshoes, Hand Grenades and Nukes** printed in the Fall 2011 issue prompted Bill Gilchrist to send his Order of the Bull Award earned on 25 Sep 67 at El Centro's 103A range. A bulls-eye hit during an over-the-shoulder delivery put a pilot in a very select crowd.)*

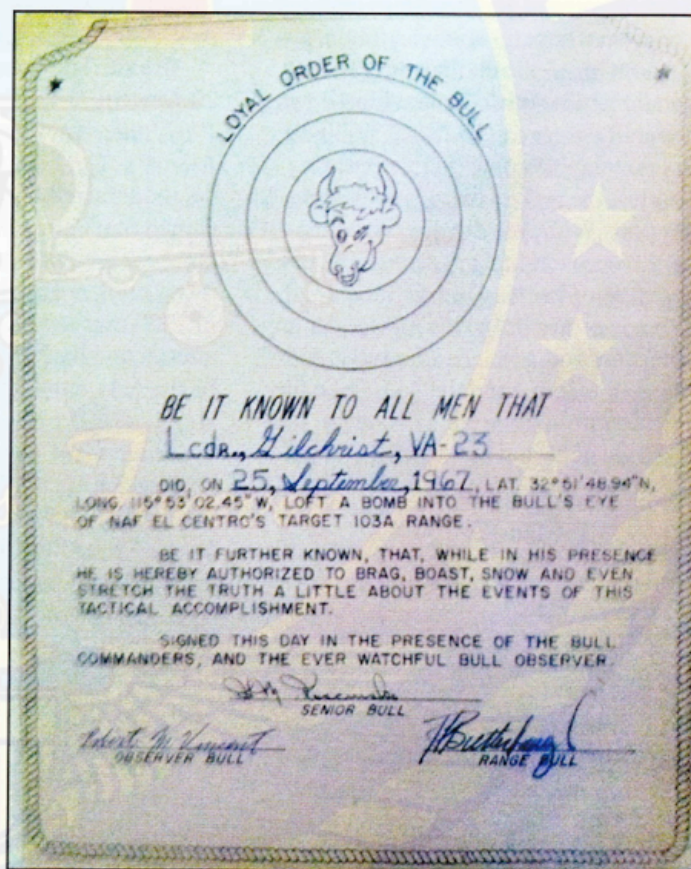
To the Editor:

Bob- it's been so long that my memory has faded about what I did or didn't do on the loft range that day. As a Fleet Replacement Pilot in the A4 RAG, VA-125, we were taught all the parameters that would affect our hits, and as I recall the most important during the "over-the-shoulder" maneuver was to keep your wings level on the AJB-3, particularly as you approached the release point which was about 120 degrees nose up. One point of interest: the rules stated that if the observation crew called your hit as a bull's-eye, then you owed them a case of beer! I've often wondered whether my hit was really a bull's eye or if the crew was just thirsty that day.

Respects and A4's Forever –

Bill Gilchrist

[a4fdriver@gmail.com]



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SKYHAWKS STILL SLIPPING THE SURLY BONDS, REDUX

• *Dateline: Feb 2012 Update (changes highlighted in yellow). Hun reporting* •

It seems to us that the renowned Skyhawk Association ought to include in its wealth of A-4 information and expertise a current and consolidated listing of Scooters still airborne. I mean, out of some 2960 aircraft produced by Douglas Aircraft, just how many of our steeds still take to the air regularly? We've got lots of that kind of information in several areas of the website, but we're thinking that it might be nice to maintain a full list of actual current operators. That's what this article means to do. Let me admit, upfront, that it's not quite as simple as it looks. On the military side, our foreign operators have legitimate security concerns about exact numbers. On the contract services side we have some competition concerns about how well and how many A-4 assets are available. And on the private owners side, well, let's just say "flyable" can be sometimes shown right in front of you and at other times may just be some very hopeful and wishful thinking. And with all the civilian aircraft, just like in the airline business, tracking down the aircraft owner can be tricky and it's a bit tough to avoid some double counting. "Show me the money" also comes into major play. With worldwide economies tight, government budgets being cut, and rising costs of keeping old airframes and their engines airworthy, it's no wonder any Scooters are still going for the surly skies. So with all that in mind, let's just take the following information as 'as good' an estimate as we need and be satisfied....deal?

Military Service:

Israel: The largest export operator of Skyhawks has had as many as 180 various models in service, the most recent being

the A-4N and TA-4J/H. Although gradually removed from front line units, the Israelis still have a squadron (Flying Tigers) of A-4Ns and TA-4J/Hs used for pilot training, EW work and other missions. Latest guess is that they expect to maintain Skyhawk operations at this level at least until 2015. **Estimate: In excess of 30 A-4N and about 15 TA-4J/H** 1

Argentina: Argentina's Air Force and Navy at one time operated close to 100 A-4Bs but the last of those older airframes were retired in 1999. In 1994, they purchased 36 A-4Ms (redesignated A-4ARs) and these are currently operational with their 5th Air Brigade. The latest information available? About 12 single and dual seaters are on the flight lines with that number again in operational reserve (stored in good condition). It's hoped another 4 aircraft will be brought on line from reserve when the budget allows. **Estimate: 10 and 2 A-4AR/OA-4AR** 2

Brazil: The Brazilian Navy acquired 20 Kuwaiti A-4KU and 3 TA-4KU in 1997, redesignating them as AF-1's and AF-1A's. These aircraft are operated with the modernized French aircraft carrier now named San Paulo. While exact remaining numbers are not available yet, we do know that a modernization contract was signed in 2009 to upgrade a mix of 12 AF-1/1A aircraft and by 2014 we expect these to be the only ones active. **Estimate: 9 and 3 AF-1/1A** 3

Singapore: The Republic of Singapore Air Force took its A-4SUs out of line service in 2004 but still maintains an advanced training squadron (150 Squadron) of some 11-12 A-4s at the Cazaux AB, France. **Estimate: 4 and 7 A-4SU/TA-4SU** 4

Malaysia: The Royal Malaysian Air Force purchased 88 surplus A-4Cs from the US in 1982 and had 40 of them delivered after extensive upgrading to Malaysia as A-4/TA-4PTMs (Peculiar to Malaysia). These aircraft were taken out of service in 1999. The idea was to use the other 48 airframes as a source for parts and they were left here in the US. I mention these Skyhawks, because those "parts" aircraft left in the Arizona desert have played a significant role in the continued use of A-4s by contract and private flyers below. **Confirmed: 0**

Indonesia, Kuwait, Australia, and finally 'most' Singapore and New Zealand Skyhawks are also confirmed as gone, 'pedestaled', 'museumed', scrapped, sold or otherwise disposed of.

