

THE A-4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL Vol 20-3



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Skyhawk Association Annual Meeting
September 11, 2015
Sparks, NV

Fall 2014

www.a4skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

By Bill "Jigger" Egen

THE VIRTUAL TURN OVER- GEEZER FLIGHT CHECK IN!

As you have been told several times, the SA board has approved a process for fleet-up by requesting that the standing VPs (Navy and Marine) commit to a future tour as President by rotating the USN/USMC VPs into/out of the president billet every 2 years. This is to keep the overhead costs of mental health insurance from making the association insolvent (without drinks?). That was the plan, and as the Marine VP, I was the stuckee this year. However, I was ordered into the depot for a hip replacement AFC (my wife, Patsy, says it was a CILOP, conversion in lieu of procurement if CRS is your problem- she wasn't about to train another husband. After 47 years- she is in for SAINTHOOD). So Dave "Hide" Dollarhide, our current president at the time and very astute at all things presidential (WHEN HE IS NOT FLYING the A-4C for the Valiant Air Command War Bird Museum), was going to continue in place to chair the Annual Skyhawk Association Meeting/Luncheon at Tailhook 14, which of course included electing a new president.

This was a great plan, but Hide had recently come under doctor scrutiny and had been grounded pending further rehab. Bottom line: no crowded aluminum flying machines for Jigger and Hide. So Navy VP Pete Cole got the stick for the board meeting/annual luncheon, and it was a resounding success. As Hide folds his tent (oops- closes his foot locker in his stateroom), I would like to recognize him for an outstanding effort over the last 2 years. Other than flying (GRRR), one of his main contributions was establishing a Standing Operating Procedure for the association (SOP for you aviators). Of course, the rest of the board, being good JOs, totally ignored this until we had to read it to find out what mistakes we made! Thanks Hide. We wish you good luck with the depot call and thank you for continuing as the model manager for the SOP. Dash 3 in Geezer flight is Terry "Cardinal" Cooney, who was at the meeting as secretary for life, but is also working his way back to FMC with a new hip! We will all be ready for another 20 years!!!

THE SCOOTER TURNS 60!

Twenty-five years after the first flight on June 22, 1954, the last A-4 rolled off the assembly line for a total production of 2,960 airplanes. Today, SIXTY years later, Todd "Hun" Frommelt, our "Keeper of the Count," tells us that ninety-eight A-4s are still flying around the world. For the annual meeting, Hide provided a great video that can be seen on our Skyhawk Assn. YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/A4SkyhawkAssociation>. All of the positive feedback was provided by spies, but keep in mind that YP, Jack "Youthly Pursome" Woodul, was in the middle of this, so the info might be a little stretched, shall we say. After Pete got the board meeting out of the way, Mike "Buick" Eberhardt and Mark "Senator" Williams (treasurer for life), ran an excellent annual meeting and luncheon with Pete as the MC. Bob Hickerson,



Bill "Jigger" Egen

our editor for life, received kudos for his after-lunch talk, and almost 100 mem-



bers and guests attended the luncheon, I am told- feed the kitty!

ATTACK READY ROOM

YP and Buick went for Air Medals and were fully engaged in getting TOP ACES (Discovery Air) and Draken Inc. to support our efforts at the luncheon and the ATTACK Ready Room – they being of the currently-flying A-4 clan. TOP ACES turned heads with words like donation (smile here) and attended the luncheon as well, led by Lonny "Eagle" McClung. With Buick providing target prep (another board member that flies A-4s!), Draken Inc. volunteered to host drinks and pupu's on Friday night after the Hook Bud Roach Happy Hour, in the Attack Ready Room which was crowded with A-4, A-7 and A-6 old fokkers. The Attack Ready Room was a big hit, and the donations really took the pressure off of YP and his biker babes with bats who were stuck with trying to get donations. Attendance in the Ready Room was very good, as it seemed that the whole convention regularly migrated to our precious

continued on page 11...



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

◆ ◆
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BOMBS AWAY!

• Fall 2014 •

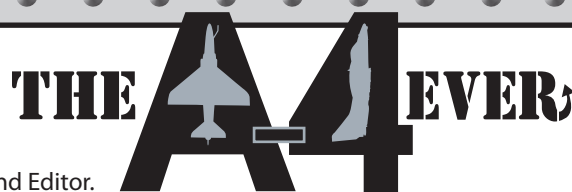
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THE A4 EVER

Bob "Raven" Hickerson – Chairman and Editor.

Dave Dollarhide, Mark Williams and Bill "Jigger" Egen - Co-Editors.

Gene Atwell – Webmaster.

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

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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 Journal 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.

On the Cover: Pilot Larry "Worm" Elmore executed this simulated napalm drop piloting A-4C 149606 of Valiant Air Command Warbird Museum at the Tico Airshow 2013. The aircraft was restored by Skyhawk Ventures and later donated to the Valiant Air Command in 2013. Photo via Valiant Air Command. Photographer Phyllis Lilienthal.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

■ To the Editor:

Hello,

The National Marine Museum said that I should see if you guys can help us out. We have an A-4C Skyhawk that was donated to our organization for our museum we are working on building down here in Monroe, NC.

While the plane will never fly again, we are restoring it for static display, and I am trying to find her history so that we can display that alongside her.

Her # is 148509, and I was able to find her listed in a few places on your site which shows that her original deployment was with VMA-242. After that point it gets a little fuzzy. But I was wondering if you knew of a way to either find out her service history or find out if there are any members who may have flown her. I would love to get stories from people who actually flew the plane and invite them to come on out and visit her.

Any help would be appreciated

Thank you,

Joseph Atkins

[joseph.atkins@gmail.com]

<http://www.warriorsandwarbirds.com>

(Ed. note: SA President Bill Egen replied with this information.)

Joe - Gabby just sent you the history on 148509, plus as you probably know, she was N204AT as well in the civilian world. I have many hours in VMA-214 at El Toro in '67 flying 148XXX series A-4Cs, but not that one. We fully support restoration efforts and would be interested in status reports and stories/pictures as the project progresses. If you join the Skyhawk Association, you will have access to more data - hint, hint. I am in the east end of NC just outside Havelock/MCAS Cherry Point. Jigger.

(Ed. note: please contact Joe directly if you have flight time in this bird.
BuNo history printed below.)

■ To the Editor:

Reference this entry on the website:

December 10, 1990:

Cdr. Philip J. Palmatier Jr., CO of VT-25 at Chase Field, Beeville, TX, was killed and the student pilot involved returned to base safely after a mid-air collision between their TA-4J Skyhawks (possibly 158098 & 158125) during takeoff and landing practice from the carrier USS Lexington 85 miles NW of Key West, FL.

I was an instructor pilot assigned to VT-22 and was at the Lexington the day this accident occurred. The facts are a little different than written above. Specifically, the SNA involved did not survive. Both pilots and aircraft were lost at sea. I was coming through the 90 position on my approach to Lex when the SNA and Cdr. Palmatier collided right above me at 3000 feet AGL. I actually had to maneuver away and down the ships wake to avoid being hit by 1/2 of a TA-4J as it fell.

If anybody wants more details I'd be happy to speak with them.

Regards,

JB Kilmer

[jbkilmer@aol.com]

(Ed.note: thanks for the update, JB. The entry has been corrected by Gabby.)

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

History of A-4C BuNo 148509

Date	Variant	Custodian	Custodian Location	Description
16 May, 1961	A4D-2N	BAR M&S	El Segundo, CA	Accepted
17 August, 1961	A4D-2N	VMA-242	NS Roosevelt Roads, PR	
30 November, 1961	A4D-2N	VMA-242	MCAS Cherry Point, NC	
10 July, 1962	A4D-2N	O&R BUWEPS FR	MCAS Cherry Point, NC	
18 July, 1962	A4D-2N	O&R BUWEPS FR	NAS Norfolk, VA	
4 September, 1962	A4D-2N	O&R BUWEPS FR	NAS Quonset Point, RI	
10 April, 1964	A-4C	VA-44	NAS Cecil Field, FL	
5 October, 1967	A-4C	VA-83	USS Shangri La	
2 February, 1968	A-4C	VA-83	USS John F Kennedy	
14 January, 1969	A-4C	VA-83	NAS Cecil Field, FL	
19 February, 1970	A-4C	MARTD	NAS Los Alamitos, CA	
1 March, 1971	A-4C	MARTD	MCAS El Toro, CA	
7 June, 1971	A-4C	MASDC	Davis-Mothan AFB, Tucson, AZ	
15 May, 1973	A-4C			Stricken : 35
10 September, 2014	A-4C	Warriors & Warbirds	Monroe, NC	Being restored for static display.

■ To the Editor:

Hi, Bob. Just got the Summer issue, and as always looks good.

Have to say that the National Defense Ribbon was known in my time as the “gedunk ribbon” or by the Marines in my classes as “the Shirley Highway ribbon.” I will always remember the DI, Sgt. Don Porter, recently returned from Vietnam, standing in front of us in the classroom at Indoc at AOCS. In his inimitable style and tone, he drawled, “Well, you guys have been here a whole week and I guess you deserve a medal.” Then, helped by the Navy PO2, he handed out our first medals and showed us how to install them on our shirts, which we weren’t wearing at the time. We were still in those green “poopy suits,” living in them for the two weeks of the Indoc phase. Arghhh-h! We showered at night then crawled back into them. It made laundry matters much easier, and no one complained. We didn’t wear our new decorations until we got to Battalion and got our tailored chino khakis.

