



THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

Journal



"Marine Tradition"
by R.G. Smith

THE A-4 EVER

Winter 2012-13

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 18 • NUMBER 4

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Skyhawk Association Board Meeting
April, 2013
Seattle, WA 



www.a4skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• From Hide •



By Dave Dollarhide

Hun...Departing!

Todd "Hun" Frommelt has come to the end of his tour as President of the Skyhawk Association. Just a few years ago, following a marathon stint as president for Bob "Raven" Hickerson, the board decided to set the President's term at two years and alternate between Navy and Marine. Also, to ensure continuous succession, both the Marine and Navy VPs must now agree to accept the President's job if asked by the board.

Hun's departure is the first turnover in the new system, so as the Navy VP, I humbly accept the job. The "Hun" was gonna just flip me the keys...but we ain't got no keys. Instead, he briefed me for an hour after our meeting at Hook 12, then dropped a ten pound stack of file folders in my suitcase for me to lug back to Florida.



My first official act is to applaud Hun for an exceptional tour as President. He'll be a tough act to follow. Few people realize how far reaching he's been in promoting the Skyhawk Association, communicating with people all over the world, keeping track of flying A-4s and improving our processes. He's been a detail guy, and our Association is a much better place as a result his leadership. Hun will continue to contribute as a director and since he was so good at it, I've asked him to remain the "Keeper of the Count"...the number of Scooters still flying.

Thanks for everything, Hun!

State of the Association

The Skyhawk Association will click over its twentieth year when Hook 13 rolls around. Like any startup, things didn't always go so smooth. YP tells us early board meetings were more like the "OK Corral," but the organization has more than just survived the years.

Today, due to the dedication of many volunteers over the years, we're one of the strongest historical aircraft fraternities in the world. We have become a full service Association...an amazing feat since no one gets paid. We celebrate the A-4, but more than that, we revel in the memories of the events and people surrounding our time with the Skyhawk. We're about old friends and other Scooter fans, the sea stories...the good times...bad times...all of it. Many of our members simply admire our agile little bomber. Pilots, mechanics, modelers, officer, enlisted and civilians, we embrace all.

- Our new website is a state of the art asset, many times more powerful than our previous site. It contains an incredible amount of historical information. I like to say, "We're the best repository of A-4 and Light Attack history in the world." I believe it to be true, and our updated site launches us into a new age of service to members.
- The *A-4EVER SKYHAWK JOURNAL* continues to receive

great reviews and is considered by many to be their primary reason for remaining a member.

- Our small research team of volunteers enjoys digging into member questions about the A-4.
- We encourage social gatherings...reunions of all kinds and have seen more people coming together with old friends to celebrate their *Skyhawk* years.
- We support privately-owned *Skyhawks* that are still flying and encourage members to attend airshows and displays of A-4s. Last year's gathering at Sun n' Fun was a hoot, with us hanging around the *Skyhawk Ventures A-4C*.
- We've provided financial support to renovate *Skyhawks* on display at various locations.
- We fully support other Navy/Marine Aircraft Associations. We partner with the *Intruder* Association in supporting the Attack Ready Room at Tailhook. The Marine Skyhawkers support us and us them. We look forward to a growing relationship with the budding "*A-7 Corsair II Association*," our up and coming Light Attack ally who has already signed up well over three hundred members.

Now what? When you have a good thing going, just keep the good times rolling! However, the long term realities of our aging membership spell the eventual decline of the Association...facts of life. Despite this, we still feel there is a place for us in the far term. No one knows what the future holds, but I believe we can find ways to adapt.

Meanwhile, if we're not having fun, we're not doing it right. As the new President, I'll do my best over the next two years to make it worthy of your time. Keep up the "incoming" with those cards, letters and emails.

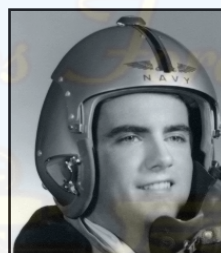
Dave "Hide" Dollarhide
President



Dave "Hide" Dollarhide

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Enlisted Advisor



GYSGT Bill "Gunny" Ravgiala is our new **Enlisted Advisor**, gunnyrav@gmx.com. A dedicated member of the Skyhawk Assn., Bill Ravgiala has volunteered for this new support staff position. He will be the contact point in representing our enlisted members and will work to encourage additional enlisted membership. Welcome aboard Gunny!

VC-1 SDO

We offer our thanks to **Bryan Chrysler**, who has just volunteered to be the **VC-1 SDO**. We've filled in some gaps in the SDO ranks recently and Bryan's initiative most certainly helps the cause.

continued on page 5...



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

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President and Director (FY 14)
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BOMBS AWAY!

• Winter 2012-13 •



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JOURNAL STAFF



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

Feature Contributors: Peter Mersky, Jack "Pursome" Woodul, Joe Turpen, Gary Verver, Boom Powell, and Dave Dollarhide..

————— Published by the Skyhawk Association © 2012 —————

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: R.G. Smith's classic *Marine Tradition* commemorated 50 years of Marine Aviation. At top is an E-1 early American Army fighter, the only pursuit aircraft manufactured by the U.S. in WWI. The middle aircraft is a WWI DeHavilland DH-4 light bomber. Below, a Marine A-4M, the primary close-air support aircraft for the U.S. Marines into the 1980s. This cover closes out our observances of the centennial year of Marine Aviation.

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION BOD MEETING

From The Hun

Skyhawk Association Board of Directors Meeting: Reno Tailhook 2012

You'll be happy to know your Board could be found hard at work on Friday, 7 September. We took some serious time off from our Tailhook seminars and other fun times to hold both our Directors' meeting AND our Association's Annual Meeting and luncheon.

Main Reports: Membership is in a holding pattern around 910 folks. We're hoping to push on towards 1000 ASAP! Requesting our SDO's and your help please! Our treasury remains solvent and, in retrospect, did well with a fine, within budget, Attack Ready Room! Website is functioning well, but we can use some man-hour help for our data entry backlog. We're just volunteers you know! Thanks Blade and Twidget! Journal update included our review of what you've now seen...an electronic 4th yearly edition! Hope Raven and his crew can find the time to keep doing one as it's a great showplace for some

of our longer articles and many photos! Modeling was a good discussion due mainly to the diminishing number of plastic Skyhawks turning up at the IPMS Annual Convention. We've elected to adjust the Best Skyhawk Award that we've been giving to the Best Navy/Marine Fixed Wing Attack Award to ensure that we have an adequate number of entries to choose from.

Old Business: We tortured until they said yes, four directors whose terms were expiring, and they've agreed to stay on for another term...thanks to Blade, George, Pete and Senator for all their work! Our big push on officer turnover folders has pretty much been completed, and I know that's going to make future transitions lots smoother. Thanks gents. Hank Caruso print sales have been slow...so we've reduced the price to \$15 +\$3 for S&H. Check them out...it's a GREAT buy!

New Business: Expect to see coming this Fall a request for support for the renovation of the Tucson Reserve Center's TA-4. Hun will coordinate with the Board and the Tucson guys...and develop a solicitation note for you all. One of the last Navy Skyhawk flyers! And we've decided on Seattle, Washington, for our mid-year meeting...probably the weekend of 5 April, right after Easter. Keep your eyes on our newsletters/Journal and website for details as we'd love to see some members!

Two other items of interest: Joe Turpin started on his own a "Bring a Nugget to Lunch" program. Essentially, he used a contact with an active duty squadron and offered to bring one of their new guys attending Tailhook to our luncheon. I think it came off great...and is a great way to expose the next generation to us old farts and our camaraderie! We're planning to try



Who says it's all fun and games? Skyhawk board at work, Hook 12.

Bear Langworthy, Gene Atwell and Terry Cooney man the Skyhawk booth.



The Attack Ready Room is getting better every year.

Annual Skyhawk luncheon and AOM.



expanding the program next year to a nugget pilot from a Navy attack outfit, a Marine attack outfit and CNATRA. Looking for your comments here...but picking up the tab for 3 new guys or gals seems a bargain for the exposure.

And...Lo and behold, if we read our records correctly, **THE SKY-HAWK ASSOCIATION TURNS 20 NEXT YEAR!!** And we're as healthy or healthier than ever! Thanks for all your support membership! And special thanks to all the old staff guys who've been around seemingly forever helping us keep things running so well... Terry, David, Jack, Mark, Gabby, Gary, Stan, Joe, Boom, Bud, Bear, Bob, and Buick

(and more!). Thanks, also, to Whizzer and ALL the plankholders. We're looking for some ideas from the membership on great ways to celebrate the occasion! Please give us your thoughts!

Annual Meeting and Luncheon:

Our luncheon was a great event, as always, with over 60 folks in attendance, and our guest speaker, retired USMC MajGen Jon "Goose" Gallinetti, was both informative and entertaining. If you haven't been to one of these, please try to make one soon. You'll be glad you did! The attendees also approved the renewed terms of the 4 directors mentioned above. After the Annual Meeting, we held a short BOD meeting

to vote on an officer's slate. While most positions were unchanged, your new VP Navy is Pete Cole and your new President, drumroll please....., is Dave "Hide" Dollarhide! Thanks for agreeing to serve in these positions guys!