Contract Services:

There are several operators, most with multiple aircraft types and numbers, who are performing contract services for the US and German military and defense manufacturers. Services cover a wide range of operations, from CAS and FAC training, air refueling evaluations, target towing, adversary air and the like. Some of that, you'll recall, was great to do while you were fleet pilots, and some maybe not so great. Well, the fleet pilots have their plates full these days, and so there is a significant demand for such contract work. The major players here, in no particular order are:

Airborne Tactical Advantage Company (ATAC): Headquarters in Newport News, VA. Operates several types of fighter/attack aircraft and into 2011, included 4 A-4N and 2 A-4L (leased). As of 2012, however, ATAC is out of the A-4 business and now does mostly Hawker and L-39 work. Sad but true. **Estimate: 0 A4s**

Advanced Training Systems International (ATSI): Headquarters in Mesa, Arizona. At one time, had an inventory of some 10 Israeli A-4Ns and 3 TA-4J. It has leased or sold several of these and now operates with about 5 A-4N and 3 TA-4F, but several are without engines at this time. **Estimate: 7 A-4N and 1 TA-4** 5





4



5



6

BAE Systems: Operates 6 A-4N Skyhawks (4 from Israel, 2 from ATSI) in support of the German Air Force out of Wittmund Air Force Base, Germany, doing mostly target towing and other support work. As of now, expecting continued work through at least 2012. **Estimate: 6 A-4N**

6 Teton Aviation Services: This Idaho service company has available about 10 privately owned aircraft ranging from MIGs to a Citation and owner Rich Sugden is about to bring online TA-4J, 154306, currently in work in Texas (to be based in Idaho at Teton Aviation.) **Estimate: ½ a TA-4J (partial credit until 1st flight)**

Tactical Air Defense Services (TADS): This Carson City, NV, contract service company provides training and support services to US and Allied air forces. Its aircraft mix also ranges widely from MIGs to Falcons. It acquired Aerogroup, Inc in 2006 which had an A-4 but we have no update on current Skyhawk flying other than that their web site still lists them as an asset. **Estimate: 0**

Tactical Air Systems, Inc (TAS): This Mesa, AZ company spent some 5 years trying to purchase 17 stored New Zealand A-4s and after long US government approval delays and lack of financing available, appears to have given up the effort just last year. **Estimate: 0**

Private Collections:

Collings Foundation: Dedicated to preserving "the heritage of the sky", this perhaps most well known foundation operates some 18 flying historical aircraft and maintains for display several more. Its

TA-4J, N524CF, is often seen around the most popular air shows around the country. With FAA certification to fly back seaters, you too can fly again...for about \$7500.

Estimate: 1 TA-4J 7

Warbird Heritage Foundation: Has a similar mission as the Collings Foundation. It operates close to a dozen heritage warbirds in air shows and appearances around the country. It's A-4B, N49WH, is actually owned by Mr. Paul Wood and first flew in late 2009. It also shows up in research as a Navy Legacy Flight warbird demonstration aircraft. **Estimate: 1 A-4B 8**

Pacific Aero Ventures, LLC: Privately owned by Don Keating, this newly restored TA-4J (by Mike McDougal of Fighting Classics Restoration) is the most recent addition to the flying Skyhawks. Don has parts for possibly 2 more A-4s for Mike to work on once he sells this N518TA beauty. If I only had \$6 million.... **Estimate: 1 TA-4J 9**

Skyhawk Ventures, LLC: Porter Spangler and Dan Carr and their team worked hard getting this hybrid 'C' ready to go and it paid off! First flight Aug 2011! **Estimate: 1 A-4C 10**

Aero Mark, Inc: Located in Idaho Falls, ID, owners Bob Hoff and Jerry Dust run two FBOs and are working on getting his A-4L back in the air someday. Sugar Daddies welcome? **Estimate: 0**

Heavy Metal Jet Aerobatics Team/JDI Holdings: Formerly known as the Black Diamonds, is a 2 year old team sponsored by United Bank Card and whose aircraft are owned by JDI Holdings. They currently fly L-39s on the show circuit, but also have a T-33 and MIG-17 or two. It was recently

released publicly that they had acquired the remaining 8 New Zealand A-4Ks and hope to get them back to the US and into its airshow circuit as soon as possible. **Estimate: 0** but lots of best wishes!

A4L LLC: Bob Schneider's outfit acquired 9 of the Malaysian 'parts aircraft' in Arizona and has brought several of them into service under contract as orders come in. (such as ATAC's now expired contract) and several more of them can be flying fairly soon after being contracted, with those spread through restoration facilities in Perryville, MO, Sherman, TX, and Bill Maszala's storage facility, ATW Aviation, Inc., in Marana, AZ. **Estimate: 2 (or more) flyers available and we'll call them "Private" until contracted out.... Estimate: 2 A-4Ls**

One final note: AMARC, or the Aerospace Maintenance And Regeneration Center, also referred to as the boneyard, is a joint service facility managed by the US Air Force Material Command located in Tucson, AZ. It used to store, amongst its over 4000 aircraft, significant numbers of A-4's. There are very few remaining. There are several A-4 aircraft still for sale from several brokers (check the web), but just 'several'. We appear to be running out of airframes gentlemen. There're not too many more to play with!

**Totals: 100.5
80 Military
14 ½ Contract
6 Private**



7



8



9



10

REFLECTIONS - VIETNAM FROM THEN TO NOW

By Denny Sapp

My wife and I have been going to Cambodia to help with human trafficking by working with an NGO who rescues children. My reasons for first going were more of a matter of conscious, remembering some ordnance flights I had flown in the Angkor Wat area of central Cambodia back in 1971. When planning our return from our current trip, I had decided to travel to Hanoi and visit the Ha Long Islands to the east of Haiphong. I had always remembered them as some of the most beautiful areas of the world, the way the karst jutted out of the ocean. In 1972 we flew by these islands enroute to targets to the north of Haiphong and Hanoi and use them as our entry points feet dry.

This particular trip started with my visiting a Khmer Rouge village of about 50 families, located about 100 meters from the porous border of Thailand and Cambodia. I met with several villagers, all of whom were former Khmer Rouge soldiers and cadre. One woman, aged 63, asked my age (66), probably wondering if I had been an opponent back in the '70's.

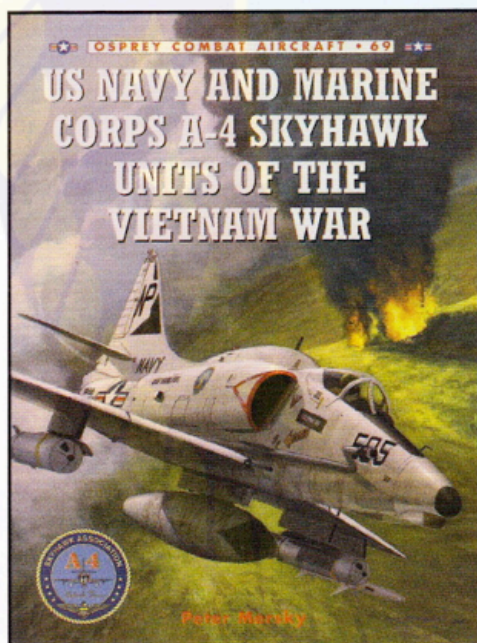
Two men, one the village elder and the other a former colonel, and I exchanged some pleasant conversation via our interpreter. The colonel even shyly and somewhat embarrassingly even admitted to doing "no good". They were very poor, had no sanitary water or facilities, and were totally uneducated. The NGO I work with was attempting to remedy this by providing a school teacher for the children and also holding classes on health and hygiene for the adults.

Our trip home was routed through Luang Prabang, Laos, on a Vietnam Airlines flight into Hanoi. There is still a row of sheltered MiG 21s at the approach end of the runway. After spending a night at the real "Hanoi Hilton," we traveled 4 hours by car to Hon Gai to board a beautiful four-star junk for a 3-day cruise through the Ha Long Islands. This was a wonderful trip, and I recommend it highly, particularly to those of us who have appreciated it from the air.

After returning to Hanoi, we spend a day touring various museums. The first was the Revolutionary Museum, near the Hilton, that depicted the communist Vietnamese view of the war with America. No surprises there. Then we went on to the Air Force museum. It was a highlight for me as there was all the aircraft and military targets we had dealt with in 1972.