Peter Mersky

■ To the Editor:

As head of the airport design department of a San Francisco engineering firm, I had many occasions to fly in the cockpit of jetliners, and my secondary job as US correspondent for foreign aviation magazines resulted in my getting backseat rides in tactical jets of the US Navy and the Air National Guard. Nevertheless, I was very

excited when given a chance to fly with the Marine Corps, especially as I would be in the backseat of a Skyhawk, a favorite aircraft of mine since my days at Douglas. Thus, on Monday morning the 20th of September 1982, I drove to NAS Alameda with my head full of A-4 images. Yet, none of them were as exciting as those I was about to take while flying in BuNo 158514, a TA-4J from VMA-133 ‘Dragons,’ a reserve unit belonging to Marine Air Group 42.

Briefing before the flight was minimal. I do not even remember being shown the intricacies of the ejection seat. But that did not worry me: I knew that, in case of an emergency, my pilot would “throw me out” before he would punch out. What bothered me was that I saw no other aircraft being readied to take-off and serve as “targets” for my camera. After all, this had been planned as a photo flight, but it appeared that there would be no aircraft to shoot!

After take-off from Alameda’s runway 07, we set course, by ourselves, toward Oregon with still no sign of “target” aircraft. My spirits were low when, as we approached Mt. Shasta, barely below its 14,179-ft summit, two A-4Fs suddenly appeared just off our port wing. (And, yes, I know, by the time the above photo was taken they had moved to our starboard wing!) The sun was shining and the snow was shimmering as we began a series of 360° turns. It was time to put my Pentax to work. Whether intentionally or not, the two



“targets” were painted differently: BuNo 155009 still carried the light gull-gray and glossy white scheme in use since February 1955 while BuNo 155006 was in the then new, and ever so dull for photographers, TPS (Tactical Paint Scheme).

Thirty-two years have passed since that exciting flight. VMA-133 was deactivated in 1992 as part of the post-Cold War drawdown of our military forces, the last Marine single-seat A-4Ms were retired by VMA-124 in June 1994, and the last two-seat Navy TA-4J followed in May 2003 when VC-8 was disestablished. For many years since, this photographer has not been able to pass the physical required for backseat rides in jets. But the memories. Ah! The memories...

The secret of great air-to-air photography: a decent camera and lenses, good lighting, and skillful flying on the part of the pilots of the photo ship and those acting as “targets.” Much obliged to the folks at VMA-133, I was able to enjoy that combination.

Thanks and *Semper Fi!*

J.B. Francillon

[aviamacfran@gmail.com]

TRIVIA ANYONE?

from Dave Dollarhide

Send your answers to:



#1

We received no answers to this question in the Winter edition: What is the purpose of this hole in the nose-wheel door? Someone must know!



#2

And, to give you a bit more to think about, what the heck is this?

Read?

you think
we *read*?

Solitary:

**The Crash, Captivity and Comeback
of an Ace Fighter Pilot.**

Giora Romm

Black Irish Entertainment LLC, New York,
Los Angeles. 2014.

287 pp. Paperback. \$13.76.

Reviewed by CDR Peter Mersky, USNR (ret)

Most combat veterans of any country have one important fear, something that sometimes occurs, no matter how they prepare to defend against it: namely, capture by the enemy and imprisonment for a long duration. In the mid- to late 20th century, there were many examples of such incredibly ill fortune, especially during the Vietnam War, roughly 1964-1973, where hundreds of Americans, mainly aviators, were incarcerated in North Vietnam for painfully long periods, often as long as five to eight years. Beaten and tortured



Then-1stLt Romm sits in a Mirage IIICJ of No. 119 Squadron in 1967. As a Mirage pilot, he shot down five Arab MiGs to become the first Israeli ace of eventually some 40 IAF aces. (Giora Romm photo)

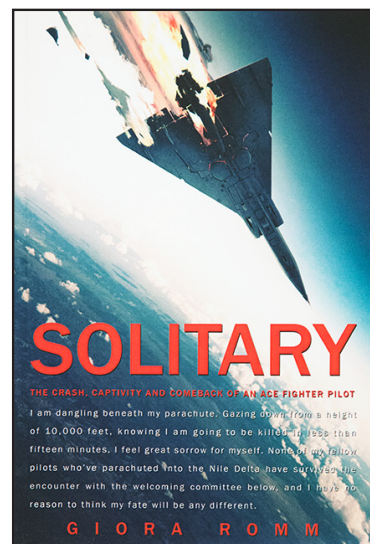
almost to the point of death, losing 50-100 or more pounds from the meager rations, these individuals had to reach way down inside to survive, and a few could not, dying in the solitary confines of the infamous Hanoi Hilton, or other prisons of the North Vietnamese system. The occasional Medals of Honor, Air Force and Navy Crosses, Silver Stars and Purple Hearts given to those men who flew home in March 1973 were small compensation for the tragedies they suffered at the hands

of their captors. Yet, while these stalwarts languished in North Vietnamese prisons, other captives were experiencing the same torturous existence.

Then-Captain (later Major General) Giora Romm of the Israel Air Force had already seen a lot of action, becoming Israel's first fighter ace during the 1967 Six Day War. He had shot down five Egyptian and Syrian MiGs during that brief, but intense conflict that surprised the world. On September 11, 1969, a date which, of course, would come to have its own tragic meaning for most of the world 31 years later, Romm's Mirage IIICJ was struck by an Egyptian MiG's cannon fire over Egypt, and he had to eject at 20,000 feet—an unusually high, and potentially dangerous altitude for such an emergency egress.

He was badly injured and as he floated down, he realized he was heading into more danger directly toward a growing group of angry Egyptian farmers and their welcome was not going to be pleasant. After several intense moments of confrontation where he feared for his life, he was rescued by Egyptian army troops to begin what developed into a lengthy, often painful and highly uncertain stay at an unclean facility. Not only was there the expected language problem—Hebrew and Arabic occasionally have minor similarities but are, in fact, two entirely different languages—there was also the obvious animosity between two cultures. None of which was going to help the young Israeli pilot as he struggled to maintain his dignity and security against the constant barrage of questions from the harsh, insistent Egyptian officers.

Romm is not the usual tough-minded, fast-acting fighter pilot, though he does have those qualities in abundance. He is also more cerebral, someone always questioning, searching for reasons, the order of the world around him and why things happen. This highly personal memoir covers a very specific five-



month period in his eventful life enduring all the physical and mental hardships associated with this most stressful of military experiences. We Americans have focused on the experiences of our own POWs in Vietnam and to a lesser extent—perhaps because there were not as many of them in a much shorter time span—of those men and women captured during the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. We might tend to forget that other countries' warriors have experienced much the same situation. Cut off from their homes and cultures, desperately trying to survive and cope with the harsh realities of dealing with harsh jailers who seem to care very little about their safety or very existence.

Romm is a very private man, and to write these extremely personal stories of his medical and physical torture at the hands of the Egyptians must have taken a great deal of intestinal fortitude that he himself didn't know he had. There's very little aviation association here, except for the fact that he is constantly reminding



A-4N no. 322 of 115 Squadron in 1973. Originally carrying the U.S. Navy bureau number 158726, this A-4N was lost on October 11, 1973, its pilot killed. A-4Ns were modified A-4Ms, which were built for the U.S. Marine Corps. (IDF photo)

himself that he is an officer in the Israel Air Force, an ace no less, and it is up to only himself to maintain that dignity even though his personal appearance and mental state may not seem to support that hard-won status.

This account offers a simple narrative that only occasionally describes the author's life and family history. He does occasionally give some details in those areas, and they are certainly welcome. Romm is a *sabra*, a native-born Israeli, whose father left Poland in 1925 at the tender age of 19, came to Israel and made a life for himself and his family in Palestine, as the area was collectively known then. Snippets of his family history and his own education and early career in the IAF round out Giora Romm's history as he takes us with him on his painful journey as a POW.

His language is straight forward and colorful. He is, after all, definitely bi-lingual, able to converse in English as well as Hebrew, having spent considerable time in the U.S. in a variety of assignments, including the Israeli Defense Attache, the senior military representative in the embassy, second only to the ambassador, in the 1990s.

Much of the narrative revolves around the daily contest between Romm and his guards, his struggle to maintain his officer identity, while trying to get medical attention and adequate food, as well as a meeting with a Red Cross representative if only to get word back to his family that he is alive. He is severely beaten by what he guesses is a "Sudanese giant," a huge, powerful individual.

Then, on December 6, 1969, he is transported to a facility from which he is released into the hands of another Red Cross

official and ultimately brought home to his anxious family and friends and country, where he is feted as a returning hero. He begins rehabilitation, all the while focusing on returning to flight status, something those around him are not sure he will be able to accomplish. But he does, in time to participate in the 1973 Yom Kippur War as the commanding officer of an A-4 squadron. Not unexpectedly, the Egyptians have learned that Romm is once more in the cockpit, flying against them, and

they broadcast an angry message to tell him they are waiting for him. This time, they say, their reception will not be as "benevolent" as the first.

Romm's description of flying the A-4, a much different aircraft from his delta-winged Mirage, and learning to lead his squadron of eager young men in an increasingly bloody and intense war appears rather suddenly. It is only after he takes a long, hard look at himself and how he feels that he is able to settle into the assignment given him by high-ranking IAF officers who are also his friends and now need his help, his personality, his experience. This last section certain gives a lot of details about flying in the 1973 war that have never been offered in other such memoirs. It is well worth reading.