And that pretty much wraps it up from the Hun! I'm already reading stuff from Hide to the Board with a big smile on my face! He's going to be a great one, trust me. As I've said before, it's been a distinct honor serving as your President these past two years. Thanks for all your support and our special camaraderie!

Hun sends



Luncheon speaker retired MajGen Jon "Goose" Gallinetti being showered with gifts by outgoing Prez Todd Frommelt.



The Hun successfully passes the baton to incoming Prez Dave "Hide" Dollarhide.

THE PREZ SEZ MORE...

Continued from page 2...

Twidget



It's time for a well deserved rest for our Assistant Webmaster, **David "Twidget" Weber**. David has been invaluable as the backbone of our website for many, many years. His first step in fading away from his volunteer job was to step down as our Webmaster, while Gene "Blade" Atwell stepped up to the plate. That was a few years back and now we must give a big "THANK YOU" to

Twidget and look for someone to replace him as the Assistant Webmaster. We'll need more than just one person to keep up with David's duties. He's not leaving the Association and will transition his replacements, while continuing to help in the background.

We need volunteers for the following jobs:

- **Assistant Webmaster** – Supports the Webmaster primarily by organizing layout, while ensuring the posting and updating of photos, historical data and current activities on the website.
- **Website data support staff** – Since David has done the work of many, we'll need one, two, or more volunteers to maintain website information. Members and the public can submit photos seamlessly through the website. Members can also submit newspaper or magazine articles. In both cases, the photos and articles must be screened before posting, requiring some judgment in each case. The Webmaster and Assistant Webmaster will assign duties as a volunteer is willing to accept.

If you are willing to join our staff in support of A4skyhawk.org, please drop a note to me, Dave Dollarhide/davedollarhide@msn.com and/or Gene Atwell/webmaster@a4skyhawk.org.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org



Share the wisdom:

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Please note email address!

To the Editor:

Reading Steve Pollock's account of his experiences aboard the USS Shangri-La brought back memories of my Shang cruise. Memories more like nightmares! The Shang seems to have had a long, sordid history of mishaps!

I was fresh off a 1965 Westpac cruise with the VA-72 Blue Hawks and had been transferred to VA-83 for a '66 Med cruise in the Shang. Our experiences during work-ups in the Caribbean did not bode well for the Med cruise. The Shang had a huge fresh water leak that they could not find. As memory serves, the evaps were turning out over 100,000 gallons of fresh water daily, and they couldn't keep up! The water line was the last connection broken before getting underway from Gitmo and the first one made upon their return. We were on water hours the entire time at sea and could barely make it back to port before the water ran out. We left for the Med in that condition. The joke was that we could be located by following the fresh water trail across the Atlantic! I think we must've had a water tanker in trail the whole way.

The exhaust duct for the diesel engine that ran the emergency generator ran through my bunk room. I had the top bunk and the duct was inches above my bod. No big deal, right? The emergency generator is rarely used, right? Wrong! They ran the thing 24/7. Why? The regular generators ran off the steam turbines, and that took extra fresh water that we didn't have. The room was so hot that we could barely touch the metal-framed medicine chest. So we lived in the Ready Room. On the bright side, it was easier getting to the brief on time.

Then there was the dark and stormy (at least dark) night when the A-4B landed and his under wing split open, spilling JP5 all over the deck. As the old hands remember, the 27 Charlies were built with a wooden deck. The Shang had just received an expensive overlay of aluminum plate over the wood, and

the burning JP turned it into something resembling potato chips. During the lengthy in-port period that followed the more senior guys toured Italy while us junior folk got lots of command time being Boat Officers and standing the Integrity Watch!

It wasn't my most fun cruise, but any cruise that didn't involve my getting shot at was ok in my book.

Johnny Bittick,
Former Blue Hawk, Rampager &
Ghost rider
Johnb40@juno.com



Skyhawkers:

It has come to our attention through Dave DeBace's note below, that ex A-4 and A-5 driver Larry Mulluly is terminally ill with ALS. Several of his friends believe hearing from old squadron mates would benefit his spirits greatly. If you knew Larry and would like to touch base with him, he can be reached at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center, 4801 Veterans Drive, St Cloud, MN 56303. Phone 320-252-1670.

Hello.

I have been asked to pass along info on Larry Mulluly. If it's possible to put this out to the group, Larry is an ex A4 and A5 driver plus airlines pilot retiring from NWA and is dying from ALS here in Minnesota. I'm sure he would be pumped to hear from old friends. Thanks for whatever can be done.
Dave DeBace

This is one of the first requests like this we've received and believe our members should know when former A-4 buds are ill or have passed away. If you have a need to inform us of these life events, we ask that you contact us by email at sa-sdo-coordinator@a4skyhawk.org.
Fraternally in Skyhawks,
Dave "Hide" Dollarhide
davedollarhide@msn.com



To the Editor:

I am a long time member of the Skyhawk Association (how long? – who keeps records?), having flown A's, B's, C's, L's, F's and T's (as well as F9s and F8s). I think I have every issue of the great A-4 Journal that I ever received (saved so my kids will wonder what to do with them when I depart).

Sadly the current issue, Summer 2012, was put through the USPS grinder. Will appreciate your letting me know how to get a replacement copy. Semper Fi,
Tony Coleman
a.g.coleman@att.net

(Ed. Note: this is not a frequent problem, but when it happens, be aware that your copy of the A-4Ever is fully insured! Just drop me an email, and I'll get a new copy in the mail right away.)



Dear Editor & Secretary:

In case you did not know, I believe there is an A-4 on display at Inde Motorsports Ranch which is about ten miles East of Willcox, Arizona.

The owner and CEO is Graham Dorland. His passion includes airplanes and race cars. At this location he has a F-86D, a MiG-15, a MiG-19 or MiG-21, and an A-4. I do not believe they are flyable.

You may find further information at their web site.

Sincerely,
Walter F. Dudley
Phoenix, AZ

(Ed. Note: John Gabbard reports "That A-4 is A-4C BuNo 147767.")





The nose cone was shortened to clear the 52" basket.
 Doc Mahoney
 VA-55 / ATSI
 elfavi@olypen.com

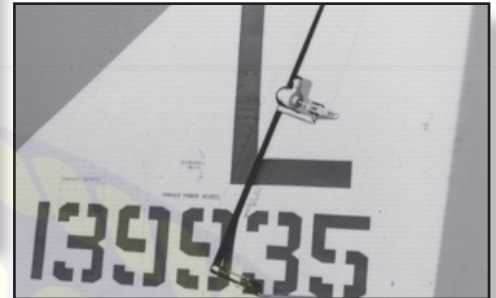
cure was the tadpole rudder that solved the flutter problem aerodynamically so the damper could be deleted.

Pictures attached.
 Best regards,
 Tommy Thomason
<http://tommythomason.com/>

To the Editor:

A4 Skyhawk mechanics wanted.
 Draken International, Inc., based in Lakeland, FL is accepting resumes from experienced A4 Skyhawk mechanics for employment beginning 1 December 2012. Recent experience required.

Qualified applicants please submit resumes by email to jkerby@drakenintl.com.



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To the Editor:

Here are some photos from 2005, when I did all of the initial tests for the V-22 Osprey refueling system in a C-130J. It was out of the USAF test center at Eglin, AFB. Great guys to work with. I got over 100 plugs in two days. 150 knots to 250 knots. All the slow ones were at full flaps to reduce deck angle. The photo with the wrinkle in the hose was during the "High Closure" tests.

To the Editor:

Bob, in response to Steve's question about the A4D-1 rudder in the summer edition of The Skyhawk Association Journal (*Summer 2012*), the fix for -1 (*A4D-1*) production was a flutter damper mounted just above the middle hinge on the rudder. It was basically a dash pot that allowed the pilot to move the rudder but "stiffened" it at high frequencies, which made it acceptable for operational use from a flutter standpoint. The -2 (*A4D-2*) and subsequent



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? SKYHAWK PUZZLERS

• Puzzlers from Skyhawk Staff •



Just a little puzzle this time.
 What do you make of it?

A member sent us this picture and asked a seemingly simple question: "What model A-4 did this stick grip come from?"
 Let us know what you think?
 Hint: it may not be as simple as you think.
 Provide your answer by emailing to: sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.



FROM THE WEBMASTER

• A Work in Progress •

By Gene "Blade" Atwell

Our website, a4skyhawk.org, has been under renovation for a couple of years now and will be for the foreseeable future. That's not to say you should not visit it, quite the opposite. It's truly a work in progress and it will become better if you offer your comments at sablade08@a4skyhawk.org.

The entire experience is enhanced if you are a member in good standing with the necessary credentials to access the entire site. Old 'Ready Room' passwords do not work, and you need an e-mail address to access the digital side of our membership offerings.

Most notable about the new site is that members and strangers can submit photos and have them appear on the site. If you are a member, there is no time delay from when you submit the information to when it's published. Going to menu item Galleries->Add Content->Photo will bring you to the necessary page. You need to be logged in for the information to appear immediately. As of 12 October, 2012, there are 10,536

different photos, and Twidget has done an outstanding job creating this formidable collection.