MiG 17s, 19s, and 21s; specifically those aircraft that had claimed many US kills. Inside the museum were panels showing the predominant air battles with schematics of how the fight was fought. Specifically the 2 that I remember were May 7, 1972, and June 27, 1972, all involving downing Phantoms. They didn't mention our kill count of May 10th, 1972. All their pilots are pictured there as heroes of the cause. One particular picture that caught my eye was of a US Air Force colonel, who had been shot down by an NVA junior pilot during the December 1972 raids. In the picture, the colonel is sitting in his prison garb on the edge of his cell bunk while the young NVA aviator is showing him, by his flying hands, how he had bagged the US aviator—appearing triumphant, as we all would have been, at the result. As I toured the grounds outside, all the AAA was there: ZSU 23, 37, 57, 88, and 100 mm guns. I was particularly interested in the radar vans, Fan Song and others, all of which we targeted while on the Iron Hand missions. They had SA-2s on fixed launchers and the dual SA-3 mobile unit. They even had old Russian and Chinese trucks used for the Ho Chi Minh trail. What a step back in time to see these weapons close up.

After the Air Force museum, we made a brief stop at the Army museum. There they displayed F-5Es, T-37s, and A-1 Spads that were captured with the overthrow of the south in April, 1975, and used by the NVA pilots for many years after until parts became a problem. There were also US military weapons and equipment that had been retrieved from the South Vietnamese army pullout of Tchepone, Laos, in 1971. I remember



Denny Sapp reunites with an old friend. Sapp received the Distinguished Flying Cross for a mission on 23 May during which he and his wingman Ken Bray destroyed an SA-2 site northeast of Haiphong. That mission was captured in the painting by Mark Postlethwaite depicted on the cover of Peter Mersky's book *US Navy and Marine Corps A-4 Skyhawk Units of the Vietnam War* (Osprey Combat Aircraft #69).

READ? YOU THINK WE READ?

SCOOTER!

The Douglas A-4 Skyhawk Story

Tommy H. Thomason
Specialty Press,
North Branch, MN 55056.
2011. 276 pp. Ill. \$44.95.

Reviewed by CDR Peter Mersky,
USNR(ret).

Co-published with Britain's Crecy Publishing, this is yet another retelling of the A-4's development and career. I must admit that with all the books about our favorite jet, I was surprised to see another one. What more could there possibly be to write about? Pocket nuke bomber, Vietnam, the Falklands, the Arab-Israeli wars, ad infinitum. Admittedly, the book is a medium format display of many excellent black-and-white and color photos, often new or seldom seen views of the A-4. There are also a few charts and 3-views that are simple, useful graphics.

The narrative is, I am afraid, where the book bogs down, unless you're an

engineer by trade or someone who likes to read about the nuts-and-bolts aspect of your subject. That's OK in very limited amounts, but *Scooter!* Serves up this rather heavy stuff in large amounts and after a page or two, it is hard to keep going.

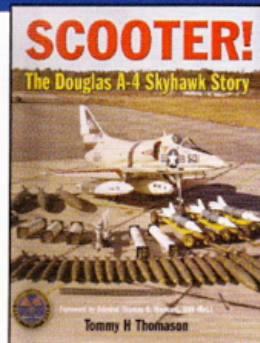
Obviously, the author is aware of previous accounts; he notes a few in his introduction. And he is predictably bound to try to find a different way to present his material. As an engineer, himself, he naturally gravitates to that form of description.

For those readers who want to know in great detail why and how Ed Heinemann designed his classic little bomber the way he did, and what were the problems and requirements the A-4 and its crews—pilots and ground crew—encountered during its introduction and subsequent service, there's a lot of material here. Competing with other companies such as North American and Grumman, Douglas's little bomber won out and gave the Navy a bit more of the nuclear delivery mission, which consumed Air Force and Navy planners

in the 1950s. As the years passed after the A-4's fleet introduction, however, it was pretty clear that the Air Force would have the lion's share of the mission, and the Navy would assume the so-called, cliché though it is, tip-of-the-spear role in U.S. power projection. Then Vietnam "happened," and we all know *that* story. . If you are looking for an in-depth service history, look somewhere else.

Thomason devotes a chapter to the Skyhawk's Vietnam service, and a few paragraphs to other countries such as Israel, Argentina and Kuwait, who also took the A-4 into combat. But this book sometimes reads like a popularly written NATOPS-like resume of the A-4's story. For those willing to push through, there's a lot of good design and system background not usually presented in such a history.

Final point? This is a nice book, well produced, with good photography and an interesting, though somewhat stodgy text. But it is certainly worth your time and money.



REFLECTIONS - VIETNAM FROM THEN TO NOW *continued*

→ when we had targeted that firebase, trying to destroy our own equipment before it fell into NVA hands. While on my walk around that museum, I passed by many former NVA soldiers, my age and older, who were also touring the area. I received smiles and greetings from these old warriors who still wore their uniforms and medals with pride. Some had been in the army for over 40 years and the battle with the Americans was only a fraction of the war they had seen, starting with the French and ending with the Khmer Rouge.

There isn't much evidence of the military in and around Hanoi today, even the police are minimalized. In talking with my guide that day (who was 34), he did offer great concern about the Chinese integrating themselves into the Vietnam economy. The city is wild with traffic, the worst I have seen anywhere in the world. I had recently asked a former squadron mate if he would join me for a motorcycle trip down the Ho Chi Minh trail, and he responded that he thought that might be more dangerous than when we were flying and dodging SAM's and AAA. I decided he was right... I don't believe I'll be making any more trips to Vietnam.



Anne and Denny Sapp inspect a MiG-21 famous for having bagged the most US aircraft during the war. Photo via Denny Sapp.

CRASHING THE FIRST TA-4F

By Bruce Corbett



On 11 September 1967, on my first flight at VMT-103 and as a Naval Aviator, I had the honor of crashing the first TA-4F (153665). It had its canopy jettisoned in the hanger, by a tech that was A-4E trained. The canopy open and canopy eject handles were repositioned. OOPS!

After about 90 days, a replacement canopy was rigged, but not quite right. Sitting in the front seat, with zero previous time in that cockpit, I was able to close the canopy, and rotate the handle forward, which usually locks in a detent. This one was rigged just right, so that the locking roller went right to the top edge of the detent, but didn't lock.

On lift off, the plane left the runway, and the aerodynamic canopy left the plane. It rotated 180 degrees until the hinges snapped. Then the canopy went straight back into the vertical stabilizer. Its aluminum frame sliced off 80% of the stabilizer. That's the only place on

the Scooter where the utility and emergency hydraulic systems are parallel. It cut off both.

The hydraulic fluid recycles every 5 minutes unless it's venting. Making a left downwind, dumping fuel and lining up for my first approach, with the instructor blind and deaf in the back, I started the left turn into the runway. About at the 90 the hydraulic fluid was gone, and the stick got stiff. A gorilla can move it, by wire, and that might work on a straight in, but not in a normal left turn.

As we went wide and low across Interstate 10, the instructor ejected. We did not have the selector set for both, so I needed to follow. I have extremely long arms, long enough to prevent the curtain from firing if I kept my elbows together, as trained. With not much time left, I went out using the alternate handle.

That was the first firing of the new zero-zero seat. It worked great, as I was descending, wing low, nose low, at about 10 feet. It's something like a 4 second delay to canopy deployment after ejection, seat separation and drogue firing. I was flying feet first above the Scooter, in formation looking down at it, when it impacted and exploded (full fuel). Then the chute opened. It looked like I was about to rejoin the plane, but the Arizona wind down the runway pushed me back enough to land in the orange grove.