Solitary is the story of one man's journey from the literal heights of flying at 20,000 feet in pursuit of his country's enemies to the equally literal and very personal depths of the type of incarceration relatively—thankfully—few men

have had to experienced. It is a journey worth taking because it allows the reader the chance to safely participate in both the capture and ultimate liberation of the soul and physical well-being of a tiny country's patriot. ✈



Now a brigadier general, Romm prepares for a flight in an F-15. (Giora Romm photo)

SCHEDULING

Reunions & Requests



PLAN AHEAD

- **VA-164 Ghost Rider Reunion:** November 5 – 9, 2014, Springhill Suites Hotel, Pensacola Beach, FL. Contact is Chip Brown, [cbrown164@yahoo.com] or 210-862-0964.
- **Skyhawk Association 2015 Annual Meeting and Luncheon at Tailhook:** 12:00 noon, September 11, 2015, Nugget Hotel.
- **Tailhook Association Reunion & Symposium 2015,** Nugget Hotel, Sparks, NV, September 10-13, 2015.
- **All-Marine Skyhawk Reunion:** October 8-11, 2015, Embassy Suites, San Diego, CA. Contact is Mark Williams, [roger.wilco@comcast.net].
- **VA-55 Reunion:** initial planning for reunion in fall 2015. To get your name on the email list, contact Denny Sapp at [djsapp@comcast.net].

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



THE FIRST COMBAT USE OF THE WALLEYE WEAPON

By Steve Gray

Ed. note: Steve Gray, author of Rampant Raider, spoke at a November 1, 2013, ceremony marking the opening of a major exhibit dedicated to the Walleye weapon at the US Naval Museum of Armament and Technology at NWC China Lake. The ceremony also coincided with the 50th anniversary of the initial fleet introduction of the Walleye. The following article, offered in two parts, was excerpted from his remarks. The second installment will be published in The A-4Ever, Spring 2015.

I joined VA-212 just three days prior to deployment on the 1967 cruise to Vietnam, and I was the most junior pilot in CVW-21. For that reason, I didn't participate in the pre-deployment training on the Walleye weapon system. The squadron pilots were briefed that absolutely NO mention of Walleye was to be made outside the squadron spaces and certainly not in the presence of any of the press onboard, which was mostly hostile to the U.S. military. Walleye was obviously a big deal!

Lt. Tom Taylor had been attached TDY to VA-212 from VX-5 at China Lake to assist in the combat operational evaluation of the Walleye. Our CO, CDR Homer Smith, had made it clear to Tom that he was to be treated just like any other VA-212 pilot and would fly combat missions which had nothing to do with Walleye, right along with the rest of us. In addition, James Reed, a civilian technical representative, was accompanying us on the cruise to assist in the combat introduction of the weapon. Jim was a civilian pilot and fit right in with the squadron pilots.

Not much had changed in the delivery of ballistic iron bombs since WWII, except that with the advent of jet aircraft accurate placement of those weapons had become more difficult. The speeds involved in jet operations required much greater release distances from the target, and the more accurate 60 and 90 degree dive profiles simply weren't feasible with jets. Hitting a target with a hunk of iron from release altitudes of 3500 to 5000 feet above the desired impact point required the proper dive angle, the exact depression of the bomb sight, proper airspeed and stable one "G" flight conditions at time of

release and proper correction for wind. Making delivery even more difficult, all too frequently our carefully-designed formations would be disrupted at a critical time by enemy anti-aircraft fire or a surface-to-air missile launch. We often had to make bomb delivery profile changes at the last second to compensate for shallower or steeper dive angles, lessor or greater than desired airspeed at release and "Kentucky windage" corrections for wind drift. It was no wonder that it frequently required four to six or even more bombers releasing 48 or more bombs to ensure target destruction.

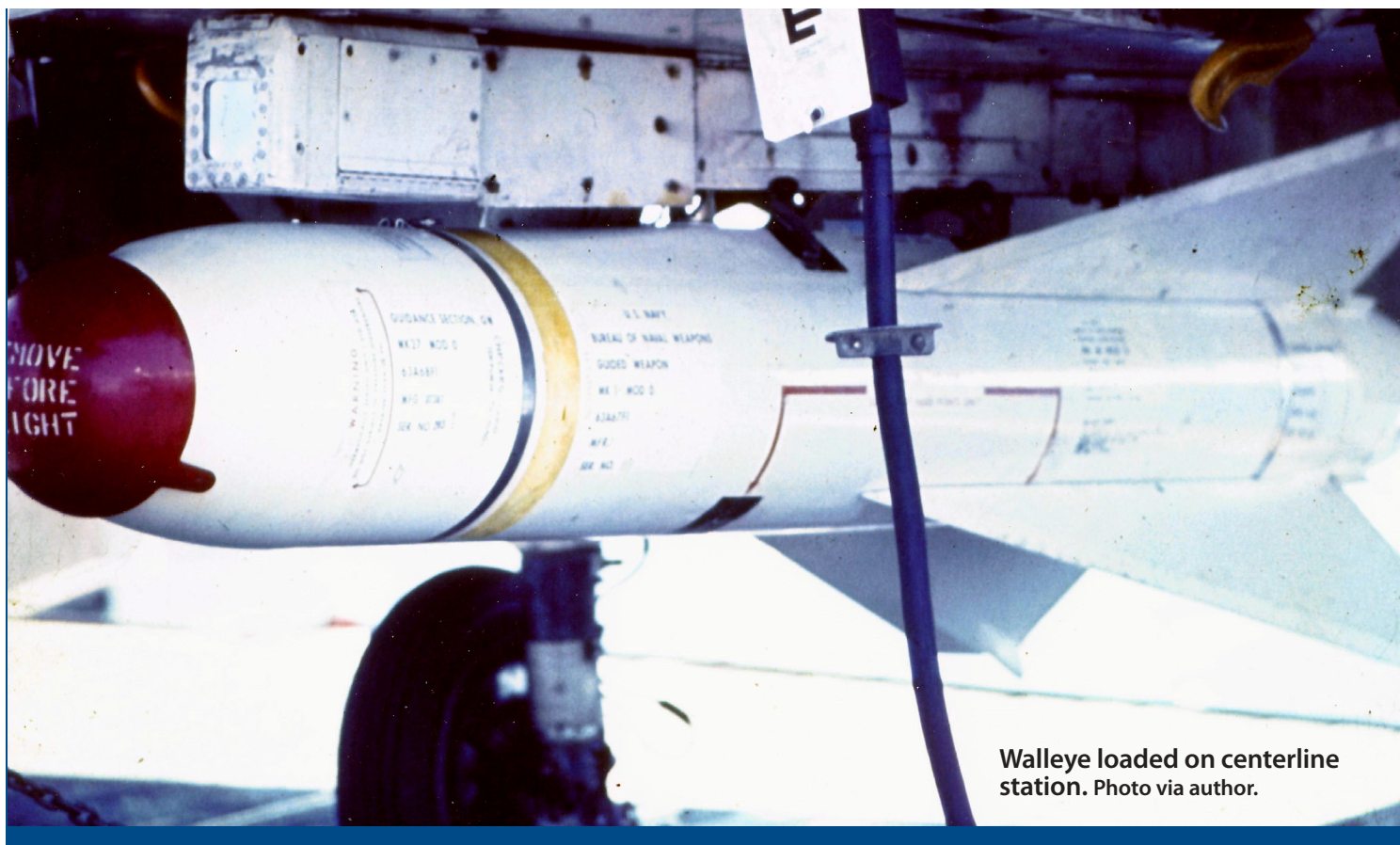
Naval Weapons Center China Lake had helped solve this problem with the development of "retarded" bomb fins, code-named Snake Eye. The Snake Eye bomb had four spring loaded fins which on release deployed to make the bomb resemble a palm tree with four large fronds. The fins slowed the descent of the bomb, allowing the delivery airplane more time to travel clear of the weapon effects when the bomb detonated. The Snake Eye delivery required a shallow dive angle, approximately 10 to 20-degrees, and a relatively low release altitude of 500 to 1500 feet above target. Delivered in this fashion, the Snake Eye bombs were devastatingly accurate. However, in North Vietnam most of the targets were defended by an extremely-concentrated small arms and light anti-aircraft envelope, making a



Author Steve Gray with VA-212 Skyhawk.
Photo via author.

Snake Eye bomb delivery suicidal!

Because of the wide-spread anti-war sentiment which existed worldwide during the Vietnam War, the Johnson administration was extremely sensitive to collateral damage propaganda released by the North Vietnamese. The rules of engagement under which we operated on the 1967 cruise stressed limiting damage to unintended areas to the extent that frequently we were required to place ourselves at greater risk to decrease the chances that near misses would hit civilian areas. Because of this, an urgent need for precision-guided bombs existed.



Walleye loaded on centerline station. Photo via author.

The term “Smart Bomb” may well have been coined by a VA-212 pilot. One of the junior officers, Charlie Ohernschall, used to delight us with a characterization of the Admiral when hearing of the Walleye for the first time. “What! A Bomb.....that can see!!!”

Walleye was a television-guided glide bomb. It had a gyro-stabilized television camera behind a clear lens in the nose of the bomb. Four wings with control tabs on the trailing edge provided maneuverability. A ram-air turbine provided electrical power. The weapon’s camera was designed to lock on to the area of highest contrast the bomb could detect in the target area.