There is a page known as the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page that helps with some queries we often field. That menu item is The Association->FAQ or click on the large FAQ now resident on the front page of the site.

While you can visit the site and roam the menu entries to find out what currently exists on the site, one of the sections I find particularly interesting is the compilation of information concerning all 2960 Scooters that were ever built. By going to menu item Galleries->Sorted By Tranche->BuNo History one can find documentation of aircraft's journey from delivery, to each unit, to the parking of the jet in a hole, on a pole or in the desert. Put the Bureau Number of any jet you are interested in researching in the box at the top and then click on 'Apply'. This information is updated as time permits, and we have to thank

Gabby for taking the time to comb through official US Navy microfiche to find and update this information. As of 12 October 2012, there are 45,920 different entries.

As a final word, I want to emphasize that we are a volunteer organization, and while the internet happens now, things on the website happen as we can get to them. (I've been promising Bob that I'd produce this article for the Journal for longer than I can remember.) One way of helping things happen sooner is to become a digital member, which is free to each and every member of the Skyhawk Association, and offer to volunteer. We can teach anyone to do what we need done, but none have volunteered. Much of the old content we have needs to be uploaded, and the new site makes that much easier than in previous iterations of the site. However, it still takes time, and we need your help so that those of us who have the keys to the asylum can continue to concentrate on building the site. We hope to make it more visually appealing and easier to navigate, ultimately capturing those great memories of the days when the Skyhawk was our life.

Blade sends.

After The Beginning

By Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

And, in the Darkness over The Great Wets where
birdfarms plowed the waves, Ruled a willful Goat God
called Grong, who called out his evil son, Prang, and
his almost as evil son, Bolter.

For his pleasure, he summoned up the rolling seas and
pitching decks of birdfarms, causing their blunt ends
to describe figure eights and righteous aviators to
dispaireth and develop a pox called chickenshit-itis
and having a bad night, and the piercing eye of their
saviours, called Paddles, to shed salt tears.

And night noises disturbed powerful engines.

And darkness sucked lift from swept wings.

And, yea, Prang and Bolter reigned.

Yet, Paddles re-girded his loins, and he calmed the poxes and
caused sucking it up and the flying of the ball.

And Grong smiled his crooked smile and was sore pleased.

And he reigned in his evil sons.

And there were traps until all the righteous had returned to
where the food was.

And manly beverages were swilled and sliders consumed.

And aviators maintained that, though they may have verily
boltered some, it was not because they were not good.

But they knew that every night would be at Grong's pleasure,

And that it would be known as the breaks of Naval Air.

R.G.'s ART

• TA-4 Leads F-4 •



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

TA-4 leads
F-4 at
Pt. Mugu, CA.

*Image courtesy of
Sharlyn Marsh.
[rgsmithart.com]*



FROM THE EDITOR

• Winter 2012-13 •

By Bob "Raven" Hickerson

The first digital edition of *The A-4Ever*, which was delivered about a month ago, was a success – well, at least a qualified success. We had a very strong response to our request for comments. In addition to many emails, 80 members took time to submit the online survey, despite the fact that the embedded link to Survey Monkey was broken due to a hyphen which was inserted by the autocorrect feature of our word processor. From those emails and surveys, we learned a lot about electronic publishing, the preferences of our members and the general utility of electronic communication with our membership.

First, we realize that the feedback we received was from a self-defining segment of our membership. Those who received and read the issue, and especially those that responded to our survey request, are obviously the segment of our membership most comfortable with electronic communication. It's likely that the respondents use not only a PC, but a smartphone and/or a tablet as well. It's very likely the segment which has access to very high-speed

internet access. Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing how many of our members never received the issue at all and were not represented in the survey.

Having said all that, one-third of the respondents to our survey said that they would prefer electronic distribution only; another one-third advocated for both types of distribution, print and electronic (actually an option that might be feasible); and one-third replied that they wanted print only. Some of those in the last one-third indicated that they would cancel their membership if we stopped delivering print copies of the Journal. To underscore the latter point, member Jerry Stafford replied, "This old Scooter driver just likes to pick up a magazine and enjoy it. I just can't get into all that tablet crap." Bear Hildebrandt agreed, "I always liked simple things – that's why the Skyhawk and I got along so well for somewhat over 3600 hours."

Before anyone gets excited, we have no intention of stopping distribution of three print issues per year (the current practice). We realize that not everyone

has access to high-bandwidth internet service (I live in the country too!), is a power-user of Adobe Reader and keeps up with the fast-changing environment of electronic distribution. However, it's clear that many of our users are firmly established in cyberspace, and we'll make every attempt to adapt to their needs, without abandoning any of our members.

For now, we'll plan to **continue publishing three print editions of *The A-4Ever* each year, adding one digital-only issue** similar to the test issue you just received. We'll also explore providing both print and digital issues simultaneously beginning in the coming year.

In addition, I'm sure that our new President, Dave "Hide" Dollarhide, will continue the precedent set by the Hun and communicate regularly with the membership via informative emails. So, for a variety of reasons, it's important that you maintain a current email address with Secretary Terry Cooney (skyhawkasn@gmail.com).

If you don't know what I'm talking about because you didn't receive the fall 2012 Extra edition of *The A-4Ever*, be sure to get Terry your current email address ASAP.

Raven

READ? YOU THINK WE READ?

On Heroic Wings:

Stories of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Lanman, Dr. Barry A. and
Wendling, Dr. Laura M.

The Distinguished Flying Cross Society,
San Diego, CA. 2012.
324 pp. Ill. \$39.95.

Reviewed by CDR Peter B. Mersky,
USNR (ret)

Individual countries' military awards systems vary considerably in number of medals and complexity. Israel has perhaps one of the most Spartan lineups. It is not unusual to see a highly experienced senior aviator of the Israel Air Force, perhaps with a few kills to his credit, wearing only three or four ribbons. Great Britain also has a fairly stringent system, although many British veterans show several campaign ribbons along with perhaps one or two personal decorations. The Soviet Union and now perhaps Russia, also had a busy awards system that allowed the individual to wear each medal even if there was more than one award for the same medal. Admittedly, the U.S. has one of the most "populated" lineups of "fruit salad" of any nation, and it continues to grow as new campaigns involve American armed forces. It also might be said that the criteria or predilection to award various medals varies considerably among the individual services.

Over the years, several books have been written about medals, with the Medal of Honor (MoH) having the greatest number, ranging from large compendiums of *all* the MoHs from *all* the U.S. services, to specialties focusing on specific wars or services. Books on the Navy Cross and the Silver Star have also appeared. Naturally, the next medal would be the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), instituted by an act of Congress in 1926. It is the only medal given by all the military services--Army, Navy,

Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. A fifth service might be added as the Air Force was part of the Army until its separation in 1947.

Like several of the medals, the DFC eventually generated its own dedicated "society," which was formed in 1994, and which now has some 5,500 members.

While most of the books about medals normally include help or participation by the specific societies associated with the award, this new book on the DFC is, to my knowledge, the first one to be written and published by a medal's specific society. As such, the authors had access to all the oral interviews and other historical assets held by the group.

It's a nice book, well produced, with many photographs of flight crews never seen before, and as such it will be a welcome addition to anyone's aviation library. The stories the book contains are full of individual experiences seldom described—often this is the first time a pilot or crewman has spoken about his wartime experiences—and the scope includes a nice mix of officer pilots and enlisted flight crewmen.

The layout and photo reproduction are good, although I have never liked using gray as the half-tone color, instead of the traditional black. The result is a washed-out, weak picture which does little to enhance the page on which it appears, and details are also lost. Unfortunately, this book makes great use of gray half-tone in full page and smaller displays. I never allow it in any of my books or articles.

I think the most negative comment I have is on problems that range from misspellings, such as *Curtis*, or *Douglass*, or the misnomers given to otherwise well known aircraft such as Bobcat (should be Bearcat, page 37), or the statement on page 36 that the Japanese fighter Ki.61 Hien "was an inline Zero"!!



Then there's referring to the Bell Aircraft Corporation as *Belair*. Sounds like a car! Many photos lack captions, leaving the reader to wonder who and what they show. I think the prime gaff is referring to well-known aviation writer Barrett Tillman as "Brown, Tillman" in a footnote on page 120.

While the book describes the records of many worthy aviators, many other more well-known folks are omitted, probably for space considerations. Most of the nearly 1,500 U.S. aces have at least one DFC, and often several more. P-47 ace "Gabby" Gabreski received 13 DFCs during his combat tours in Europe and Korea. A-4 stalwart Adm. Stan Arthur totaled 11.

I wish there had been a list of *all* DFC awards perhaps along with the other nice-to-have lists such as comparing U.S. military ranks and a glossary. I know that would have required many more pages and hours more compilation than the authors and publishers could permit. Still, such a list would have been very worthwhile.

All said, though, this book is well worth buying and using as a reference. It goes a long way in providing information on an important area in U.S. military aviation history.

(Ed. Note: *On Heroic Wings* can be purchased on line at: www.dfcsociety.org or www.amazon.com. Information about the DFC Society was published in *The A-4Ever*, Summer 2012. Contact Chuck Sweeney at csweeney2@san.rr.com).