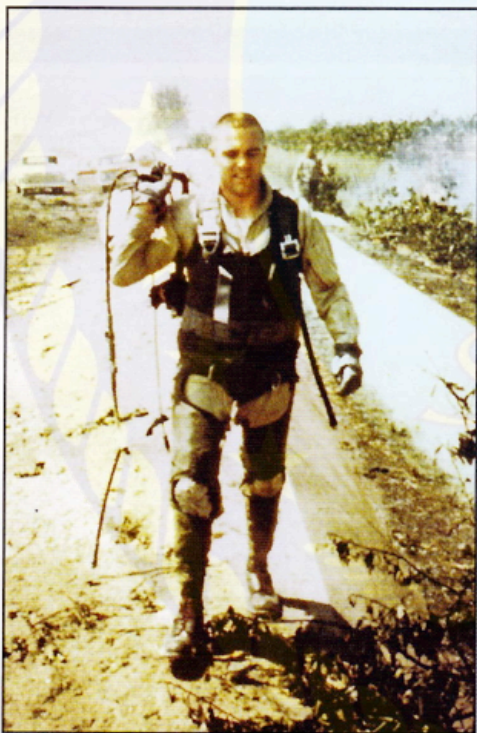
The orange trees are about 18' tall, and that's the length of the raisers. I came down centered between 4 of them, and the chute hung up nicely. My feet reached the ground, but my knees never bent.

I have some nice pictures because there was a Navy squadron doing field carrier training at YUMA. Their LSO was on the runways with his 35mm. He got shots all the way around. One has the planview from the bottom, with a wingtip just about on the ground, before I got out. There's one in color with me in the chute descending into the fireball. Yuma is below sea level, so I may have the low record for MSL if not AGL... I joined the search group looking for the 'other' pilot. We found each other at the same time...

Then there was the ride back in the station's CH-53. The crew chief shouted 'got him' while I was just getting in the hatch. I was swinging out the door holding on to some webbing as the helo took off.

They dropped me at the squadron ready room. I walked in and found the lonely duty officer, on Friday at 5 p.m., and he just told me to sign in. I put INC, 0.1 on the board, and he asked if I wanted another plane?

He thought I was being very sarcastic when I told him I was grounded, because we crashed across Interstate 10. Then he got serious and went after the CO. I had to walk 2 blocks to the dispensary.



Lt. Corbett walks away from the crash following low-altitude ejection. Photo via author.



A USN LSO captured this photo prior to the ejection. Photo via author.

REMEMBERING BOB RAHN

By Jim Barnes



It was in the early days of the Skyhawk Association; the first ever luncheon in conjunction with Tailhook I think, held at the Balboa Park Aviation Museum in San Diego. We had a great lunch in the open-air pavilion in the center of the building.

When lunch was over, we lined up to take the guided tour of the museum. As luck would have it, Bob Rahn was in line right behind me. Even a low-time A-4 driver like me knew who Bob Rahn was and so I introduced myself. As we chatted for a while, it was evident that Bob not only was a walking encyclopedia of aviation engineering and history, but just one of the nicest guys you could ever wish to meet.

As we got to the head of the line, they broke us into groups, and Bob was part of my group. We were introduced to the docent who would give us the

guided tour. This guy announced that he was a retired USAF Lt Col. and claimed to be the most knowledgeable Tour Guide at the Museum. He kept bragging about his knowledge and even challenged us to try and ask a question about any exhibit that he could not answer. Most of us didn't think much of his arrogant attitude and forgot all about it.

As we went through the exhibits, however, our docent began to irritate us. Every time anyone would ask a question he would always come back with a snide comment such as "that was an easy one," or "you are certainly NOT challenging me with that one," and so forth. As we neared the U.S. Navy carrier exhibit with a beautiful A-4 on display, I resolved to take this USAF (Ret.) smart ass down a notch.

Standing in front of the A-4, our

know-it-all docent began his canned spiel about Skyhawk performance and history. I raised my hand immediately. At first he ignored me and droned on about the airplane; but I stuck my hand up higher and started waving. Looking slightly annoyed, he acknowledged me. I asked him, "Do you know who flew the first flight of the XA4D-1?" He opened his mouth but there was a long pause and you could almost see the wheels in his head spinning. Before he could say anything, I said "It was Bob Rahn, would you like to meet him?" He just stood there with his mouth still open as Bob stepped forward and stuck out his hand! He shook Bob's hand and Bob said "Thanks for a great tour."

As we moved on to the next exhibit, I whispered to the docent "I still have more A-4 trivia questions if you are still up for the challenge." Within minutes, I looked around, and he had disappeared. We were on our own for the rest of the tour.

Bob Rahn was a great pilot and a fine gentleman. We really miss him!

(Ed. Note: this piece is for the exclusive use of the Skyhawk Association and may not be reproduced without permission of the author or the Association.)



Test Pilot Bob Rahn on first flight of XA4D-1, 22 June 1954.

FACT OR FICTION? INVERTED PLUGS?

• Our readers respond •



In the last issue, we asked if anyone had performed or seen an inverted in-flight refueling plug. As you can see from responses printed in the Letters to the Editor in this issue, most respondents are skeptical. However...

Dave Dollarhide, Skyhawk Association Director, wrote to tell us that Curt Ayers had accomplished an inverted plug and had a photo of the event. Dave continued with:

"I checked with Curt Ayers later, and he was unable to find the photo. However, when I sent him the photo-shopped pic, he said I'd created almost an exact image of the actual photo. Of course, in re-creating the photo, I used personal shots from my files, and the Scooter was from VA-46. (Note the sun on the wrong side of the airplane.) In the real photo, Curt was in VA-76 when he rolled his airplane upside down and approached the basket. A camera bird was in position to capture the moment, but alas we all tend to misplace things after 45 years or so."

So, the answer to my question posed in the Fall issue, the photo shown above was "just another sea story aided by Photoshop."



Image 2. Photo via Don Simms.

That's not the end of the story, however, as related by Don Simms (RNZAF).

"We (the RNZAF) used to do not only inverted plugs, but formation barrel rolls plugged as well! We also had some rather interesting aircraft buddy refuel from us. See attached."

Don provided us the photographic evidence, of which I was already aware having read the interesting and colorful history of the RNZAF operation of the A-4, *Skyhawks, The Story of the RNZAF Skyhawks* written by Don and Nick Lee-Frampton (watch for a review of this book in the Summer 2012 issue).

Reference Image 1 – From *Skyhawks*, "The 'Plugged Barrel Roll' was debuted by the Skyhawk aerobatic team at the Whenuapai Airshow in 1983 and is seen here being practiced over the Central North Island." The maneuver became a staple of RNZAF airshow demonstrations.

Image 2 is another shot of the barrel roll while plugged into the buddy store, this from inside the cockpit of the receiver aircraft.

While this formation maneuver became commonplace at Kiwi Skyhawk aerial demonstrations, it turned deadly on 16 February 2001 when NZ6211 flown by Squadron Leader Murray "Muzza" Neilson crashed during rehearsals for a display at the Avalon Airshow (to be held the next day). Neilson was leading a section through practice wingovers and barrel rolls, for two of which the wing-



Image 3. Photo via Don Simms.



Image 1. Photo via Don Simms.

man was plugged into the buddy store. On the third plugged attempt, the leader recognized that the section was too low to recover and called for a disengagement. There was time for the wingman to avoid the ground, but Squadron Leader Neilson crashed into the trees just outside the base.

The maneuver was obviously considered routine by RNZAF pilots because it was later determined that neither pilot had done the plugged barrel role before the day of the crash, and they elected to try the maneuvers despite an unusually heavy weight and drag index (both aircraft were configured and fueled for a ferry trip to Melbourne, the site of the airshow) – both had two 300 gallon drop tanks and a buddy store.

The buddy store was put to frequent and effective use by the RNZAF Skyhawk pilots due to their frequent over-water deployments to exercises in allied nations. Some of the uses were unusual, as seen in the Image 3 shot of a RAF VC-10 lining up to refuel off an A-4. When I asked Don if the VC-10 actually plugged, he replied:

"Yeah the Tristar did a dry plug and so did the VC-10 that was with it. This was in 1987. And while the VC-10 was lining up on the A-4, two RAAF Hornets lined up on the VC-10's drogues!"

A picture of the VC-10 engaged with the buddy store basket can be found on page 164 of *Skyhawks*.