Walleye I was a “fire and forget” weapon. Once it locked on, it guided itself to the target. The Walleye bombs used in the initial combat operational evaluation had been equipped with data link transmitters which transmitted what the television camera in the nose of the bomb recorded all the way to impact. Video tape recorders about the size of two small suitcases used two-inch wide tape to record the images. A chase A-4 carried the recorders in a hollowed out drop tank for the first few drops.

North Vietnam has an extended “winter monsoon” period from October till March which nearly precluded conventional visual bombing. Clouds, rain, fog, and low

ceilings are the usual day-to-day weather conditions during the monsoon. However, on March 10, 1967, we had a break in the normal weather pattern which provided a high, thin overcast with good visibility underneath. This gave us the opportunity for the first combat test of the Walleye system. A military barracks resembling a multi-story apartment complex, located on the coast of North Vietnam just south of the mouth of the Song Ma River near the village of Sam Son, was chosen as the target. CDR Smith chose this target for the initial drop because the run could be made from seaward and would allow time for inflight adjustments in the delivery, without subjecting the aircraft to antiaircraft fire. CDR Smith and VX-5’s LT Tom Taylor were assigned as the Walleye delivery pilots, and another VA-212 pilot was chosen to fly the recorder-equipped chase plane.

The mission was reported as a complete success! We all crowded into the ready room to view the video recording of the strike as Jim Reed hurriedly threaded the tape into the recorder. Although somewhat grainy, the picture was clear. The barracks, made of whitish concrete, was clearly visible. The weapon was locked on to a dark area surrounded by the white concrete background. As the weapon neared the target, the dark area

was revealed to be a window shaded by an overhanging ledge. The Walleye flew right through the window, and the picture disappeared as the weapon smashed into the room just nanoseconds before it exploded. The effect of the Walleye’s 750-pound, star-shaped warhead exploding inside the concrete building was devastating, collapsing most of the building. The first combat drop of Walleye was an unqualified success!

The rest of the Walleye Operational Evaluation targets were mostly bridges which the shaped charge warhead proved highly successful in dropping. The star shaped charge was very effective in cutting the steel girders supporting the bridge structure. With the Combat OPEVAL completed, CDR Smith decided to use the first of the purely operational Walleyes against the most famous bridge in North Vietnam, the Thanh Hoa Bridge. The Song Ma River had cut a deep chasm through the plateau on which the City of Thanh Hoa was located. The French had constructed a steel suspension bridge to cross the gap. This became a critical interdiction point on Highway One, the major highway between North and South Vietnam. The bridge was immensely strong with supports sunk deep into the bedrock walls of the chasm. Seemingly indestructible after *continued...*

WALLEYE WEAPON CONT...

numerous strikes, the bridge had even survived direct hits from 2000-pound bombs with only minor damage, which the North Vietnamese had been able to quickly repair. If a bomb missed the bridge by mere inches, it would explode harmlessly in the deep chasm below. In addition, the bridge was very heavily defended by medium and large-caliber, radar-controlled anti-aircraft guns. We promptly dubbed it the Thanh Whore Bridge.

CDR Homer Smith was an engineering graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He had done an engineering study of the bridge structure and had even constructed a scale model of the bridge. He was convinced that simultaneously cutting three of the main support girders of the bridge would cause the bridge to collapse from its own weight. In addition to being a major contributor to the war effort, the air wing which succeeded in dropping the Thanh Hoa Bridge would become famous. Skipper Smith convinced the Air Wing Commander, Jack Monger, to lay on a major strike against the bridge.

These were called "Alpha Strikes" because the targets were on the "A" list of major targets. These missions required elements from the entire air wing to perform various missions in support of the strike. This Thanh Hoa Bridge strike required the Walleye bombers; flack suppressors; anti-radar guided missile aircraft performing a mission we called "Iron Hand" (carrying the radar signal homing Shrike missile); fighter cover; rescue aircraft and rescue fighter air cover; and tanker support. It was a major undertaking and utilized most of the aircraft aboard the *Bonn Homme Richard*, as well as shore based assets.

I was a flack suppressor on this strike. It was the mission of the flack suppressors to silence firing gun sites to give the bombers the best chance to hit their targets. Flack suppression was the most hazardous mission we flew. Once you began your attack on the gun site, the gun director knew immediately what you were up to and shifted the fire of his battery towards you. It became a "you or them" situation. The easiest shot for a gunner was up the throat, firing directly at the airplane with no deflection or lead required. It was very common in a flack suppression run to see anti-aircraft shells passing through the 100 mil ring of the gun site. But if they were firing at you, they weren't shooting at the bombers, and you were accomplishing the mission.

Locking the Walleye camera on the target required absolutely smooth, stable flying. From lessons learned during testing and practice bombing drops, we knew that the weapon had a tendency to shift its lock to the highest area of contrast it could see in its target window. The pilot had a full field of view, but the weapon's field of view was limited to what the target tracking system saw – a four-mil gate (displayed by a double set of cross hairs which formed a square). We had learned that if the pilot bored in during his dive until only the desired impact area was displayed in the four mil gate, the weapon was a 100 percent bull's eye bomb. Even though the camera was gyro-stabilized, with even small control inputs to the airplane's flight path the camera would bob and weave, making it impossible to lock it on the target. To get the weapon in the ballpark so that only very tiny corrections were needed, a system was developed. Enroute to the target, the Walleye-equipped aircraft would slide into tail chase formation and position the airplane so that the Walleye camera had the 4-mil gate in the black tail pipe opening of the lead aircraft. The pilot would then mark the position of the tail pipe on his gun sight glass with a grease pencil, giving him an aim point for when he rolled into his target run. This got the weapon camera as close as possible to the target, minimizing corrections during the bomb run. During the target run, until the weapon was locked on the target by squeezing the gun trigger, then released by pressing the bomb pickle button, absolutely smooth, stable flying was demanded. Doing this under anti-aircraft fire required nerves of steel!

The plan was for the three Walleye bombers to release their weapons simultaneously after locking on the key support girders of the Thanh Hoa Bridge. My target that day was an actively firing 37mm gun site on the southwest side of the bridge. During my attack run, the bridge was behind me so I had no idea how the Walleye bombers were doing. Relief mingled with fear as I recovered from my run on the gun site and began to jink rapidly during the run out to the safety of the Tonkin Gulf. Just as I thought I had it made, with the beach in sight, a blood curdling, gargling scream filled my headset. Jeez! I thought, somebody caught one in the throat! I almost wet my flight suit! It wasn't until the mission de-brief that I learned the noise was Skipper Smith screaming in frustration. When the smoke cleared, the Thanh Hoa Bridge still stood, with three, perfectly placed black smudges on the main support girders.

(To be continued...)



VA-212 aircraft readied for Walleye mission aboard USS Bon Homme Richard. Photo via author.

THE PREZ SEZ continued. from page 2..

hunting grounds. Senator wowed the crowd with G-rated videos of... A-4s, what else! On top of this confluence in the Ready Room, Steve "Dwarf" Linder had a VMA-214 reunion in the Ready Room- well done and fairly easy to do for you other squadrons thinking about a RDZ. Thanks again to all hands for what appears to be one of the best annual meetings that the incumbent and pending president could miss! By the way, YP



says the guys in suits are security! (Ed. note: either that or someone seriously elevated the dress code!)

SPRING BOARD MEETING 10-12 APRIL, 2014

Just to keep our wallets lighter, we have a mid-year board meeting each spring, and this last April we enjoyed a visit to Virginia Beach, NAS Oceana, the LSO school and VFA-106 - guess what day spring break started! The Friday Happy Hour at the O'Club included the VFA-106 "patching," and we enjoyed watching the nuggets get their first fleet assignments. We held the Saturday board meeting at the Military Aviation Mu-



seum (MAM) south of Virginia Beach and most stayed for the afternoon wine tasting and tour and flying demo put on by the MAM, including our very own R.R. "Boom" Powell in a Curtis Pusher. Thanks to Hide and Boom for coordinating this event.

SDOs AND MEMBERSHIP

We wish to thank the recent volunteers who have taken on SDO jobs. We appreciate their willingness to be a part of the team, as a point of contact for their units. As part of the September board decisions on association leadership, Todd "Hun" Frommelt will again be the Marine VP and chase Marine unit SDOs, and Pete Cole will continue his SDO efforts as the Navy VP.

- Bill Nelson: VA-303 and VA-876.
- VMA-311: We are looking for a replacement for Bob Pohlhamus.

We are currently hovering around 900 members. There are still lots of experienced A-4 types out there, and we are continually challenged to engage and recruit. Beyond membership, any and all assistance you can provide is much appreciated. As you can see above, our annual RDZ at Hook is a well-attended event and offers lots of comraderie and lies! Our Journal, *The A4Ever*, gets outstanding reviews and comes with the membership. We provide three printed editions annually, and a 4th edition in digital format is available on the Skyhawk Association web page, www.a4skyhawk.org.

A-4 RESTORATIONS

There are many A-4s on display and flying at various locations - check our web page under Skyhawk Displays. Restoration of A-4C 148509 is under way for display at Warriors and War-



birds (www.warriorsandwarbirds.com) in Monroe, NC. They are working their way to a complete assembly and have asked for help if you are in the area. A good POC is Joseph Atkins [joseph.atkins@gmail.com]. Our very own Hide has some time in this bird at NAS Cecil back in the dark ages!

