

THE A-4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL VOL 21-1



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First Combat Use of the Walleye: Part II

Skyhawk Association Annual Meeting
September 11, 2015
Sparks, NV

Spring 2015

www.a4skyhawk.org

REMEMBER WHEN

The picture speaks for itself. Just fell out of the crib or maybe it was at VT-1, NAAS Sauflay Field, January 17, 1966, the day I soloed in the T-34 – “prop, chop, drop, flop,” or something like that as I landed the studly T-34B Mentor. This is what happens when you start digging into stacks of old fodder – you find remnants of old fokkers! My instructor in Flight 18, the superlative, BMOC, YGTBSM “Marine Flight” in VT-1, was the OIC – Maj Bert Meek. He was a Korean War vet (maybe WW-II also), cigar-chewing SOB and would not put up with any nonsense. Hence, when I taxied for the first time, not exactly on the centerline, and I mean one foot off as an example (looked good to me), I realized the Godzilla-type image in my mirrors was the good Maj standing in his seat! My next recollection of his instructional aide was the crushing blow from his kneeboard to the top of my newly adorned, look at me, I are one, helmet!

As an aside, remember the issuing at Sauflay of flight suits, survival knives, helmets with pads to fit any size head, complete with the reflective tape for personalizing your brain bucket with attitude. All that was soon followed by the trip outside the main gate to get the survival knife holder for the flight suit and name tags which were actually strips of web cloth with your name on it – attic memories below!



Back to Maj Meek, that was my first time in the seat, and I was already on his sh** list. Roll ahead 9 flights, and after the check ride I solo. We had our tie-cutting that PM in the O’Club while we fearless, fledgling aviators were watching Batman – REALLY! There was a lot of “BAM” and “POW” as our class celebrated our first major achievement toward being SH nasal radiators. Shortly after I completed the syllabus, I was headed to NAS Meridian and the T-2A, but only because Maj Meek kicked me out of his office when I expressed concern about the cutting score for jets. He bellowed that I should get my a** to Student Control and tell them I want to fly jets, which I did and they did. It was a long night of celebrating before packing the typical wanna-be jet jock image machine, a ’65 Mustang 2+2, to begin the required journey of the



Bill "Jigger" Egen

SNA (Student Naval Aviator). Five change of station orders in 18 months, VT-9 at Meridian, VT-4 at Pensacola, VT-24 and VT-26 at Beeville, and then on to El Toro with a new wife to the world famous VMA-214 Black Sheep – a squadron with no jets, but that’s another story!

PICS AND VIDS

Steve Belanger is designing accurate scale model decals covering all USMC A-4 squadrons that served in Vietnam, and ideally he wants to cover each squadron throughout the entire war by representing at least one aircraft in each iteration of markings. He is looking for clear/high-resolution photos in particular that show any part of the A-4 and especially squadron/aircraft specific markings (squadron codes, insignia, crew names, etc.). Close-up and general overall photos help equally. He has already gathered many photos from books and the internet, but there are certain periods that are still very much under-represented. VMA-225 (all years) and VMA-311 (only 1969-70) are the only ones for which he currently has enough thorough information. He needs more input on VMA-121, VMA-211, VMA-214, VMA-223, VMA-224 and VMA-311. His email is ziggyfoos@hotmail.com or info@aoadecals.com. Your help on this project will be greatly appreciated and will create good opportunities for the modelers to document Marine A-4s in Vietnam.

Under the wise leadership of Dave “Hide” Dollarhide, the Skyhawk Association is expanding its coverage of all things A-4. Make sure you check out the “Operation Home Movies” article in this edition. Just like digging out old equipment in the attic, finding movies should be easy and a kick – put yourself and your squadron(s) on YouTube’s big screen with Cecil B. De Hide.

continued on page 4...



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

◆ ◆ ◆

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION, INC.
Officers and Directors

Bill Egen
President and Director (FY 16)
[zerocep@ec.rr.com]

Pete Cole
Vice President (Navy) and Director (FY 15)
[pete_cole@verizon.net]

Todd Frommelt
Vice President (Marines) and Director (FY 17)
[toddfrommelt6913@att.net]

Terry Cooney
Secretary and Director (FY 17)
[skyhawkasn@gmail.com]

Mark Williams
Treasurer and Director (FY 15)
[rogerwilco14@gmail.com]

Gene Atwell
Webmaster and Director (FY 15)
[geneatwell@gmail.com]

George Blosser
Director (FY 15)
[george.blosser1@gmail.com]

Dave Dollarhide
Director (FY 17)
[davedollarhide@msn.com]

Mike Eberhardt
Director (FY 16)
[thebuick@aol.com]

Ted Langworthy
Director (FY 16)
[FLYBEAR@peoplepc.com]

Steve Linder
Director (FY 17)
[steve.linder@1969.usna.com]

Bill Ravgiala,
Director (FY 16)
[gunnyrav@gmx.com]

Joe Turpen
Director (FY 16)
[forrestal@fewpb.net]

Skyhawk Association, Inc.
2421 Clubside Drive
Beavercreek, OH 45431
[skyhawkasn@gmail.com]
Website: www.a4skyhawk.org

BOMBS AWAY!