Reported by Bob Hickerson

OVER THE SIDE

From David Blair



(Ed. Note: I received this email from David Blair just before the holidays, and asked for more information.)

12/24/2011:

Bob,

I have a series of pictures of a VA-12 A-4 that went over the side of the *Shangri La* on the '68-'69 Med cruise. The driver didn't make it. Would you be interested in these and the little bit that I know about it? I took the pictures.

12/28/2012:

Bob,

Here's the story:

I worked night check in VA 72 airframes, I was walking thru hangar bay 3 going forward about 1700. The boat was in a recovery cycle, and this VA 12 A-4C Scooter had just gone over the side. I went out on a sponson deck with a bunch of others to take a look. Ran back to our compartment to get a Kodak and this is the result.

We were on the *Shang* on the '68-'69 Med cruise. I can't remember when it happened but I believe it was early in the cruise. The weather was excellent, and the sun was still shining. The story was the rescue swimmer could see the pilot about 2 feet under with the chute open.

You can see the seat dragging in the water in one of the pictures. We had put a change in before the cruise that gave the seat zero-zero capability, and I believe this change was for all A-4s.

I have always wondered what caused this accident and who the driver was. As you know, back in the day this was not headline news like it is today. If you come up with something on this incident please let me know.

I was the nite check supervisor and the squadron final checker at the JBD and cat shot, but that's another story. Thanks, David

[dvblair2003@yahoo.com]

From the Skyhawk Association website:

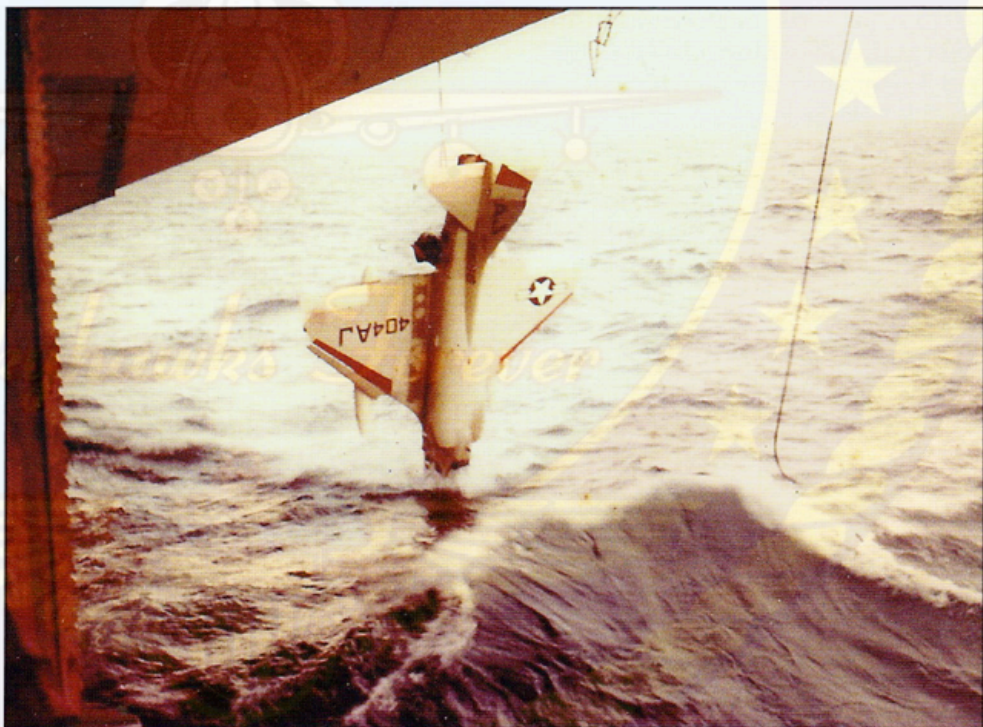
Mishap aircraft: A-4C 149566, VA-12, USS *Shangri-La*, February 12, 1969.

Narrative: LTJG Frank Peter Neuman was killed during recovery into a setting sun. LTJG Neuman caught the #2 wire, but at such an angle that his aircraft proceeded to go over the side. He ejected, but by the time the sequence completed, he was ejected almost on a parallel path to the water. Apparently when he hit the water at that much of an angle, he broke his neck. HC-2 could not cut him loose from his chute, and the body was never recovered. The aircraft was held by the wire with its' nose just touching the water. The memorial service was held onboard the *Shang* on 15 Feb 69.

Source: Bob Fossum, *Atkron 12 Newsletter*, Volume IV, Issue 1, March, 2005.



Photos provided by David Blair.



Photos provided by David Blair.

THE NAM DINH STRIKE

By Hugh Magee

The morning of 28 June, 1967, broke in full sunshine at sea, with just a few scattered clouds. Excellent flying weather had prevailed through the month of June, and Air Wing 14 in Constellation had been, for several weeks, on the three Alpha strike per day schedule.

In some ways it was a grueling schedule. With VA-146's complement of 19 attack pilots, it dictated that each pilot fly an average of three Alpha strikes every two days. During normal non-combat operations, this would be a very desirable schedule, but the three hour planning/briefing and one-hour debrief coupled with the one-hour or so strike, made for a very long day when two strikes were involved. This, coupled with the mental anxiety which accompanies an Alpha strike, made for some very long and thoroughly exhausting days.

On the plus side, the three strike a day schedule was tailor-made for launches and recoveries. The ship would steam as far north (as close to the targets) as possible. Most available strike and support aircraft would be spotted and launched for each of the three

strikes per day and when the strikes were completed, there was no waiting or holding upon return for a "ready deck". The ship merely turned into the wind when the first returning strike aircraft checked in.

The planning/pre-briefing for the Cong My strike was held the previous evening in the Integrated Operations/Intelligence Center (IOIC) on Constellation. Scheduled for a noon launch, the strike would concentrate on all areas of the "transshipment point located 2 miles west of the port city of Haiphong. With the weather prediction at Cong My indicating questionable cloud cover, the Nam Dinh railroad marshalling yards were also briefed as the alternate target, weather permitting.

Mind you Cong My was no "piece of cake," however, being only about 10 miles from "feet dry" it sure looked better to me than the alternate! Nam Dinh had the reputation as the most heavily defended target south of Hanoi. It is the textile manufacturing center of the country and as such, is the second largest railway center in North Vietnam. Prestrike photos disclosed a large

confluence of railway tracks which in some areas of the target, were 16 tracks abreast in the loading/unloading areas.

The strike consisted of eight A-4C Skyhawks (VA55/146), eight F-4B Phantoms (VF-142/143), four A-6A Intruders (VA-196), two KA-3B Skywarriors (VAH-8) (tanker support), two RA-5C Vigilantes (RVAH-12) (pre/post strike photography), and the standard E-2A Hawkeye (radar coverage).

The strike plan had the A4 bombers leading, Phantoms following, with the Intruder bombers close behind. Four of the Phantoms were tasked with fending off enemy fighters (TAR/BAR CAP) and the other four with flak suppression. The flak suppressors were armed with four Cluster Bomb Units (CBU) each.

CDR Gene Tissot, Commander, Carrier Air Wing 14 led the strike in a VA-146 A-4C. Because the A-4Cs were the slowest aircraft in the strike group when loaded with bombs, we also assumed the navigational lead. CDR Bill Lawrence's (CO VF-143) F-4 division was assigned to flak suppression. They were to accelerate ahead of the group just prior to roll-in and, hopefully, silence the anti-aircraft gunners as we rolled in to drop our payload of 500# bombs.

After rendezvous of the strike group, and about halfway to the target, the weather recce aircraft reported heavy low cloud coverage and rain in the Haiphong area and recommended a divert to the alternate target. CAG wheeled the strike group to port and set course for Nam Dinh.