Brasher Falls, NY, is busy reassembling TA-4J, 153505, for display in the city. It was given to them by the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, and the last livery is for CTW-1. There are names on the cockpit rails that have generated interest by the new owners and they would love to hear from anybody about the pilots involved. If you can provide any info on Capt Callis (CO) or Capt Noce (XO), please contact James at [jksshootout@aol.com].

MOVING RIGHT ALONG

It is going to be a fun and fast two years, and I know Pete is eagerly awaiting the stick. Look for more details soon about our 2015 mid-year board meeting in and around Wright Patterson AFB - we will probably be able to give the Air Force a lot of rudder!! Also, the Marine Skyhawks are making noise again, and a reunion in San Diego in October 2015 is taking shape.

SEMPER FI and A-4s FOREVER,
Jigger



Draken International and Its Kiwi *Skyhawks*

Hun reporting...



RNZAF A-4K Skyhawks on a New Zealand flight line 1974

Photo via Don Simms

One of the great parts of this job, as I've perhaps mentioned before, is that you get to meet and see some great folks and the neat stuff they're working on. I had another one of those opportunities this week (4 March) when I traveled to Lakeland, Florida, and met with Mr. Dale Snodgrass, Chief Pilot, Draken International to tour their facility on the Lakeland Linder Regional Airport.

Draken International, and their CEO, Mr. Jared Isaacson, are assembling what is quickly becoming a very formidable little air force. With a start of the core Black Diamond Jet Team's Aero L-39s (5), and a CT-33, Draken has now added Polish MIG-21s (25), New Zealand Aermacchi MB-339CBs (9), and finally, the focus of this article, eight New Zealand A-4K (6 Ks, 2 TA-4Ks)! (Draken also is leasing 3 A-4Ls from A-4L LLC and has them at work out west). We're talking huge inventory here...and huge investments! The business is aviation contract services. The business plan is to provide our military services and defense industry quality aviation services ranging from adversary air, simulated close air support, attack profiles for ship defense and the like to defense systems product and development air support. And to provide these services as well, or better, and less expensively than the services could provide it themselves. That's a tall order in this tight budget environment with plentiful competition. The main competition comes from Airborne Tactical Advantage Company (ATAC) in Newport News and Discovery Air, a Canadian firm that has its own air arm (DADS). DADS U.S. operation is called Top Aces, USA, and they recently purchased Advanced Training Systems International (ATSI) of Mesa, AZ, and their A-4s.





With the Black Diamonds limited primarily to airshows and showing the company flag around the nation, it falls on the Draken Skyhawks to win the day, for now at least, in the contract services bidding wars. I suspect I'm preaching to the choir here, but we're pretty confident in the Skyhawk's capability to do so...especially THESE Skyhawks! The Kiwi birds are mostly low time, original Australian (1967 birthdays) A-4G's which underwent extensive upgrades while serving with the Royal New Zealand Air Force. The "KAHU" upgrade program, undertaken in the late 1980s/early 1990s, replaced wing spars, removed the avionics hump (space no longer needed with more modern electronics), upgraded all comm/nav gear, added HOTAS throttles and put early block F-16 APG-66 radars in the nose. With J52-P8B/C engines, an empty operating weight just over 12,000 pounds, slats that are (Kiwi magic) rigged perfectly, dual multi-function displays, dual MIL STD 1553 data-buses, INU, HUD,



Photo via Don Simms

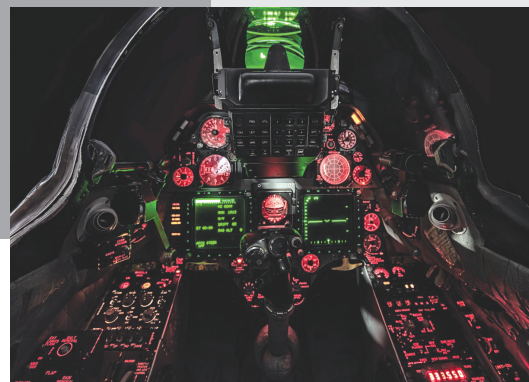
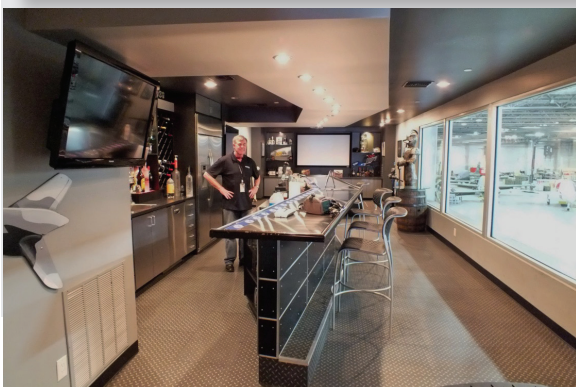


Photo by Jeff Spann via Dale Snodgrass

RWS/CDS, and even drag chutes, these birds are real close to Israeli A-4Ns. Some would argue the avionics and weapons suites are even better than the Israeli aircraft.



Piloting these birds for now are a cadre of eight, mostly combat experienced high-time veterans of the U.S. armed forces. Most of the pilots have substantial Skyhawk time as well. Based on the four of them that I've met, they're a professional crew of skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic Skyhawks. A CEO who loves to fly is a fine start; Chief Pilot Dale was an impressive and encyclopedic host; Jerry Kerby seemed like someone I'd pick as my VP Ops too (assuming that I could afford him), and, of course, Mike "Buick" Eberhardt is the flight time hog we all know and love! Draken's hiring emphasizes 'tactically fresh' with lots of recent fleet experience, adversary knowledge and current security clearances. They expect zero credibility problems with the folks they support. Did I mention that they have a luxurious hangar skybox ready room? Not a bad place to work!

continued...

Kiwi Skyhawks cont...



Maintaining these birds are some twenty-four experienced Skyhawk mechanics who have had great success putting the birds back together and getting them checked out. All eight aircraft have their airworthiness certificates from the FAA, a major maintenance success considering that originally there wasn't an engine for each airframe. Before you read this, each airframe will have been fitted with a matched J52 engine, the company will have two spare checked-out engines on site, and about six more spare engines will be available in New Zealand. The J52 maintenance support is augmented by New Zealand's Safe Air, Ltd, at Woodbourne, and the KAHU avionics are supported by New Zealand's Field Air, Ltd, at Palmerston North. These company teams were in Lakeland in force when the Skyhawks arrived (by ship and truck) and were invaluable in getting the aircraft up and running. They continue to come as needed and will be called upon again as soon as a major contract is awarded.

One of the best moves made by Mr. Isaacson and his acquisition team was successfully including in the winning bid a very impressive parts and ground support equipment package. When trying to keep 40+ year old aircraft flying, you had best plan to have plenty of spare parts. Draken has some parts! In addition to eight spare J52s, the company has a spare parts stock that would make any Marine H&MS Commanding Officer very jealous....and then there's the ground support equipment! The buy included over 15 AIM-9L Sidewinder Captive Air Training Missiles (CATMs) and 4 TGM-65 Maverick CATMs. And how about five functional air refueling buddy stores? The Draken Air Force and its parts stockpile just barely fit into the company's 10,000 square foot facility at 3330 Flightline Drive, Lakeland, FL.



When they win one or more of the expected big contracts, Draken expects that all eleven Skyhawks (8 Ks and 3 Ls) will be put to work full-time. Dale expects this would require about a dozen more pilots and some four-dozen more mechanics, as well as some help from the Kiwi contractors. A large contract award will also let them start to invest in and work earnestly on the Aermacchis and even look seriously at putting the Fishbeds together. A major NAVAIR contract is in the bid process as this is being written – one that would employ all eleven A-4 aircraft. Other contracts and solicitations are being “actively pursued.” In the meantime, if you happen by Lakeland Regional Airport, linger a bit and you're likely to see a Draken Skyhawk or two being put through their paces. It sure is nice to see some Skyhawks in U.S. airspace these days!

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Special thanks to Jared Isaason and Dale Snodgrass for my educational tour of the Draken facility in early March 2014. Thanks also to Association member Don Simms, noted New Zealand Skyhawk historian and author, whose September 2013 *Pacific Wings* magazine article “The Skyhawks' Final Resting Places” provided much appreciated background information on the RNZAF Skyhawk program and the disposition of their aircraft.

PS. While on my visit, Skyhawk Association Director Buick Eberhardt just happened to be there to run a Functional Check Flight! (See pictures on this page). ✈️



(Ed. note: photos via author unless otherwise noted.)