A-4S FOR MALAYSIA

• Part II •

By Gene Atwell



Bombay to Calcutta

The morning of 19 March saw us on our way to Calcutta, another single leg day. A uniquely Indian experience was the number of cows that freely roamed outside the airport perimeter in Calcutta. We hadn't seen that in Bombay because Bombay airport was much busier in both aviation and ground traffic. By the time we headed to the hotel, it was dark and difficult to do much gawking from the bus. On the ride to the hotel, I noticed a large "pyramid" shaped figure. It looked odd, but what it really was and what it was built of did not become apparent until I saw it the next day as we returned to the airport. The "pyramid" was a pile at least 10 feet in height of fecal matter that some of the more enterprising local youth had collected around town. They hand-formed this material into patties, and then slapped them onto a wall which was about 8 ft.

Calcutta to Phuket

Departure from Calcutta on the 20th of March was anything but smooth. We had a strict take-off time, that would have required us to stay an extra day had we missed our window, and this particular day the clearance took forever to reach the airport clearance delivery controller. Meanwhile, our appointed hour was drawing near. Those of you who flew the early Skyhawks know that one needed a starter probe, which was carried in the aft "hellhole" and inserted into the starboard wing root. The huffer that supplied the air was then attached to the starter probe. The engine cranked while the pilot scrubbed the throttle to energize the igniters before bringing the throttle around the horn to dump fuel into the engine. We had briefed the line crew about how to insert the starter probe into the wing root and what signals we would use to begin and end the

When Walt saw what was happening, he unstrapped, leapt out of the jet, grabbed a new starter from Gene's jet, put the old probe (now curved) into the empty fitting and got strapped back in just in time to see Birdie reaching near take-off speed on the taxiway headed to the takeoff end of the runway. Bummer was in hot pursuit while Bear and I were just beginning our taxi. Birdie figured correctly that if one of us was airborne before the appointed time, we'd all be able to get airborne. We all breathed a sigh of relief during the rendezvous turn when Bummer finally caught up with Birdie and told him he could now raise his gear.

We tried to find out how high we could get the jets over the Bay of Bengal, without doing an unplanned descent back to find more air molecules after an unwanted slat deployment. The highest I remember anybody reaching was 43,200 ft. Another of the interesting modifications the A-4PTM had was a bubble canopy that allowed us to actually see the AOA (Angle of Attack) probe on the port side of the fuselage with the canopy closed. The cockpit on the PTM dwarfed even that of the Mike. We also had a braking parachute added below the tailpipe as on the A-4M to assist with stopping on short fields.

"Now is a good time to mention that the J-65 made a lot of strange noises that were not present in the later generation of Pratt engines. The best description is that there were night noises to be heard in the middle of the day..."

tall and 40 ft. long. When the patties fell off the wall they took with them a few bits and pieces from the wall, which gave the wall a distinct circular grid pattern that was extremely similar to the grid pattern of the McDonald's burgers I cooked as a youth. The now "cured" patties were taken to the curb and sold as fuel to the locals. I had made a couple of deployments to WestPac and had seen poverty in Manila where local kids ran between the traffic selling single pieces of Doublemint, Wrigley's or Chiclet's gum; however, those Filipino kids looked like millionaires compared to the poverty we saw in Bombay and Calcutta.

start. They were then supposed to take the probe and huffer to start each successive aircraft. When the last jet was started, the probe was to be secured in the last jet's aft hellhole.

Birdie finally got the clearance, and the signal to crank the engines went down the line. Birdie, Bummer, Bear and I started in order of flight, but things went poorly soon thereafter. Once Gene got started, he signaled the ground crew to disconnect the starter probe and advanced the throttle for taxi before the ground crew was clear of the jet. The panicked ground crew dropped the probe, and Gene ran over it with his starboard main mount. OOPS!

Phuket to Kuantan

We landed at Phuket, Thailand, our penultimate stop. The airport had a thin strand of barbed wire that separated some of the airport from the rest of Thailand. We had a really quick turn around (even by "Can-Do" standards) and were soon on the final leg of our journey to Kuantan, Malaysia. Just prior to level off, I heard a thunking sound. When I looked at the dime-sized oil pressure gauge hidden under the glare shield, I noticed that the pointer quivered about 5 PSI in a quick jerk. The other aircraft had engine readings comparable to mine, so I elected to continue. Now is a good time to mention that the J-65 made a lot of strange noises that were not present in the later generation of Pratt engines. The best description is that there were night noises to be heard in the middle of the day, and for that reason, I really didn't worry about that thunk.

continued...

A-4S FOR MALAYSIA

Continued...

Unfortunately, a while later there was another “THUNK,” and I noted another oil pressure surge. This time I set the power to 82 percent because the jungle then below was the same jungle the Royal Malaysian Air Force was employing our A-4’s to clobber local insurgents.

I was presented with a dilemma. The plan for arrival was an arrival air show with 6 jets, followed by Bear, Bummer and I peeling off to do a three plane air show. What’s a lieutenant to do: precautionary approach or air show? I opted for the precautionary approach and spoiled everything. When I pulled up to the flight line, the Malaysians and Gordy Harris (a flight school instructor of mine who was now teaching the Malaysians to fly A-4s) thought I was the only jet to make it. They completely missed the 5-plane air show and the 2 plane follow-on since my motor continued to turn during both events. We signed off the airplanes, which meant everybody was going to be paid. (The

Malaysians had insisted that the planes be flown over before they would sign for them and complete the contract.)

The evening of the 20th brought some great revelry at the hotel, and we found a wonderful use for the portable radios we had been supplied with in case we had to leave the jet sometime prior the destination. Nobody came to the bar without having called ahead an order. The entire bar population was amused by our antics, and between the pool, the dance floor and the bar, we were a hit. Sometime during the evening we were approached by security guards who asked that we not change anything we were doing, but to understand that we were partying with members of the Malaysian Royal Family. I couldn’t imagine anything like that happening in London.

Late in the evening, Bear called it quits and headed for the room. I stayed for a while and was trading drink-buying offers with the group. About 20 minutes later Bear reappeared with his dishdasha and kufiya that he had purchased in Dubai, along with a pair of mirrored sunglasses. I met him at the entrance to the bar, bowed and led him into the crowd. He said not a word, but

put his hands out arms akimbo to signal yes or no to each of my questions, doing an excellent job of looking regal. The Royals were inquisitive, and when I told them he was an Arab Sheik that we had befriended earlier in Dubai, they bought it hook, line and sinker. I didn’t have to pay for any drinks the rest of the night, but Bear had to abstain.

On the 21st we corralled a trio of taxi’s to take us to Singapore to catch our flights back to CONUS. The Bear and I had a driver named Goona, and shortly after leaving the hotel, Goona asked if it would be okay if he brought his wife Nercia along. We agreed because it would be her first trip outside of the country of Malaysia. As soon as we agreed (literally), Nercia was opening the door to take the left front seat. (Interestingly, neither Goona nor Nercia spoke the other’s language since they were of different religious sects - they communicated in English.) Bear and I had packed some road cokes because the trip took about 6 hours and there wasn’t a real highway to travel until we crossed the border into Singapore. We had convinced Nercia that there would be a strip search at the border, and she was on edge, especially when we were directed to a separate line from theirs. The most memorable part of crossing the border into Singapore for me was signing the immigration form that had in bold red letters: “Drug Trafficking Punishable by Death.” When we met on the other side of the customs room, Nercia was laughing saying that she had not been searched after all.

We were dropped off at the Raffles Hotel, birthplace of the Singapore Sling, and of course, had more than one. We thoroughly enjoyed the old world elegance of the large rooms with outdoor hallways, obviously from a bygone era.

We departed the next day, and after many hours and a couple of connections, I made it to Skyways in Southern California to drop off my signed aircraft delivery form and the cash that had been burning a hole in my pocket for over a month. At that time, I found out that the thunks I heard during the last leg were two turbine blades separating from the J-65 engine.

Another flight was ready for delivery in St. Augustine, so I went there on



Ferry pilots pose after arriving at Kuantan, displaying “personalized” flight suits.
Photo via author.

July 16, 1985, to begin my second journey to Malaysia. Picking the aircraft up in St. Augustine was a better way to start since I got the detailed indoctrination brief I missed the first time around. (I did things backwards). Bear, Gene, Snatcher and I met at a hotel outside of the factory and showed up early the next morning for some briefings and our assignments. This time I was in MS 32-29 and the first days' flying consisted of two legs: one to Griffiss AFB, and then on to Goose Bay, Canada, for an overnight stay.

On the 17th our destination was Keflavik, Iceland, with a stop in Sondrestrom, Greenland, for gas. Sometime after we blasted out of Goose, Gene had a stuck fuel float valve and we returned to Goose with some high-quality, rooster-tailed, low-altitude flying to burn down to landing weight. During the refueling at Goose, Gene and Snatcher spilled some fuel on themselves and Snatcher went to the Q in order to wash their fuel-soaked zoom bags. Hurrying to get back to the flight line, he crashed into a British warrant officer's wife's car and broke his hand. We had to sit in Goose until another pilot was flown in, and for the next couple of days, we visited the local area and became familiar with fishing in Canada. We also brought the warrant officer and his wife out to see the

planes so we could take some photos of them to thank them for being such good sports. I had met a reporter for the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) by the name of Jasmin Seputis, and she published an article in the local paper entitled "British Warrant Officer's Wife Survives Low Altitude Collision with Pilot."