A-4C NK-604 of VA-146 Blue Diamonds.

R.G.'s ART

• High Flight •



Early R.G. Smith painting depicts A4D-1s overhead.

Image courtesy of Sharlyn Marsh. [rgsmithart.com]

R. G. Smith,
(1914-2001)

Named Honorary Naval
Aviator Number 11.



THE NAM DINH STRIKE *continued*

“Nam Dinh?” I thought “Nam Dinh”!... “But why?”... We went there just last week and for the life of me, I cannot understand what they are so proud of...” Normally, a weather divert to an alternate target was coupled with a sigh of relief, lessening of heart rate, and a grin. Not this time!

Located only 30 miles south of Hanoi, Nam Dinh is a fairly large city by North Vietnamese standards. Reportedly, a large textile manufacturing center, I personally had been involved in two major strikes there in the previous month. Both were rigidly opposed by the flak gunners, and we had felt lucky to get out of there alive. I could not understand what it was they were protecting so vigorously!

We had planned on fooling the gunners and missile sites by feinting to the north, but it did not work. Black clouds of flak dotted the sky as we raced straight to the city now only two minutes away. I heard the flak suppressors rolling in “Taproom flight in” as we approached our roll-in point.

Arming the bomb switches, I rolled inverted and pulled my bombsight down into the center of the railyard. Screaming down toward the target, a piercing “beep, beep, beep” resonated through my headset. “oh oh” I thought, “someone is down!” I continued the dive

wiggling through the broken clouds and pickled my entire bomb load at 4,600’. As I pulled off, two parachutes appeared drifting below me toward the broken clouds over the target. “Must be the flak suppressors” I thought... “good luck guys!” One of the things that we feared most about being shot down was the thought of landing in a parachute right in the middle of an area that you had just bombed! The two chutes were headed right “downtown”.

Upon return to the ship, we learned that CDR Lawrence and his RIO LT(jg) Jim Bailey were missing. They were captured on the ground and would spend nearly six years as Prisoners of War in North Vietnam, returning in 1973. Luckily, all the remaining strike aircraft returned safely to Constellation that day.

Oh well, ‘twas just another normal day “on the line”!

It was seven years, almost to the day, before I was to meet Bill Lawrence again. I was then the Aircraft Maintenance Officer on COMLAWT-WINGPAC staff in early

July 1974, slated to retire one month hence. Rear Admiral Lawrence checked aboard to prepare to take command of the Wing. We met, shook hands, and I saluted and uttered a hearty “welcome home, Admiral!”



LCDR Hugh Magee in August 1967. Photo from Hugh Magee.

TINS

From Earl Chinn via Bill Gilchrist

I've got to tell you another story, about a guy who was in the reserves with me. Jack Hartman and I were A-4 pilots in the Naval Air Reserve in the early 70s, and we both lived in the Kalamazoo area. One day while we were sharing a ride to our drill weekend at NAF Detroit, he told me this one:

On Yankee Station in the Tonkin Gulf, in 1969, he was in his A-4 on the starboard bow cat for a night launch. He was loaded with 250 lb iron bombs and two external wing fuel tanks. Like the F-4, the A-4 needed a bridle to hook it to the catapult shuttle. The bridle had a permanent eye at each end, and the eyes slipped onto hooks on the belly of the airplane, and the body of the bridle was hooked over the shuttle. He went to full power. The shuttle fired, and at about 70 knots or so the belly hook on the left side of the A-4, or maybe it was the eye of the bridle, broke.

As the bridle whipped across the shuttle it took off his left main and nose landing gear struts and the airplane went down on its nose and left wing, shedding fuel tanks. There was an explosion, which killed one of the kids in the starboard catwalk, and Jack ejected out of the fireball as the bird went over the bow. His lower legs were singed by the flames.

Jack's a character, and since he lived through it, it's a hoot to hear him tell it. He went off in his RAPEC seat into the night as the bird went over the bow, and he thought he was dead. The A-4 was in a pronounced left-wing down attitude as he ejected, so his trajectory went out forward and to the left of the ship.

The seat worked perfectly. He made one swing in the chute and hit the warm water of the Gulf. He shucked his chute, and counted his blessings. But the OOD's SOP for a bird in the water off the starboard bow cat was to make a hard port turn.

Jack looked up, his MK3C flotation having inflated, his mask and helmet still being on, oxygen coming from his

seat pan, and here came the pointy end of the boat. It hit him, doing maybe 30 knots, and he ricocheted down the side of the hull, through the barnacles, missed the main engine intakes, was knocked unconscious, and the stern watch saw him come up in the wake having somehow gone through the four propellers. The ship was in the middle of launch and recovery so it resumed course, and the plane guard destroyer astern never saw Jack, who was unconscious and only half afloat. One chamber of his MK3C had been punctured during his slide along the side of the hull. He drifted off into the night.

At some point soon thereafter, while he still had seat pan air, he regained consciousness and got into his raft. He had no radio. Over the course of the next day and a half, he drifted with wind and tide to within about four miles of the shore of Hainan Island. There was a low overcast that afternoon, but a random A-3 at about 500 feet flew right over him and reported the position to the boat, which dispatched a destroyer to pick him up. But by the time the destroyer arrived from Yankee station 50 miles away, Jack had drifted inside the three-mile limit of Hainan.

Since the destroyer presented a big radar return, its CO stayed outside territorial waters and called for a helo, which arrived when Jack was only about a mile offshore. The helo driver was gutsy, and he dropped down on the water and ran in and picked Jack up. But by then the helo was low fuel, so it landed on the destroyer, and they put Jack in one of those chicken wire stretchers for the long ride back to Yankee.

When they got to Yankee, the destroyer came alongside for unrep and they high-lined Jack across to the carrier in his wire stretcher. He had several fractured ribs and a fractured right arm. When he got to the carrier, the medics prepared to carry him down the long external escalator to sick bay, which was one deck below the hanger bay. But on the way down the escalator, they dropped him, and as he bounced down

the escalator in his stretcher he broke his other arm. As the flight surgeon examined him, he asked Jack, "Did you even TRY to put on your brakes?" They sent Jack to Cubi Point on the COD and put him in the hospital at Clark AFB.

But wait, there's more.

A few weeks later he was on the mend and was hanging around the OPS office at Cubi, wearing Bermuda shorts and a tee shirt. The ops duty yeoman asked him if he was Lt(jg) Hartman, and Jack said that he was. They handed him a message from the ship which directed him to fly an A-4 back to his squadron. It was an A-4 that had been reworked at the repair facility at Nippi in Japan. Jack said, "Well, OK." He borrowed some flight gear and manned up (his quote: "I was just a dumb (jg)").

As I imperfectly recall, it's about 600 miles from Cubi to Yankee, all over water, of course, and single-engine birds weren't supposed to do that solo. But there was an A-6 going to the ship that day, so Jack arranged to fly wing on him and off they went.

Enroute, the A-6 lost its radar. His inertial nav also went inop, and his avionics suite quit, except for having UHF COM. As they approached Viet Nam, the ship was IFR, so the A6 said he was going into Da Nang. Jack said, well,

OK, but I've got TACAN lock on the ship, so I'm heading there. He got a Charlie time and landed aboard.

Jack said he hadn't thought about it ahead of time, but with one forearm in a soft cast and his ribs taped up, it really hurt when he arrested.

He parked his airplane and when he walked into the ready room the brothers were

aghast.

"Hartman, what the hell are you doing here?"

It turned out that he didn't have an up chit from the hospital at Clark and was not authorized to fly. His squadron OPS officer lost his job for originating the message to Jack at Cubi.

So they put Jack back on the COD and flew him to Cubi again, where he stayed at Clark for a couple more weeks until the ship came in.

TINS: This is No Sh....T!