THE TA-4F LASER DESIGNATOR

By Johnny Bittick

During the early 1970s, VA-164 (The Ghost Riders) had the A-4 Super Fox equipped with the Ferranti gun sight. The Ferranti had a laser seeker in place of the radar dish, and a moveable donut slaved to the seeker in the gun sight picture. In short, we could see the laser spot on the ground through the gun sight. It was like getting a radar lock in a fighter. During the 1970-71 cruise the squadron used Air Force OV-10s to designate targets in South Vietnam and used the donut as the aiming point for iron bombs. At the end of the cruise, the Air Force told the Navy they had better things to do than spot targets for them, which left the Navy with an asset they couldn't use. When we left for another WestPac tour in January 1972, the squadron sent me and another newbie to Iwakuni to "borrow" two combat-configured TA-4Fs from the



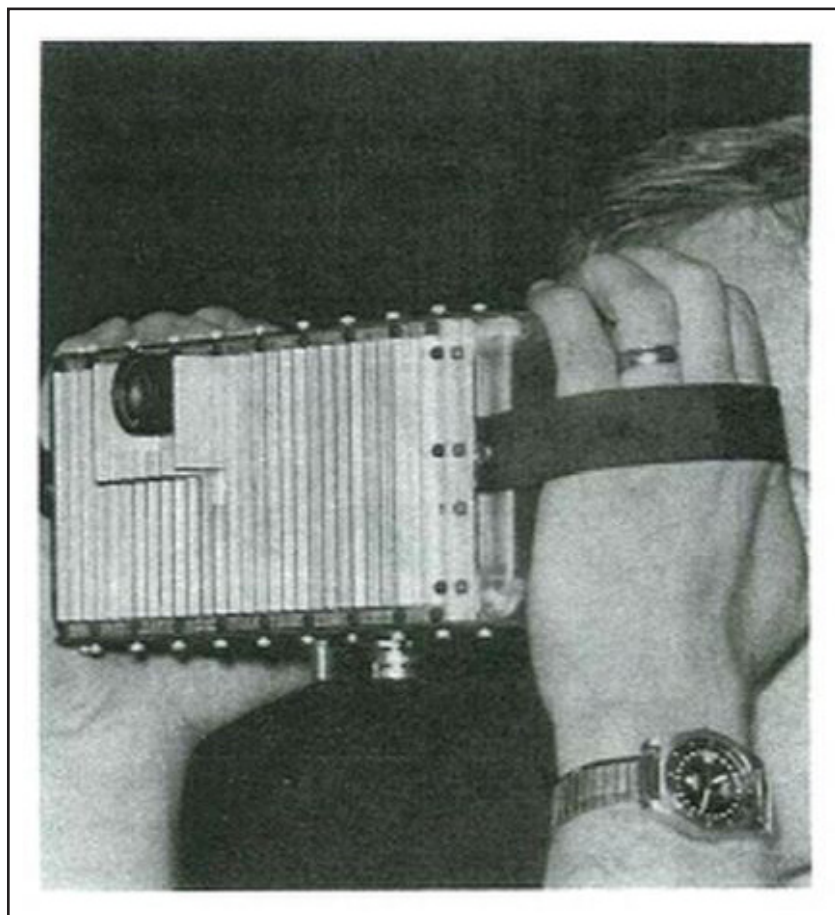
"Borrowed" TA-4F traps aboard *Hancock* on 1972 cruise.
Image via author.

By the time we got to Cubi, a China Lake representative was waiting with a hand-held laser designator. Rumor had it that a couple of engineers had built the thing in their garage on weekends!

Marines. By the time we got to Cubi, a China Lake representative was waiting with a hand-held laser designator. Rumor had it that a couple of engineers had built the thing in their garage on weekends! There was no test program, no OPEVAL - it was going to be used for the first time in combat.

The first designators had problems - mainly cooling and jitter. As squadron Operations Officer I, along with a couple of others, flew almost all of the designator hops. It was amazing - we'd bring the thing back, tell the China Lake rep what was wrong with it, and in a couple of days we had a new, improved box in our hands! The unit was about the size of a cigar box, was plugged in to a 28 volt power receptacle in the cockpit, had its own internal cooling system, and the transmitter & cross hairs were gyro stabilized. What made it efficient and effective was that we could see the laser spot, allowing us to tell if the unit quit operating. Because of that, we didn't waste any laser-guided bombs (LGB).

We worked out the bugs down south and then took our show up north. Way up north. No one else had this system, so we developed our own tactics. The designator flew along at approximately 3,000', dodging and weaving while looking for trucks under trees, fuel dumps, etc. The bomber was at 16,000' about 2 miles behind, keeping the TA-4 in sight. Our standard bomb-



The Lightweight Laser (LWL), affectionately known as the Brownie, weighed eight pounds and had a 70% success rate when designating from F-4s and TA-4s. USN Photo provided by Cliff Lawson.

er configuration was a 400 gallon center-line drop tank with three LGBs on each wing. The "T" had the usual 300 gallon drop tank on each wing, so we often hung a MK-83 or MK-84 on the center-line station. When the TA-4 pilot found a target, he would pop-up, circle and designate the target. When the bomber pilot obtained a good lock on the laser spot, he would fly into the LGB "basket" and release the bomb. The intent was to get bomb impact before the gomers figured out what was happening. We didn't lose anybody, so I guess it worked.

The system was extremely efficient. I remember one mission where we discovered a disassembled pontoon bridge along a good-sized stream. The pontoons were far enough apart so one bomb could destroy only one pontoon, and it took almost a direct hit at that. The Deadly LGB Duo went to work and a pontoon was destroyed with each and every bomb, something unheard of with iron sights and iron bombs! One aircraft loaded with six MK-82 LGBs wiped out the entire bridge, something a whole flight with dumb bombs would have been lucky to do.

On another flight, I was flying the TA-4 and my back-seater saw a truck pulled up under a large tree. I talked the bomber's eyes onto the tree, but he couldn't see the truck. No matter – we designated the truck and the bomber released his LGB, scoring a direct hit on a target he never saw.

Our squadron was short on pilots during that cruise, and the schedule wouldn't permit using one of our own in the back seat of the TA-4. My regular back-seater was an A-7 pilot doing his ship's company



Laser-guided Bomb loaded on A-4E 148613 at China Lake 1975. Image via Skyhawk Association.

tour in Air Ops. He volunteered, and we used him. It wasn't until later that I wondered what would have happened if we had been shot down!

Toward the end of our cruise the Navy wanted to continue the program using F-4s as designators and A-7s as bombers. (CVW-21 on *Hancock* was the last Air Group with A-4s and F-8s assigned). I took a two plane detachment to the other four CVs on Yankee Station at that time to teach them how to use the designator system. They had only moderate success because the bombers couldn't see the laser spot on the target and therefore couldn't tell if the designator overheated and quit firing.

We were asked to write up the tactics for inclusion in the NATOPS confidential supplement. My assistant Operations Officer was a good artist. He did the illustrations, and I wrote the verbiage, which was published as submitted. However, that was in October, 1972, and the war was over a few months later. It wasn't long before the Navy had a new airplane with designator capability, so I think VA-164 was the only outfit to really use the hand-held laser designator system.

One of the lessons I learned from the experience is how quickly and efficiently a completely new war-fighting tool can be designed, developed, tested and employed when it's done by the fleet operators in response to a combat-related need, outside of the normal procurement system.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Go Digital - December 2014!

Don't worry! We're not giving up on our printed Journals. We just want everyone to watch for our annual digital-only issue coming in December. We have reliable evidence that not all members have accessed our digital issue in past years and we want to correct that.

In mid-December you will receive an email letting you know that Volume 20-4 of The A-4Ever is available on the Skyhawk Association website. A link to our Association home page will be included, and once you've arrived on the home page, you will see a prominent link to all the digital issues we have published.

We hope that this will simplify the process for our members (compared to previous years), and that everyone will be able to enjoy the benefits that publishing online affords: longer articles with larger images, combined with hyperlinks to additional information and videos.

Don't forget, we want your stories and pictures! As always, we welcome your feedback, so drop me an email at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.



FROM THE ATTIC

Mailbag



The NAS Lemoore Aviator Memorial was unveiled in a ceremony held on Oct 4, 2104. The memorial, dedicated to all Lemoore aviators that have lost their lives in the line of duty, was constructed by the Lemoore Aviator Memorial Association, founded and led by LCDRs Ben Charles (3rd from left in group photo) and Erick Kenny (3rd from right in group photo). The Association raised \$100,000 in one year. Skyhawk Association was a contributor (see brick image). Photos via LCDR Charles.



Anyone need an A-4 throttle quadrant? Myles Douglas (owner of Skyhawk Ranch near Reno, NV – see photo), has one for sale for \$2500 (and will throw in a second for spare parts). Myles once owned ten disassembled A-4Cs and the front end of a TA-4.



Dr. Rich Sugden's TA-4 is nearing completion in Jackson, WY. He has accomplished engine start and high speed taxi. He still needs pyrotechnics for the ejection seat. If anyone has information on a source, please contact him directly at [rsugdenmd@gmail.com]. Don't you wish your TA-4 had had a panel like this one!



★ TAPS ★

CAPT Jerry "Hook" Singleton, USN (ret)
Star Valley Ranch, WY
Dick "Moose" Thomas
Lanikai, HI

For TAPS lists, members may access these links:
www.a4skyhawk.org/2D/KIA.htm
www.a4skyhawk.org/2E/ops_losses.htm

TAPS notices may be sent to Bob Hickerson, Newsletter Editor
at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org or mail to
Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624



NEW MEMBERS

Join or renew, and give someone a
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Burns, Eric - Corinth, TX
Carter, Eric - Paso Robles, CA
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Fregeau, Robert - Waterbury, CT
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Howe, Daniel - Riverside, CA
Husemann, Arnold - Conway, SC
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Patterson, Robert - Cawker City, KS

Richards, Larry - Richmond, IN
Roth, Scott - Port Orange, FL
Slota, James - Green Bay, WI
Staggs, Gary - Collyville, TX
Tripoli, Andre - Brazil
Verstraete, Edward - Florissant, MO
Ward, Thomas - Beaverton, OH



VMA-223 Bulldog pilots pose following April 1969 awards ceremony at Chu Lai Airbase, VN. Photo via Duke Stanton, standing 5th from left.