On July 20th we took to the air again, and during the crossing of the Davis Straits, I picked up another strange noise, set the power, pointed the nose at the runway and did a PA into Sondrestrom. Enough was enough. I spent the next few days in Sondrestrom until the twice-weekly SAS flight made its appearance to whisk me away to Copenhagen, Denmark, while the rest of the gang went on their merry way to Keflavik, Iceland, and beyond.

During my stay in Sondy, I was able to catch a flight on a Danish G-3 that patrolled Greenlandic waters looking for poachers who did not have the necessary fishing permits. The previous week, they had nailed a boat, and the fine was a million \$ US. I imagine it costs quite a bit to keep a G-3 airborne looking for ne'er-do-wells. During the flight, I was able to sit in the jump-seat while flying at 500 feet, and the icebergs splashing below produced some incredible colors of blue and white for which no camera could do justice. Dur-

ing the conversation, the pilots asked how we were able to navigate with the A-4. I pulled out a memento I had bought on the first trip (it was a pencil sharpener with a globe that was about an inch in diameter), and it took only a second to sink in.

At that time Greenland was Danish controlled, and there were quite a few Danish citizens who populated the flight-line jobs. Through them and the local U. S. Naval personnel, I was introduced to a local drink by the name of "North Sea Oil," and it reminded me of warm Sambuca with sand thrown in. The high quality, white, paper cup from which I drank this libation was permanently dyed black wherever the liquid touched, and the sensation going down was one of complete warmth from the inside out.

When my SAS flight showed up, I reluctantly boarded and set out for Copenhagen enroute to JFK. I had the names of some relatives of the Danes I had met in Sondy and made some phone calls to send regards. I was invited to dinner, where I was able to practice my German since they were more comfortable in German than English (I spoke no Danish). They recommended that I visit their world famous Tivoli Gardens before leaving, and I did so.

When I arrived at JFK, I boarded a 727 for Philadelphia. Once I arrived back home, I eventually found out that the most recent engine problem was simply a resonance emanating from the hump behind the cockpit. Oh well, the breaks of naval air! I would have truly enjoyed flying the leg to Keflavik and then to England because that is what I still need to complete a circumnavigation of the globe in a single seat A-4. I had done the Pacific during unit deployments in the 80's.

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(Ed. Note: Gene Atwell survived his Malaysian adventures to fly again. He is currently serving as a captain for American Airlines, qualified on the Boeing 757 and 767, and flying international routes. He is a director and serves as webmaster of Skyhawk Association. Part I of this story was published in the Summer 2012 issue.)



None the worse for wear following "low-altitude collision," wife of British warrant officer poses with Atwell at Goose Bay. Photo via author.

SKYHAWK'S ROCKET-POWERED EJECTION SEAT

By Dave Dollarhide

The A-4 was the first Navy/Marine jet with a rocket seat...right?
The A-4 was designed with a rocket seat...right?
...Kinda...and No!

Actually, bragging rights for the first rocket powered ejection seat is shared between the A-4 Skyhawk and the T-2 Buckeye. Douglas designed their rocket seat using RAPEC technology developed by the Navy at China Lake, while North American used TALCO Engineering Co. to develop a rocket seat for their trainer. These seats became operational in 1959.

Ejection seat technology was still developing in 1956 when the first Navy A4D-1 (A-4A) was delivered to VA-72. In previous jets developed by Douglas, like the F4D Skyray,

they installed their “conventional” seat, a fairly heavy system with foot rests, powered by an explosive cartridge. The Skyhawk “Light Attack” concept endorsed a small, light airplane, resulting in a very tight cockpit. Douglas developed a narrow and much lighter seat for that purpose, but as before, it still incorporated an explosive charge to push it up the “rails.”

The original A-4 seat incorporated several innovations, such as automatic seat/man separation and a simplified pilot restraint system, using an “integrated torso harness

suit.” The new system also featured an automatic parachute opening device. However, it was still an under-powered cartridge seat and the NATOPS manual was only able to state: “Safe ejection can be accomplished in level flight or a climb, at any altitude above 600 feet terrain clearance.” This was an improvement over previous Douglas seats, but still, the seat just kicked you out of the cockpit enough to clear the tail.

Early on, following WWII and the evolution of carrier based jets, the Navy had developed a relationship with the British company, Martin Baker, that had made great strides in ejection seat technology using explosive charges. For a while, it seemed their seats would be used in all Navy jets. However, for shipboard operations, the Navy continued to be driven by a desire to improve slow speed, low altitude ejection survivability. They eventually wanted “zero, zero” performance, but cartridge-powered seats weren’t showing enough promise. Rockets had to be the answer.

The Navy saw the value of competition and in an unusual move in 1956, commissioned the Naval Ordinance Test Center (NOTS) at China Lake to conduct research on rocket-powered ejection seats. As an ordinance development center, China Lake had never taken on such a project, but in 1957, they accepted the challenge.

The wealth of rocket research data at NOTS actually made it a logical choice to some, but to many it seemed out of their area of expertise...a poor choice for ejection seat development. With little knowledge of the requirements, goals and the data from years of previous development, engineers at NOTS jumped right into the project. It wasn’t easy, but they worked their way through the resistance and gathered industry data to develop the initial specifications of the new ejection seat.

The hands on work in the California desert began in earnest. What kind of rocket should be used? How can we slow down the onset of Gs? An exotic new plastic fuel was needed for the rocket fuel. Tests began in earnest on the Supersonic Naval



The new Douglas “conventional” ejection seat designed for the A-4 is on the left. Note the absence of a “head knocker.” The seat on the right was used in previous Douglas jets.



By fall 1958 successful tests on SNORT had catapulted a dummy strapped in an ejection seat 225 feet into the air and had seen the seat safely parachute back to earth.

"Another China Lake First—Successful RAPEC Tests Pave Way for All-Military Use of Pilot Ejection System," read a Rocketeer headline (NOTS publication). (From "Magnificent Mavericks..." by Elizabeth Babcock)

Ordinance Research Track (SNORT) and from airplane cockpits on the test range, both airborne and static.

Douglas and other manufacturers immediately began work to adapt the new RAPEC technology for their ejection seats and deploy it to the fleet.

The first A-4 pilot to eject using the RAPEC technology was Marine Lt. Melville in 1960. He later traveled to China Lake to show his appreciation.

In 1966, when I reported to VA-44 at NAS Cecil Field, FL, for A-4 training, all models were equipped with the much improved rocket-powered seat. There were fewer "Gs" during an ejection, and Skyhawk pilots enjoyed a zero altitude and ninety knot airspeed (Zero/90) envelope. In the previous six years, scores of lives had been saved by the new seats.

I don't recall using the term "Escapac" in those days. It was the "RAPEC" and a point of pride for "Scooter" pilots to fly with such a

reliable escape system. Most certainly, for those of us who'd just left the Training Command flying Cougars, we were happy to be away from the old "Martin Baker Back Breaker" seats.

The Scooter's ejection seat may not have had a rocket in the early days, but it continued to improve over the years, saving many lives. The original Zero/90 RAPEC seat became the Escapac I. The Escapac IA-1, later installed in the A-4E, reduced the envelope to Zero/Zero. The "integrated torso harness suit" became a more simplified "torso harness." There was the "soft pan" seat, then the "hard pan" to reduce spine compression. DART, a stabilization system from Stencil Aero Engineering, kept the seat from tumbling. The final versions, Escapac 1C-3, 1F-3 and 1G-3, installed in A-4Fs and subsequent models, could save your life at low altitudes and high sink rates.

Why do I care? My turn to pull the handle was in 1968...center main bearing failure in an A-4B. At 130 knots and one thousand feet above Florida's pines, I acquired a deep appreciation for the fine folks at China Lake.

Have you punched out of an A-4 or seen it happen? Do you have a story to tell? Let the Skyhawk Assn. know the details!

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Credits: Many thanks to Gary Verver, Cliff Lawson, Chris Woodul, "Magnificent Mavericks" by Elizabeth Babcock and Tommy Thomason's book, "Scooter" for filling in the gaps.



BROKEN ARROW!

By Jim Winchester



Nearly 47 years ago, during the early stages of the Vietnam War, an A-4 and pilot were lost at sea in circumstances that remain murky even today. Although aircraft and crew losses were sadly not uncommon, the presence of a nuclear weapon on the accident aircraft made it unique and led to a cover-up that caused distress to the pilot's family and an international incident when details emerged in the 1980s.

USS *Ticonderoga* left San Diego on 28 September 1965 for Vietnamese waters. Embarked was CVW-5 comprising attack squadrons VA-52 (A-1s), VA-56 and VA-144 (both with A-4s), F-8 outfits VF-51 and -53, and detachments of VAH-4, VAW-11, VAW-13, VFP-63 and HC-1. After port calls in Hawaii and the Philippines, 'Tico' spent fifteen days on Dixie Station and ten on Yankee Station, where CVW-5 flew missions against North Vietnamese bridges and other infrastructure targets.