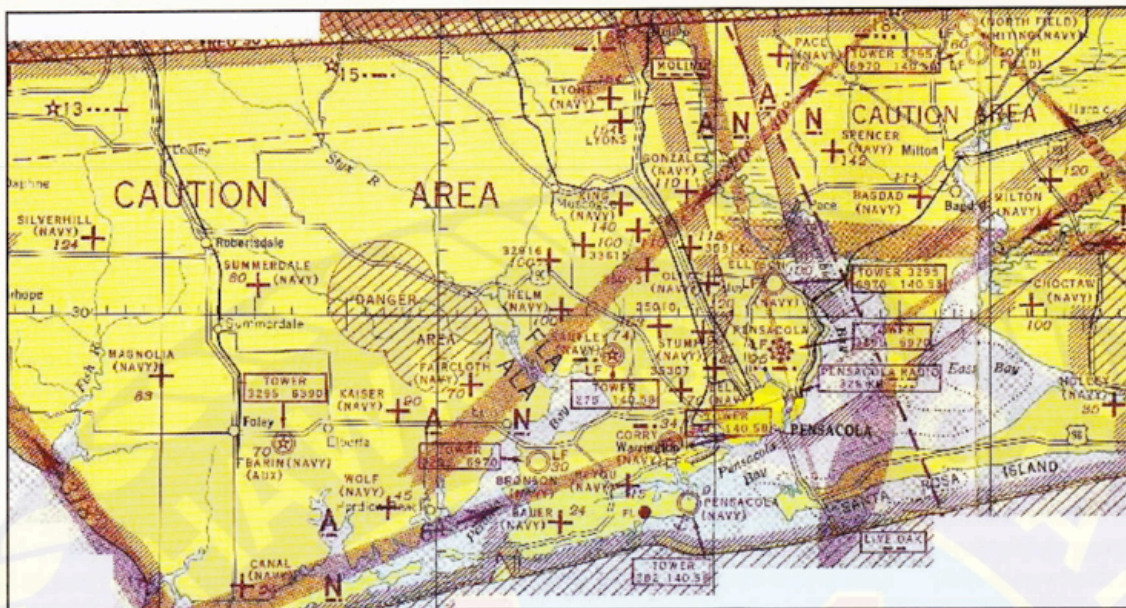


FROM THE ATTIC

• Mailbag •

Before they fade and crumple,
share your photos.

email to
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org



This will bring
back memories!
From
Bill Gilchrist.



A-4A 142200 back on display at the NAS Alameda gate after being blown off its pedestal in February 2008 and undergoing a major restoration. The aircraft was severely damaged a year ago when it was dropped during the attempt to replace it on the pedestal. The refueling probe was placed on this aircraft for demonstration purposes. Note the smooth rudder (pre-tadpole design). Photo from Rob Roberts via Dave Dollarhide.



A4D Jet Assisted Take Off (JATO) from Kaneohe Bay, HI, 1963, VMA-212. Although the pilot was supposed to time lighting of the JATO bottles so that they burned out right at rotation speed, delaying burnout until after rotation made a more spectacular airshow and was a common practice. Photo via Raymond Snyder.



Glenn Fox's 2011 Dodge Ram, decorated as a tribute to his squadron, VA-216. The photos were taken at Fallon, NV, in 1962 while preparing for a Westpac deployment. One of the aircraft depicted was A-4C 149620, which was assigned to Glen for the cruise. Glen lives in Windsor, CO, where his truck attracts a lot of attention. The license plate, For-Kev, is a dedication to his late son Kevin. Glen retired as a retired captain with Continental Airlines, and his claim to fame was serving as Senator John McCain's SPAD instructor in VT-310. See Glen's letter in this issue.



SIZE DOES MATTER

• Modelers' Corner •

By Joe Turpen

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

Skyhawks in Styrene (Part I) An overview of Scooter kits, from A4D-1 to A-4KU

By Joe Turpen (Director, Skyhawk Association)
(Ed. Note: this article was originally published in the *International Plastic Modelers' Society IPMS Journal*. This article will be serialized in *The A-4Ever*. Used with permission.)

On June 22, 1954, A4D-1 BuNo. 137912 flew for the first time from the Edwards Air Force Base dry lakebed. At the time, no one realized she was the first of 2690 aircraft that would not only serve with the Navy and Marine Corps but with the air forces and navies of eight countries. She was so versatile that the aircraft would be modified for electronic warfare training as well as flying as an adversary aircraft and also serving as a fast forward air controller.

Like the prototype aircraft, Skyhawk models have proliferated for longer than the operational history of the Skyhawk. There are 37 kits that are listed as E/F kits alone. Also, most countries that operated the Skyhawk are represented, and include Kuwait, Singapore, Aus-

tralia and New Zealand, to name a few. There are kits that represent most of the models that were operated by both the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. Oddly, there is no good kit of the A4D-1!

Due to the large number of kits of the Skyhawk that have been available, I'm just going to do a quick overview. There are no reviews of specific kits, and I will not guarantee that these are all the kits that have been available.

Hasegawa's 1:32 Skyhawks

Since they are the largest, to my knowledge, I'll start with the 1:32 scale Skyhawks. The models of the A-4 that are represented by the most kits in every scale are the A-4E and F. Not surprisingly the best-known Skyhawk, "LADY JESSIE" of VA-164, is in a 1:32 kit by Hasegawa, which also has markings for VA-212 as well. Other squadrons represented are VA-192 and VA-55. There is also an adversary 1:32 scale A-4E/F which has markings for both Navy and

Marine aircraft. The units represented are the Navy Fighter Weapons School (Top Gun) and VF-126. The same Hasegawa kit has also been issued with markings for VC-1 and an Israeli Skyhawk. This particular A-4 does not have the exhaust extension that is associated with the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) Skyhawks.

Needless to say, Hasegawa has not ignored the Blue Angels in this scale. Hasegawa/Minicraft issued one kit, No #103, but issued it under at least one other number. Hasegawa issued it as S61 and then in 2004 as 8147, with markings for the 1976 (CDR K.C. "Casey" Jones) and 1978 (CDR Bill Newman) Blues.

Two seat Skyhawks have also been represented in this particular scale as well. Both the TA-4 and OA-4M are represented. The TA-4 has been seen in the marking of VT-24 twice, once in the markings commemorating the 75th anniversary of Naval Aviation. The other squadron in the anniversary kit was VT-25. The OA-4M kit was issued by Hasegawa and was a "collector's hi-grade" kit that had photo-etched parts included. The squadrons represented were H&MS-11 and 12. Another Hasegawa TA-4 kit also featured a VF-126 aircraft in bicentennial markings.

Hasegawa's 1:48 Skyhawks

1:48 scale has the greatest number of kits, and the most variety. There have been few A4D-2's (A-4B) in 1:48 scale, and other than the two-seat Skyhawks, this may be the one model of the Skyhawk with the fewest models produced. Hasegawa issued a kit of an A-4B in the markings of VA-72 and VA-106. It also released a B/C kit with markings for the Falklands campaign.

With minor modifica-

continued...



Photo via Joe Turpen.



The Hasegawa 1:48 A-4B kit No. 09426. Included decals for 144954 VA-106, USS Essex AK-00 and 144952 VA-72 AG-300. Photo via Joe Turpen.

tions, and the camel back included in the kit, the Hasegawa A4D-2N (A-4C) kit can be converted to an A-4L. However, you really don't have to do that since Hasegawa then issued the kit as an A-4L with markings for VC-2 and VC-13. One aircraft chosen by both Hasegawa and HobbyCraft has been VA-76's 148609 which shot down a MG-17 using unguided rockets.