SIZE DOES MATTER

Modelers' Corner

By Joe Turpen

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

Building a VA-46 Skyhawk Model as a Memorial

The project to build the A-4 of deceased VA-46 pilot LCDR Fred White (A-4E 150064) started as a result of conversations between Skyhawk Association Director Joe Turpen and Mike Shine, Sponsorship Co-chairman of the 2014 IPMS convention. Mike told Joe that at some point he wanted to build John McCain's Skyhawk from the fire on the USS *FORRESTAL* (CVA-59), but he needed information on the markings of that aircraft. Joe was aware of 1/48th scale decals that had been produced by Victory Decals, but sought additional information on the aircraft markings. Dave Dollarhide, past President of Skyhawk Association, was a pilot assigned to VA-46 and was on the *Forrestal* flight deck when the fire broke out. Dave provided detailed information concerning the squadron markings of VA-46, including pictures of his, LCDR John McCain's and LCDR Fred White's aircraft. Further, artist Jim Caiella provided detailed drawings of the aircraft, and Dave Dollarhide provided additional information on the bombs the aircraft were armed with when the fire broke out. While obtaining this infor-

mation, Mike learned that it was LCDR Fred White's aircraft that was hit with the Zuni which started the *Forrestal* fire, not John McCain's. As a result, he decided to build White's aircraft as a memorial to that pilot.

The major problem with this build was replicating the bombs loaded on the *Forrestal* aircraft at the time of the fire. The aircraft were armed with WWII AN/M85A1 1000 lb. bombs that Mike had not seen before, and the Hasegawa kit only came with drop tanks. Additionally, no ordnance kit for the old WWII bombs was available, so Mike began to research them to see what he could find. After contacting Jim Caiella, Dave Dollarhide and Ken Killmeyer (USS *FORRESTAL* Association historian), Mike was able to replicate the bombs



in 1/48th scale. To do so, he used the nose of a standard WWII 1000 lb. bomb and grafted it to a M117 bomb. He then cut off the bomb fins, cut a notch out of them and reinstalled them with the notches aligned to the rear of the bomb. After some questions concerning the fusing of the bombs on the Skyhawks, Mike decided to use both the front and rear fuses on his bombs.

The result is the model you see in the pictures, which won Best Navy Marine/Attack Aircraft honors at the 2014 IPMS.

Mike Shine is a retired Navy Lieutenant who served on active duty for 26 years as a Data Systems Technician. His service included sea duty on various destroyers, cruisers and aircraft carriers. He started building models when he was 9 years old.

Puresome Unplugged

~ YP's Excellent Adventures ~

From The Hook magazine, Spring 2004

The Further Adventures of YOUTHLY PURESOME

by CDR Jack D. Woodul, USNR(Ref), artwork by Carl Snow



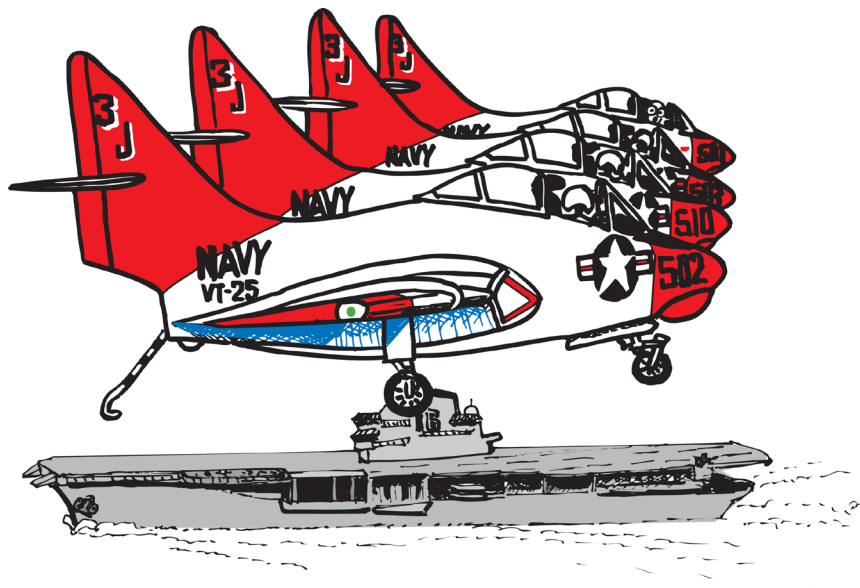
Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

It seemed to Puresome that the Grumman Ironworks AF-9J *Cougar* had come directly from Toko-Ri. Even though it was painted in the Training Command's high-visibility orange and white, and the wings were bent back, possibly from being dived too fast, there were sealedover gun ports where four mighty 20 mike-mike cannons had once spat leaden death. It had a lethal look that the somewhat preggers two-seat *Cougar* did not have, and there was no howling instructor to disrupt fantasies of aerial glory.



CHEATING GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

Puresome fervently hoped that the answer to "Where do we get such men?" was VT-25 at NAS Beeville, Texas. He had thrashed his way through most of the Advanced Training Command jet syllabus with only carqual, transition to the F11F *Tiger* and tactics training standing between him and Golden Wings. Even though the end was in sight, every flight had to be taken in turn, and eternal vigilance was still needed to guard against frabb-ups. Even Elder God Winged Persons went out and had themselves bad days, causing Grampaw Pettibone



in *Naval Aviation News* to point the finger bone of scorn and scream "Jumpin' Jehosaphat!" It was better to be dead than look bad, but worse still to get cashiered before you got the chance.

But it was a good omen that Youthly had drawn the single-seater for carqual, and he had gloried in the freedom of flying solo to the outlying field at Alice Orange for field carrier landing practice. He and his fellow students had avoided being detected in some of their more exuberant transit activities and had finally amassed enough bounces to satisfy the watchful LSOs. It was time to hit the boat.

The final lectures about carrier procedures were serious stuff. Beyond prangs, there were many chances for the squadron, the LSOs and student Naval Aviators to look bad. By now, the students were used to pooting around in a 600-ft. landing pattern, and they chanted "meatball, line-up, airspeed" in their sleep.

They were used to obeying Paddle's calls as they would pronouncements from the Burning Bush. They learned early-on that one did not call down lightning bolts by being waved off for being long in the groove, getting hung in the gear, or otherwise wasting sea room and screwing up the Olympian plans of Skipper of the Boat. They were reminded again and again that the first rule of carrier aviation was, "Your formation flying vill look good around the Boat, or you vill be shot!" Puresome clicked his heels, shouted "*Jawohl!*" and resolved to be a truly welded wingman.

On the selected day, USS *Lexington* (CVS-16) had chosen to operate in a far corner of the *Golfo de Mexico*, and it was decided to stage out of NAS Kingsville. Instructors led flights of three students there, and the planes were serviced while the pilots awaited the pleasure of a Charlie time in base operations. Puresome had done his Basic Training carqual in the prop-driven T-28, and this was his first experience around the Boat in jets. As a result, he had a bit of a quease going.

The feeling was not helped by the instructor, a somewhat swollen Marine major. Though he had clearly lost some of his PT commitment, he was to lead them to the ship. The major was clearly nervous about the whole Boat thing, and plotting boards and navigation devices festooned his flight

continued...

gear. But this was the Big Game, and this was the reason Puresome had wanted to be a Naval Aviator all his life. It was hugely exciting.

He resolved to keep everything all compartmentalized, and the first thing was to fly wing like the first student Naval Aviator *Blue Angel*.

With the arrival of a firm Charlie time, the carqual flights saddled up, turned up and launched. Puresome noted right away that his Tacan navigation system didn't work, but he reasoned that he was just a wing person who was being led, anyway.

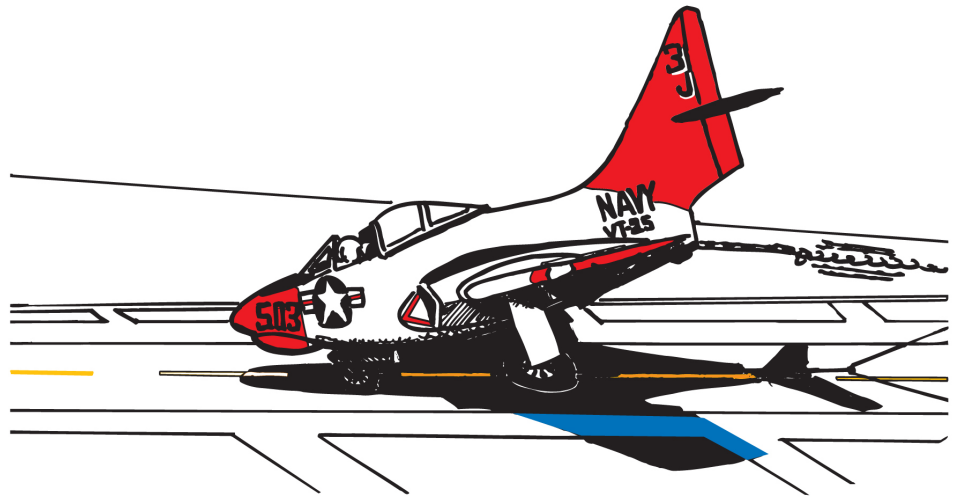
A Covey of Quail

He concentrated on flying formation, aware that the section on the major's other wing was doing the same. As they went feet wet, the major contacted *Lexington*, who requested a "see me" call when the flight had the carrier in sight.

It was a typical Gulf day with hazy visibility and low-altitude scud, and when the major finally made his "see you" call, Puresome looked down from the formation's cruise altitude at the impossibly small-looking carrier, a dark object followed by a streak of white wake. They were told to anchor at 5,000 feet over the ship to await the call into the landing pattern. As they flew in circles above the port side of the carrier, Puresome glimpsed tiny airplanes in their circuits against the whitecaps of a choppy, gray sea.