On 5 December, 'Tico' was en route between Yankee Station, to Yokosuka, Japan for a well-earned period of rest and recreation. Despite the air wing's participation in a conventional shooting war, one that had seen four aircraft lost since it entered combat in early Novem-

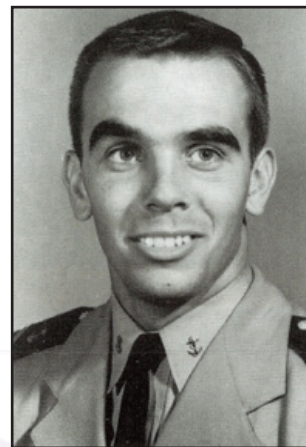
ber, CVW-5 as designated in official documents was as an "Attack Carrier Air Wing for support of conventional and nuclear war in all weather conditions". This day they were going to test that second capability by staging a weapons loading exercise under the code-name 'Crewcut'.

The drill was supposed to go like this: weapons would be assembled and brought up from Tico's Special Aircraft Service Stores (SASS) spaces under Marine escort, then loaded aboard the A-4Es of VA-56 'Champions'. With a pilot aboard, each of the seven or so participating aircraft would then be pushed onto Elevator No.2 on the forward port side and raised to the flight deck. From there it would be towed to one of the two catapults and the procedures for a launch, up to but not including the cat shot itself, would be run through before the jet was towed to the forward elevator and lowered back to the hangar.

The lead aircraft, A-4E 150122, Modex 472, was not connected to a tug, probably for space reasons, but was moved by the muscle power of a dozen or so blueshirts to the edge of Hangar Bay 2. A tug awaited on the flight deck, but another human effort would be

needed to clear the slight hump between the metal hangar floor and the wooden elevator deck.

One pilot had been assigned to the A-4 for the evolution, which was delayed by a fire in a stateroom, but in actuality a trainee plane captain took his place, riding the brakes as the Skyhawk was pushed to its loading position by



Douglas Webster. This photo comes from the Japanese book on the accident. I don't know where the author obtained it, but it is one of only two photos I have seen of Doug. The other is the wings ceremony photo that the Association has used on the site.

the blueshirts. A pilot then emerged from a hatchway in flight gear, climbed the ladder and connected his harness with the help of a plane captain. He put his helmet on his knee or the stick top and concentrated on the preflight checklist while the tie-downs were removed.

The planepushers pushed on the wing leading edges but the 10-ton Skyhawk, with full wing tanks and a 2,100lb bomb on the centerline, failed to clear the hump and rolled back towards them. They gave it an extra push the second time.

Accounts differ at this point. Some witnesses remember a IMC announcement to standby for a turn to starboard, but no turn is mentioned in the Deck Log or the enquiry report. The seas were fairly calm with only a light swell, but whatever the cause, Tico listed slightly to port as the sailors pushed. The A-4 cleared the hump then started to pick up speed. It was supposed to stop with its nosewheel on the white centerline of the angled deck but clearly wasn't going to.

The safety directors blew whistles and the chock men threw their chocks at the mainwheels. Unfortunately they didn't land evenly and were knocked aside. The pilot looked up. Some say he then looked down and tried to pump the brakes. Several sailors recall a look of puzzlement then terror on his face as the A-4 continued rolling backwards. He appeared to try and stand, but even though he was an accomplished gymnast he couldn't escape the secured straps.



Plane captain George C Floyd with 'his' A-4E 150122 on the 1964 Ticonderoga cruise. The Modex at the time was 406, and this is about the only known still photo of the accident aircraft. Photo via author.

The mainwheels jumped the six-inch guardrail then fell into the safety netting around the elevator's edge. The A-4E reared up and the canopy slammed shut, some say onto the pilot's fingers as they gripped the windscreen bow. The A-4 hung suspended for a moment then flopped backwards into the ocean. One sailor says he saw the bomb detach and bob around issuing smoke before it disappeared along with the aircraft, which sank very quickly, even before it had passed the fantail. Tico launched a boat and a UH-2 which returned only with a helmet and a piece of drop tank. The escorting destroyers searched until sunset, but the A-4, bomb and pilot, 24-year old Lt (jg) Douglas Morey Webster of Warren, Ohio were gone forever.

As soon as the accident happened, position and depth readings were taken and messages fired off to Washington about the lost weapon. It was a true 'Broken Arrow' with a complete war reserve B43 one-megaton thermonuclear bomb gone from US custody.

From that moment on, the navy began covering up. A squadron memorial service was held at 2AM the next morning, the family and press were told that the pilot had just returned to the ship after a training mission when his aircraft rolled overboard, without mentioning the bomb. The location was fudged as "The Pacific."

A JAG enquiry was conducted over three days in Yokosuka and concluded that it was nobody's fault. It said that a 12-inch elevator-edge rail might have stopped the A-4 going overboard. NAVAIR decided fitting such rails was impractical for ordnance clearance reasons. A redacted version of the JAG report only appeared in 2010.



Seen configured as a tanker, 151079 replaced 151022 as NF-472 within five days of the accident. This more fortunate Skyhawk went on to serve with the Israeli and Indonesian air forces.

It seems that no explicit gag order was put on the crew about the incident, but they got the message not to write home about it and the secret was kept in their homes or amongst skeptical friends for nearly 24 years.

In 1981 the DoD released the barest details in a list of Broken Arrows, not naming the ship, pilot or weapon and stating the location as "500 miles from land."

Greenpeace researchers later combed through carrier deck logs in the National Archives and found more details of the accident and its exact location, which was in fact around 80 miles from inhabited Kikai-shima, part of Japan's Ryuku chain. Their May 1989 press conference and report caused headlines around the world and a diplomatic fuss with Japan, who concluded, rightly, that that nuclear weapons were being brought into Japan, in violation of the nation's post-war constitution.

After commissioning a radiation sampling mission and declaring that there was no environmental impact from the 5.5lbs of plutonium, the Japanese closed the matter, at least publicly.

The press reports prompted three of the many witnesses to talk with their hometown papers, recalling what they could of the accident. The pilot's name either wasn't mentioned or was misreported as Daniel Webster in the published stories. Later Doug's father discovered the grave marker at Arlington was misspelled. His mother may have learned more details of the accident from a cab driver than she did from the Navy.

Doug's family and friends wondered why he was not commemorated on the Vietnam Memorial Wall and started writing letters to congressmen. The stock answer they have received is that his death occurred outside the war zone and did not qualify.

The information vacuum allowed rumors to spread among Tico veterans about the accident and the pilot: saboteurs were caught on board cutting aircraft brake lines and

sent to Leavenworth; Webster and his CO didn't get on; he was disillusioned and writing home against the war; that a B43 had been seen on a mess deck a few days before with significant damage.

These and other events have led some to believe that a conspiracy to rid Tico of a troublesome pilot and a damaged bomb was somehow hatched, carried out and covered up. That has to be considered far-fetched, yet there *had* been incidents of aircraft sabotage earlier in the cruise, some of Webster's diary entries expressed frustration with the war and how much effort was devoted to nuclear attack training, and crewmen who saw the mess deck bomb were sent for repeated check-ups.

Even if conspiracy theories can be disproved, there is still a lingering feeling that "something funny went on out there" and the whole truth has yet to come out.

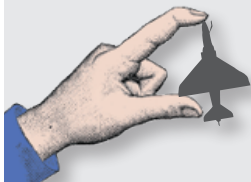
More and more info has surfaced since the author became interested in the subject, but the story is incomplete.

Masayo Duus, a California-based author, doggedly tracked down VA-56 pilots and airmen and got a copy of Doug's diary from his mother, publishing parts in a book called 'Death of a Top Gun', which appeared in Japanese only in 1994. There is very little written in English and few official documents in the public domain. No copy of the original 'Broken Arrow' message has been traced so far, nor diplomatic messages between the US and Japan.

The author is writing a book on Tico's 1965-66 cruise and the Broken Arrow incident and would love to find more friends and colleagues of Doug Webster and anyone who was on Tico who remembers the incident or its aftermath or would just like to share memories of the cruise and life on a carrier at the beginning of the Vietnam War.

Jim Winchester
A4sforever@aol.com
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Would love to hear from anybody with input into the story, particularly if they have documents or pointers on where to find them, and of course memories of Doug during his training, squadron service or any time during his life.



SIZE DOES MATTER

• Modelers' Corner •

By Joe Turpen

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

Skyhawks in Styrene (Part III) 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. Part I appeared in The A-4Ever Spring 2012 and provided an overview of Hasegawa Scooter kits in 1:32 and 1:48 scale. Part II was published in The A-4Ever Summer 2012. Used with permission.)

A Continuing Survey of Scooter kits

Fujimi's 1:72 Skyhawks

The A4D-2 (A-4B) kits from Fujimi represent both U.S. Navy and Argentinian aircraft. One version of the kit, issued in 1988 and later in 2004, shows an aircraft from the Mavericks of VA-152 when it was on the U.S.S. *Forrestal* with CVW-17 during the 1968 cruise. However, the markings on the box art are from the squadron's 1970 cruise on board the U.S.S. *Shangri-La* with CVW-8, though the tail code on the box art is that of CVW-17. Also, this is an A-4B kit and the Mavericks were flying the A-4E for their 1970 cruise. Fujimi also issued another A4D-2 (A-4B) kit that contained markings for four aircraft.