Hasegawa has, over the past several years, produced several good A-4E/F kits. The first issue was with a VA-192 and VA-22 aircraft, which was followed by the release of the model with the Marine markings for VMA-211 and VMA-311. The model was released at least two more times with different markings, including the Blue Angels and "Lady Jessie" markings. Hasegawa's E/F kit

has also reappeared as a Revell/Monogram Promodeler Blue Angels A-4F in 2002.

Blue Angels A-4's were all "Super Foxtrots," which means they had J52-P-408 engines in them. The Super Foxtrot is, in general, easy to spot if you can see the intake nose-on. It's extended slightly at the top and not as symmetrical as the

regular Skyhawk intake. Also, some of the Foxtrots have a coffin-shaped raised area on the intake. It appears that this was a reinforcement for the lifting location on that portion of the intake. Why all Foxtrots didn't receive this modification isn't known. However you will find photos of the Foxtrots with and without this modification. Another note is that the Blue Angels had the only Skyhawks that had their leading-edge slats fixed in the closed position.

Hasegawa also released an A-4E/H kit as well as an A-4N, but in both cases did not provide the exhaust extension. Hasegawa has produced several A-4M kits, one of which is a model of the final Skyhawk 160264 in its delivery scheme. This scheme is referred to as the Easter Egg scheme and the aircraft actually

did operate for a while still painted this way. The aircraft is now on exhibit at the Flying Leatherneck Museum in San Diego but in a tactical scheme. This aircraft is a late version of the A-4M, which can be identified quickly by looking at the main gear door, which is different from other Skyhawks.

Hasegawa has also issued kits for some of the export versions of the A-4M. Not only did it issue a kit of the A-4N but it has recently issued a kit of the A-4KU, and earlier a kit of what the A-4KUs became when there sold to Brazil, the AF-1. Singapore's Skyhawks are also represented in this scale by two kits. In 2002 an A-4SU kit was released by Hasegawa in the markings of the Air Force's flight demonstration team, the Black Knights, and again in 2007 the model was released in its tactical scheme. New Zealand's A-4's are also represented as the KAHU version of their aircraft.

Hasegawa didn't forget the TA-4 either. Their latest kit, issued in 2009, was Pf43/07243, which had markings for both VC-1 and VT-7. I also think they released another TA-4 kit that was in Blue Angels marking and have searched for it but with no luck. To me it seems strange that Hasegawa hasn't produced more TA-4's and it may be that I just haven't found them. If any one knows of more please let me know.

Part II of this article will be printed in *The A-4Ever*, Summer 2012.



One of several Hasegawa 1:48 A-4E/F kits. This is kit number Pt21 with markings for 151148, VA-192 USS Ticonderoga, NM-200 and 154190 VA-22 USS Bonhomme Richard NF-300. Photo via Joe Turpen.



Hasegawa 1:48 A-4C – kit no. Pt22. Included are markings for 148543 VA-15 USS Forrestal, AA-401 and 147825 VA-153 USS Coral Sea, NL-302. Photo via Joe Turpen.

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Marine Corps Aviation Association Symposium, May 17 – 19, 2012, Gaylord National Hotel, Oxon Hill, MD. MCAA 2012 will celebrate 100 years of Marine Aviation. **The All-Marine Skyhawk 2012 Reunion** in conjunction with MCAA will be held May 17 - 19. Reunion activities will include a Welcome Aboard reception Thursday night and a Saturday afternoon trip to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, followed by a reunion dinner at the legendary Globe and Laurel restaurant in Quantico. Watch the Skyhawk Association home page (www.a4skyhawk.org) for more information, or contact Mark Williams at roger.wilco@comcast.net.



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



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



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PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

~ Crubfoot Active ~

In a shower of plaster and sheetrock fragments, the Naval Aviator's mighty foot, followed by leg, once again penetrated the ceiling. "Blaznabbid defective overhead," came the muffled roar from the attic.

"Oh, honey! Three more and you're an ace," was the sweet wife's comment. Mighty Crubfoot had struck again...

In the merciless manner of fleet squadrons, Crubfoot had earned his nickname the easy way. A highly intelligent Boat-Schooler, he was a relentless pursuer of justice as the squadron's Perry Mason legal officer. A competent aviator, he was still suspect to the Reserve Junior Officer's Association because of his general sobriety, and because he wore his pisscutter with the back turned down, somewhat resembling posterior cow parts.

While the ceiling attacks story had surfaced somehow at a squadron party, his eventual squadron nickname was truly earned while on a U.S.S. Boat deployment. It seems that, after parking his Scooter port side forward, he decided it would be too far a journey to the nearest ladder to get off the flight deck, so he lightly leapt into the catwalk, promptly breaking his ankle.

The results of his non-acrobatics were four-fold: he was off the flight schedule; a large, conspicuous cast appeared on his left foot, which resulted in even further loss of grace; SDO duty for the foreseeable future, thereby becoming highly visible and available for needling; and, lastly, his enduring, literal nickname of "Clubfoot," which underwent the inevitable WESTPAC Japanese transmutation to "Crubfoot." Puresome figured it was better than some of the Crusader pilot's nicknames, like "The Bald-Headed Chicken Molester" or "Limpy."

Whenever the unfortunate lad showed up in the ready room, it became fashionable to make simulated warning

radio calls like Red Crown or Big Look used for MIGs or SAMs: "Warning! Warning! Crubfoot active, Delta Sierra all quads!"

All this was born with the weary resignation of the frabbee who has righteously been caught and joyously not been allowed to forget about it. Naturally, it was Puresome who pushed it too far.

For some unexplained reason, Puresome had abandoned the dirty shirt wardroom and had decided on doing supper at prestigious Wardroom One among the Black Shoes, senior citizens, and simple refugees from the unwashed splendor of Gator Chow. He selected a wild card napkin, intricately stuffed in its silver ring, and wandered over to join some of his squadron mates, one of whom was Crubfoot.

"Hey, Crubfoot," said Puresome as he shook out his napkin, "I bet they teach you at Boat School how to put these things back right."

"Yes, actually, they do, and if you had gone anywhere tonier than Sorghum State Agricultural and Mechanics College, you would realize that linen napkins, properly folded and tucked into silver rings, separate man from Marines and other beasts," rejoined Crubfoot.

The Sorghum State part and the beast part weren't as telling as the jibe at Puresome's napkin folding technique, the results of which always looked like busted out bales of cotton. Fortunately, Puresome was as sensitive as two train wrecks.

"Your prattle is as the buzzing of dung flies in my ears," said Puresome as soup was served by Filipino waiters in white jackets.

Impeccably dressed officers ate from fine china with gleaming silver cutlery atop starched white table linen. Clever wardroom chitchat avoided politics, women, and shop. Then, from lip level,



Crubfoot dropped his spoon, kerplash! into his soup.

A shocked silence overcame the table. As the eaters assessed damage to their uniforms, Puresome was the first to recover.

"Well, Crubfoot, if you can't be good, be colorful."

That was too much. In front of God, CAG, and an assortment of commanders and slightly lesser sorts, Crubfoot rose himself up, black eyes flashing and soup stained breast heaving.

"Puresome, I've had enough of your crap, let's go settle this on the flight deck right now!"

Puresome was on his way to his feet when forceful intervention by LCDR Spider's large hands sat both he and Crubfoot back down. Speaking through his teeth, Spider invited them to cool it and join him in his palatial stateroom later for a mini-A.O.M. Puresome felt it prudent to chill out and accept.

Later in Spider's stateroom, junior officer counseling was in full flower. Crubfoot was persuaded to de-miff and un-huff, and Puresome was yet again advised to be nice. Finally, the two shook hands and were dismissed.

But as they negotiated the knee-knockers down the passageway, Puresome couldn't resist.

"Say, Crubfoot, now that we're buddies, when you trip and bust your butt, can I have your Akai tape recorder?"

It was a good thing Puresome was a nimble wise-ass.



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