Finally, the landing pattern cleared out and Youthly's flight was given a "Charlie now!" With the switch to land/launch frequency, the major started a descent down to pattern altitude. As they started the turn to pass down the boat's starboard side, the major gave the signal for Puresome to cross over to his starboard side, and the section already positioned there dutifully moved out to make room for the young ensign.

The formation was in a neat right echelon as the flight rolled out. Youthly, as Dash 2, was working hard to be tight on the leader and smooth for the other two members of the flight. He had a vague impression of the white wake and the dark bulk of *Lexington* passing close aboard his port side.



All of a sudden the major's gear came down, followed shortly by his flaps! *Yaaa!* Puresome reflexively dropped his gear and flaps — he had no choice but to parallel the major's moves — and the other two members of the flight did the same. The major had skipped the part about signaling the break for interval, and now there was a four-plane echelon flying downwind abeam the LSO platform looking much like a covey of quail that had been shot into, madly maneuvering to avoid smacking into each other or the water. The air turned blue with Paddle's shrieks as he tried to sort out the mess.

Jerbis Flinderbars! Puresome's heart was doing about 160 pittypats a minute. Wildly yanking and banking was not the way to start an exercise where smoothness and concentration was the name of the game. There was the wine-dark sea below, the blunt end of the boat, and things were Alpha Fox Uniform-ed.

Puresome, though, was too busy trying to fit himself back into some kind of orderly pattern to have time for metaphysics. He got himself re-established upwind, picked out his interval and turned in behind. By the time he made his identifying radio call abeam the LSO platform, his airplane was on altitude and trimmed up, and Youthly's voice was down to merely soprano.

A Piece of Pastry

Puresome's first two passes were touch-and-goes without his hook down, and they went by in a blur. When he was told to drop his hook, things actually slowed down some. The impact and deceleration of his first trap came as a surprise, and Puresome actually imagined that the bow of the ship pitched up from the force of his impact. But once he cleared the landing area, actually he was able to relax a little while being positioned for the next catapult shot.

So it went for his six traps. Puresome had a qual, and he was pulled over to the lee of the boat's island, shut down and serviced by the purple-shirted refuelers for the flight back to Kingsville.

"*Piece of pastry,*" thought Puresome with relief, "*I am a steely-eyed student Naval Aviator carrier pilot!*" He was already starting to taste celebratory cold foamy beverages. Finally, the grapes took away their hoses and he went through the engine start and aircraft checks with the plane captain. The yellow-shirted taxi directors guided him onto the starboard catapult.

The catapult crew and quality control checkers did their thing just before Puresome ran his engine up to takeoff power. He checked the controls and his engine instruments, saluted the catapult officer and jammed his head against the headrest. Whoom! The catapult fired, squatting the airplane down, hurling it forward and squishing Puresome back into his seat. Very suddenly, he was flying! *Yeeehaw!* He reached over, flipped the landing gear handle to the "up" position and climbed away from the sea while waiting for enough airspeed to retract his flaps.

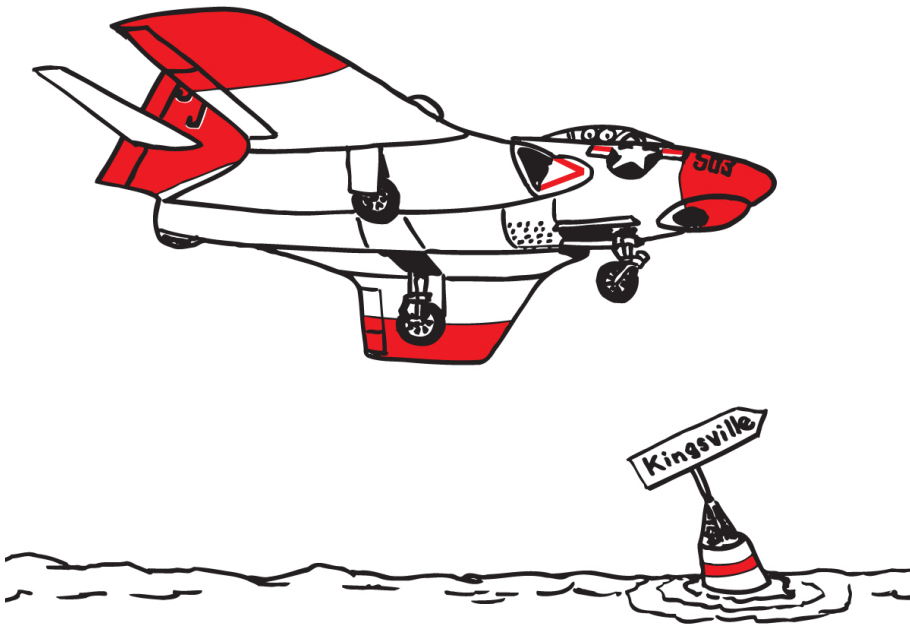
The Boat's land/launch frequency crackled in his headset, giving him his "pigeons" to Kingsville and clearing him to change frequency. This information on the bearing and distance was real important, especially since Puresome didn't have a Tacan to guide him.

Unplanned Trip Back to the Carrier

Puresome needed to jot down the numbers, but his Thunder Machine wasn't accelerating in a normal manner, and he hadn't retracted his flaps. When he looked over and checked his gear handle "up," there was a red light in the handle and three little wheels in the indicators. His gear was still down!

"Wut?" A big question mark appeared above Youthly's helmet, and he moved the gear handle to the "down" position. The red light in the gear handle went out and the three little wheels in the indicators showed the gear was definitely down. He raised the gear handle but the wheel indicators remained showing — his landing gear was definitely not going to come up.

This turn of events definitely put a crimp in Youthly's plans. Because he had been wandering around some at about a thousand feet messing with his problem, he was not sure of where he was, where the ship was or whether he had enough



gas to make it to Kingsville with his gear down — if he even could find it! Puresome decided "negats!" to all that and to go home to Momma — there was a perfectly good ship back behind him somewhere. That decided, he turned around to head back to the boat, switched back to land/launch frequency and started calling for help.

That seemed a real good plan, but nobody would answer him on the radio. As the low-altitude scud had thickened somewhat, Puresome reluctantly descended for better visibility. Though he continued calling Paddles and he could hear the LSO talking to airplanes in the pattern, nobody would answer his transmissions. Grampaw Pettibone was definitely looking over Youthly's shoulder, finger bone at the ready, as the *Cougar* stooged along with gear and flaps down at low altitude looking for *Lexington*. Finally, there was the *Lexington*'s Tacan pot, sitting atop the radar mast as it skimmed through the scud!

Puresome positioned himself at pattern altitude and maneuvered for a slot in the downwind pattern. When nobody answered his radio transmissions, he figgered it was easier to beg forgiveness than wait for permission. He turned abeam the LSO platform, flew his pass and trapped!

Naturally, there was some consternation. After a great deal of gesticulating, Puresome managed to convey that his aircraft was "down," and he was directed to an empty space behind the island and was shut down. A squadron maintenance type climbed up beside him, whereupon Youthly told him about his radio, Tacan and landing gear problems. Others with tool boxes soon arrived and began working.

More Misadventures

Cheating Grampaw Pettibone had been sweaty work so far, so it was nice to relax some and watch the chaps still in the pattern whang aboard, but he was too tired to feel superior for having CQ'ed already. Finally, a mechanic climbed up and told Puresome that his radio gear had been fixed, but the Tacan and gear problems had not. The decision by all highest was to fuel him up and launch him for Kingsville with his gear down!

"Oh, boy! Here we go again!" Puresome queased. While the grapes refueled the plane yet another time, he whipped out his whiz wheel and started furiously figgering some data for stooging along with his gear down while the engine sucked fuel at a prodigious rate.

Since Puresome was a stranger in a strange land around Kingsville, being a furriner from Beeville, familiar landmarks would not be helpful. Navigation would have to be of the heading-and-time variety. It was a real good opportunity to frabb up, and he could visualize a skinny old coot of a Naval Aviator jumping up and down on the pages of a future *Nav Air News* asking how any Dilbert could be so dumb?

So Youthly was flang into the air one more time. He was extremely mindful of his heading, and he had punched his clock and watched the minutes tick away as he pooted along at middle altitude with his gear down like some sort of FLAP (floofy light airplane) on steroids.

Very soon it was apparent that nobody would talk to him anymore. He watched the hands on the elapsed time clock tick away and the fuel sucked from his tanks at a prodigious rate. He pondered how much the speeding ticket might be if he had to land on some farm-to-market road, and he considered the improbability of making a smoking hole on anything other than cactus on what had to be the King Ranch that stretched beneath him.

Puresome was strongly considering promising to sign up for the Boy's Soprano Chorus at Sunday school just before the parallel runways of Kingsville hove into view. Thankful that he hadn't actually signed on the dotted line, he eased out of altitude and down to the traffic pattern. The tower flashed him a green-light signal to land, and it was a very grateful student Naval Aviator that taxied to the transient line and shut down.

Puresome finally made it back to Beeville. When the LSO finally showed up to debrief his passes, nothing was said about shot-up coveys of quail or an extra trap. The predominant comment on his passes was "F...A...S...T!" with lots of "a's" between the "F" and "T." Puresome dimly prefigured that "speed is life," and that was way better than being "S...L...O...W!"

And Grampaw Pettibone didn't have a damn thing to say, either



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