The A4D-2N (A-4C) is only represented by Fujimi's kit in 1:72. It's been issued using two kit numbers and has a

selection of five different aircraft to pick from.

Fujimi's kit F-24 A-4E/F Top Gun has an interesting misidentification problem. First, it states all the aircraft represented are A-4Es, but the BuNos reveal that they are all A-4Fs. The one that could not be identified is 150023. Fujimi may have thought all the aircraft were Es because of the lack of the camel back. However, most single-seat Skyhawks used by adversary squadrons, excluding the M's, had their camel backs removed. Also, it was the Royal Australian Navy that operated the Skyhawk, not the Royal Australian Air Force. Fujimi produced a second 1:72 kit, which had fleet birds in it, as well as another, which featured VC-5.

Fujimi has issued a Blue Angels kit twice, once with MRC. This kit could be built as either an A-4F or TA-4J. They also have a kit for the F that is entitled "Last Cruise."

Fujimi also produced a 1:72 kit of the A-4KU, which was operated by Kuwait. This kit also had markings for Israeli and Marine aircraft. This kit has been issued twice and, by using the markings for the Kuwait and Israeli aircraft, you can cover both the Yom Kippur war and Operation Desert Storm.

Fujimi has issued several TA-4 kits, mostly as TA-4F/J kits. One kit had markings for four different aircraft, including a TA-4H from Israel. Fujimi then issued the kit again with 75th Anniversary of Naval Aviation markings that featured two squadrons, VT-22 and VT-25. Hasegawa also issued a TA-4 kit that had both the F and J models with markings for the Chief of Naval Aviation Training (CNATRA) and Blue Angels.

ESCI's 1:72 Skyhawks

The ESCI A-4E kit has no frills at all. It's been re-issued by AMT/ERTL, then twice by ERTL/ESCI, including one time as an Israeli A-4E. This last kit includes decals for an Australian aircraft. The Australians flew the A-4G, which was a modification of the A-4F. ESCI released the kit as a Blue Angels plane, but as described earlier, the Blue Angels flew the Super Foxtrot, not A-4E's. AMT released an A-4E kit, which had markings for two squadrons VA-12 and VMA-121.

ESCI/Scalecraft issued an E/F adversary kit with aircraft from two squadrons represented, VF-101 Det. Key West and the Naval Fighter Weapons School. A third set of markings are included for a Marine aircraft, but this might be a NWFS aircraft since the Marines didn't have a dedicated adversary squadron.

Italeri also re-popped an A-4E/F kit, which had markings for two squadrons. The kit was repackaged as a Testors/Italeri kit and had different squadrons and Australian roundels included. Testors also issued another A-4E/F kit with two other squadrons' markings.



ESCI produced an A-4F kit that had all adversary aircraft on the decal sheet. Testors has also produced a model of A-4M in this scale with marking for 160264, the last Skyhawk.

Hasegawa's 1:72 Skyhawks

Hasegawa released the E/F six times and a seventh time as Hasegawa/Minicraft. For the most part, they depict the fleet and Fleet Marine Force (FMF) squadrons, but one kit has a Blue Angels TA-4 mixed in with some regular A-4E/F's.

Hasegawa also produced a kit of Blue Angels aircraft, and it could be built as either an A-4F or TA-4J. However, the TA-4J kit comes out shorter than it should be. Hasegawa also produced an F model of the Blue Angels kit, which had all four aircraft, and is only a collector's item. Hasegawa also had an early kit that was issued as a Minicraft kit with markings for three aircraft.

Kangnam's 1:72 Skyhawks

Kangnam also issued an E/F, and kit #1008 has decal instructions for an aircraft from VA-212, but no decals are present. However, the box art shows a VA-55 aircraft.

Hawk's 1:72 Skyhawks

One of the more interesting Skyhawk kits in this scale is that by Hawk (IMC). It's one of the oldest 1:72 scale kits and features the option of building it as a "battle damaged" aircraft. I built this as a kid, but it is really only of interest to the kit collectors now. The kit features A-4 with the BuNo. 141197, which was an F9F-8 Cougar in real life.

Matchbox's 1:72 Skyhawks

Matchbox issued an A-4M kit, and it's easily the worst kit of the M.

Other Skyhawks

Even when you look at smaller scales, some Skyhawks can be found. HBM Models issued a 1:200 scale A-4C, though I don't have much information on this kit. BEN produced a 1:100 scale A-4E, which was a re-release of Tamiya's PA1003. Revell of Germany is also said to have issued the

Tamiya kit. Takara has issued a 1:100 scale A-4M that not only has VMA-214 "Black Sheep" markings, but also fictitious markings for the Royal Asian Air Force based on a Japanese comic book.

At the same time there are a host of Skyhawk kits, which I refer to as "the unidentified." Some of these may be repeats or reissues with different numbers and others just have some mystery surrounding them. The mystery can be something as simple as which model of the aircraft it was or what is the kit number.

In the first category are kits by Allyn, Central, ESCI, Hasegawa, Lindberg, Monogram, Starfix, Sankyo and Testors. In one case, I know the kit is a 1:72 scale A-4K with decals by Zantii of Italy, and it's a re-pop of the Italeri A-4E/F. Another kit is from Aeroclub and is an A-4E/F/H in 1:144 scale. It is a mostly resin kit with white metal for parts such as landing gear and refueling probe. The Allyn A4D has a bureau number that actually belongs to an AF-2S/W. Hobby World has a couple of interesting Skyhawk kits; they call their aircraft an F-4E and a TF-4J.

In all honesty, I know there are kits that I have missed or skipped. Anyone who has information on other Skyhawk kits please let me know. I am sure there may be more foreign kits than I know of. Not only am I interested in Skyhawk kits but also any information available on the Intruder, to include the EA-6A and the Prowler. I can be reached at forrestal@fewpb.net.



REFERENCES:

The information in this article was derived from both personal experience and the following sources:

- *USMC/USMCR/USNR Douglas A-4A/B Skyhawk Naval Fighters Number Fifty by Steve Ginter with Steven Albright*
- *Douglas A-4E/F Skyhawk in Marine Service Naval Fighters Number Fifty-two by Steve Ginter and Steven Albright*
- *McDonnell Douglas A-4M Skyhawk Naval Fighter Number Fifty-Five by Steve Ginter*
- *A-4 Skyhawk Detail and Scale Volume 32 by Bert Kinzey.*

Special thanks also go to Jim Winchester who shared his list of kits with me.



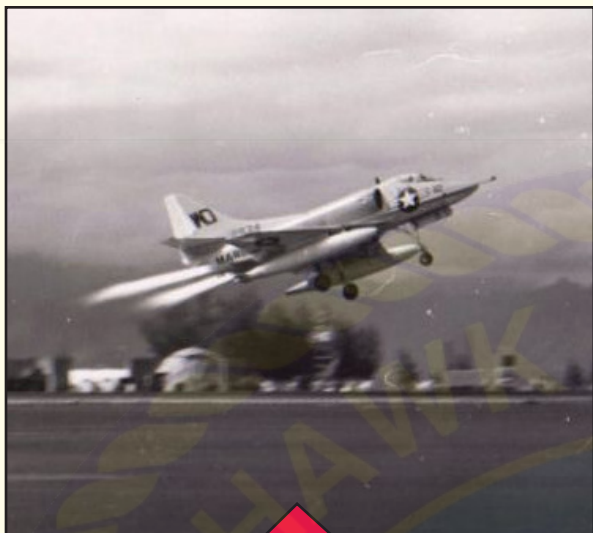


FROM THE ATTIC

• Mailbag •

Before they fade and crumple,
share your photos.

email to
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A4-D from VMA-212 demonstrates JATO bottle-assisted takeoff from Kanoeh Bay, Hawaii, 1963. Photo via Raymond Snyder, Nunda, NY.



Just another day on the flight deck aboard USS Hancock (CVA-19). Photo via Boom Powell.



VA-86 on flight deck, Independence, leaving Yankee Station after second line period on way to cold beer and such in Yokuska. A veritable cast of Youthly characters: Front row: YP hisself, fourth from left, Buffalo Bill to YP's right, All highest Skipper next, then Norman-The-Fink, Tanks, Paganeuch, Ray Rodge, and Spider Second row from left: Candy Andy, Pee Nutt, Club-foot; #5 is Capt. Zoderly, next is Alpha Alpha; then, from the right--LT Loose, Skip Lead, Weed, Worm, and Raypat. Photo via Jack Woodul.



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• Reunions & Requests •



PLAN AHEAD

- ★ **Skyhawk Association Mid-Year Board of Directors Meeting:** April, 2013, Seattle, WA. See POD at www.a4skyhawk.org for details.
- ★ **Skyhawk Association 2013 Annual Meeting and Luncheon at Tailhook:** 12:00 noon, September 6, 2013, Nugget Hotel.
- ★ **Tailhook Association Reunion & Symposium 2013,** Nugget Hotel, Sparks, NV, September 4-7.

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



PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

The Shrill of the Bagpipes, The Roll of the Drums

In small moments, the War always came back to him.

He never remembered his minor triumphs, but frabb-ups were always sneaking up out of his subconscious, tapping him on the shoulder to say, "Remember me?" The ghosts of his flying career also occasionally emerged from their smoking holes in the ground and their fireballs in the sky to visit, though over the years they had largely merged with the spirits that haunted the skies over Schweinfurt, stilled the air over Gettysburg and sounded distant trumpets over the lonely white markers on the hills above the Little Big Horn.

But mostly, the daydreams came to Puresome in disassociated moments while going for a trot in the neighborhood or droning along at 41,000 feet following the magenta line from New York to San Francisco. The bagpipes would begin to keen and the drums would mark the relentless advance to the target. And Puresome would be gone.

Suddenly back in time, Puresome was stooging around a USAF HU-16 Albatross as it droned low over the ResCAP station in the Gulf of Tonkin. Far above, Puresome and his wingie on the other side of the circle from him were at max conserve power settings, waiting to cover the amphibian if someone got shot up and had to punch out over the water to land in the middle of a bunch of gomer bounty hunters. Or much more probably and seriously, the jets would be ready to go feet dry and shoot up the bad guys trying to hustle the duty

downed F-105 Thud pilot or one of his pals off to the Hanoi Hilton before a helo showed up.

But today was quiet so far. Puresome had his mask in his lap. The sun

"Guard channel was constantly breaking in with various codes, SAM and MiG alerts as well as fragments of tight-throated broadcasts from others in the area getting their asses shot off, screaming for tankers or hollering for help."

streamed in through his canopy as he made lazy, low-speed wingovers. He watched the gray HU-16 over the drop tank and Zuni rocket pack sticking out from under the port wing of his A-4, the red paint under the leading edge slat starting to show as it crept out during the slow parts of the gyrations. The Albatross crew below was probably eating box lunches instead of properly admiring his flying, he figured. This was the attack-puke version of the fighter guys orbiting at their CAP stations, waiting for MiGs that never came. Puresome looked at the waves, the puffy white cumulus clouds and the perfect blue sky. He was amazed that despite all the bang-bang, shoot-shoot going on just down the way, the earth was abiding well and the sun still rose and set with indifferent regularity.

Big Look, the aircraft that kept radar watch of the skies over North Vietnam, came up on guard with the MiG caution and location code words of the day.

Puresome snuck out the ONC chart that was folded up in the lower left pocket of his g-suit and noted that the MiGs were up from both Kep and Phuc Yen. The calls kept coming—the changing codes showed that the gomers were flying around like it was their country or something, and business looked like it was going to pick up for some lucky fighter pilot. Puresome didn't go to high PRF, but when Red Crown, the ship that watched over gomer airspace from its station in the northern Tonkin Gulf, started making calls and the babble on guard increased, it was obvious that things were heating up. Puresome put on his mask and checked his fuel state.

When the call came that vectored them toward an A-4 pilot who had been

unlucky enough to get shot up but lucky enough to make it to the water before he had to punch out, Puresome got real serious. He kicked his Scooter to 350 knots, selected wing stations one and five for his four-shot Zuni packs and rotated his weapons selector to "rockets." He next turned his gunsight rheostat to bright and double-checked his mil setting for Zuni delivery. All that was left was to turn on the master armament switch to make the trigger on his stick grip ready to fire.

The clouds grew thicker and lower as the HU-16 motored along as fast as its fat props would flail. Puresome was having to work hard to keep clear of the clouds while keeping his wingie and the Albatross in sight. Fortunately, the Scooter was quick and nimble when lightly loaded and its external tanks were dry. Puresome didn't carry the usual cargo of bombs today, only the two four-shot Zuni packs hanging under his wings and 150 rounds of 20mm ammunition.

As Puresome and his wingman approached the small bay where the downed pilot bobbed in his raft, the radios went completely crazy with terse conversation from the ResCAP flight.



Mixed with those were calls from the downed pilot's wingie who was trying to direct those who were shooting at gomers heading toward the downed pilot. Guard channel was constantly breaking in with various codes, SAM and MiG alerts as well as fragments of tight-throated broadcasts from others in the area getting their asses shot off, screaming for tankers or hollering for help. The unnatural pitch and urgency of the transmissions alone were enough to raise the hair on Puresome's neck. It was understandable that the last part of a transmission from Big Look got stepped on.

"Garble, Shotgun, red...garble." The MiG code word for the day and the signal for probable attack was all Puresome heard. The rest of the transmission, the location code, was lost. Puresome was too busy to check his chart, but he knew the activity was close.

Suddenly there were fireballs streaking toward the HU-16 from a dark-green MiG that had popped out of nowhere and was closing at the speed of heat. "Lifeguard, break left! Break left! You've got a MiG up your ass!" Puresome screamed as he rammed the throttle to 100 percent and stuffed his nose over toward the Albatross, which cranked on a good turn. At its low speed and lower altitude, the amphibian's maneuver caused the fast-moving gomer to lose his firing solution and overshoot his target.

Puresome had just stuffed his nose down when he spotted a MiG closing on him rapidly, its front end lit up as it fired at him. Fireballs floated through the space where he'd just been. "Ralph lead, break left, break left! You've got a MiG on your ass and he's gunning!" hollered Puresome's wingman.

"No shitski!" thought Puresome as the rapidly closing MiG's nose pulled lead inside his turn and started hosing again. Puresome yanked on max g's and pulled his nose up to disappear into the clouds. He didn't have time to think, "He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day." Too busy for anything but surviving, he was by now nose high in the clouds and went on his Abba-Jabba all-attitude indicator to keep the nose coming up, over, around and down in a barrel roll. As the A-4 rapidly picked up speed as it came down

through the clouds, Puresome knew the MiG would either be gone or, with luck, out in front of him somewhere.

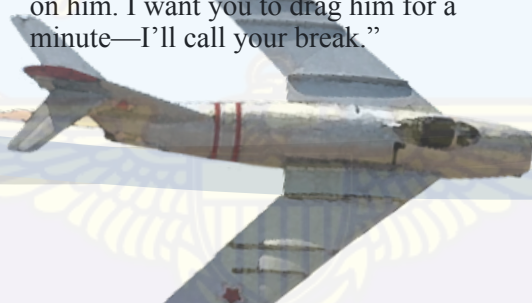
When he broke out of the clouds, he was nose low and going like stink. And there below him was the first MiG, re-engaged and trying to set up another pass at the squirming HU-16. Puresome had lots of smash and had flown into the clear almost on top of the MiG. He pulled lead and fired a pair of Zunis, which roared out in their impressive manner but were way short. Puresome kept pulling and fired again. And twice again. The fourth pair of Zunis either hit the low-flying MiG or he flew through the considerable waterspouts thrown up by the five-inch, supersonic missiles to crash in a tremendous splash of spray.

Suddenly there were fireballs streaking toward the HU-16 from a dark-green MiG that had popped out of nowhere and was closing at the speed of heat. "Lifeguard, break left! Break left! You've got a MiG up your ass!"

Ralph Two, his wingman, was hollering on guard for fighters. Puresome was about to ask his posit when he spotted an A-4 under the clouds opposite him and, low and fast, pulled across the circle to join.

Behind his wingie was MiG lead, now closing from deep six o'clock. Puresome reached down and pulled his emergency jettison T-handle to blow off his drop tanks and the empty Zuni pods. At the same time, he flipped on his gun-charging switch and felt the breech blocks slam home. His hand continued up to the gunsight to dial in 60 mils, the duty starting point for lead.

"Ralph Two from lead, you've got a MiG at your six, but I'm closing on him. I want you to drag him for a minute—I'll call your break."



"I don't have him. Ah...OK, tally at seven o'clock low."

The MiG was padlocked on his target and Puresome smoked on in, sliding slightly behind and underneath the two aircraft. With no fancy deflection shooting in mind, Puresome waited until the MiG's tailpipe filled his windscreen before he fired. The combination of tracer, high explosive and ball ammunition allowed him to hose a sparkling stream into the unsuspecting MiG; the short range allowed enough BBs to hit the gomer aircraft hard enough for parts to fly off. It exploded and plunged into the ocean in a bright orange wipe, followed by a dirty cloud of black smoke.

For purposes of the daydream, Puresome captured the fight on eight millimeter film, shot with the camera rigged with the remote release to film through the gunsight. Sometimes the Albatross

crew caught it on film, too. Puresome was an attack pilot who wanted a MiG in the worst way, who always jumped everything he could as often as he could for the absolute, fierce joy of kicking someone's butt. Fortified with the armor plate of youth and extreme ignorance, there was never any other possibility.

The other daydream was a variation of an attack on Nam Dinh POL tanks. Since "I'm hit, but I'm rolling in anyway" was already taken, Puresome's variation was "shut up and let me bomb."

But reality was a sump of caution, misdirection, waste, abuse and a black wall below ground in Washington, D.C., with lots of names on it. The daydreams were different—a constant loop, a chapter that would not close. So Puresome chose, like his co-religionist Walter Mitty, to refuse the blindfold, place his heels together and flick his cigarette away into the fog, defiant and unafraid to the end.

It was better that way.





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