• Spring 2015 •

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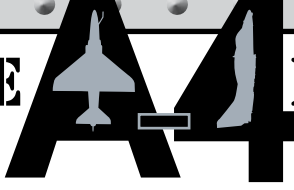
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JOURNAL STAFF

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, Dave Dollarhide, and Todd "Hun" Frommelt.

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THE A4 EVER

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:
Valiant Air Command Warbird Museum A-4C piloted by Dave “Hide” Dollarhide joins Dan McCue in the Collins Foundation F4U-5NL Corsair for a legacy flight at the NAS Jacksonville (FL) airshow October 2014.
(Photo courtesy of Hans Li, whose work can be seen at <http://www.hansliphotography.com>)

SDOs AND OTHER THINGS

We are constantly looking for support from volunteers. Our Squadron Duty Officers (SDOs) are a key factor in keeping us connected and helping to get the word out when required. I am pleased to announce the following new SDOs:

VFC-13, Mike "Ratman" Ranftle
VMA-311, Kevin M. "Feeny" Mac Donnell

If you want to contact them, go to the contacts page on our website for their email addresses.

We are also looking for money, believe it or not! Yes, money does help an all-volunteer association. To facilitate your opportunity to make a generous donation, we have a donation option on our "Contacts" page. The donation link can be reached from our home page by clicking on the "Association" drop-down menu and then clicking on "Contacts". Now for the hard part – the IRS will not let you deduct your donation, so if you keep it to a few thousand bucks, it won't hurt as much!

In our Fall 2014 edition of *The A-4ever*, we gave you a glimpse of the Monroe, NC, Warriors and Warbirds (www.warriorsandwarbirds.com) efforts to reassemble A4D-2N/A-4C 148509. Recently, Joe Atkins (joseph.atkins@gmail.com)



gave us a heads up that the piece parts were not cooperating as the fuselage was not mating with the wingy thing – notice the gap below. Not to worry, our own Dave "Hide" Dol-larhide, who flew this agile beast in VA-44 at Cecil when men were men and the aircraft knew it, started offering chickens and incantations to solve the problem. Todd "Hun" Frommelt jumped in with a full collection of been there, done that experienced re-assemblers and guess what – it worked. Not bad for a May 1961- vintage aircraft. A bigger hammer, a little jumping up and down and probably some choice words, and we have an A-4! Way to go Joe. We will be looking for the completed version with paint!

NOTAMS/R&I

■ We would also like feedback on our Winter 2015 digital version of the "A4ever" which can be accessed from our home page without logging in. As mentioned before (perhaps too many times), the digital issue will only happen once a year (in the winter), with 3 other printed issues which will be mailed as usual throughout the year.

With over 900 members, our database is constantly changing, and it is not unusual to have quite a few emails kicked-back when we attempt to notify the membership about pertinent items, such as the release of the digital journal. The message is: **if you change your email address, mailing address, phone number, squadrons assigned, etc, PLEASE let us know so our records are up-to-date. Send changes to our Secretary at skyhawkasn@gmail.com.**

■ PBS recently announced a documentary about the April 1975 withdrawal from Vietnam. It will premier on 28 April at 9 p.m. (EST) on the PBS TV channel.

Another, more pleasurable, viewing is the "Wings of Gold: History of Coronado's North Island and Naval Aviation (Video)" which can be watched by clicking on <http://www.ecoronado.com/profiles/blog/show?id=2019736%3ABlogPost%3A336139>.

Lots of memories like MEXPAC, the Downwinds, the I-Club Bar, Miramar WXOF, MCRD, Bully's, etc. Remember what goes on in, stays in!

■ As mentioned before, the Skyhawk Association Board will meet in Dayton, OH 24-25 April, 2015, at the Holiday Inn Fairborn. We are planning social events Friday and Saturday evenings, with the board meeting Saturday morning and a tour of the Air Force Museum at Wright Patterson on Saturday afternoon. If you can join us, send a note to skyhawkasn@gmail.com to let us know you are coming. Hotel reservations can be made at: <http://www.holidayinn.com/redirect?path=hd&brandCode=hi&localeCode=en®ionCode=1&hotelCode=FBNPD&PMID=99801505&GPC=ASA>

■ The USMC Skyhawkers are planning a reunion 8-11 October, 2015, in San Diego at the downtown Embassy Suites. Contact Mark Williams at roger.wilco@comcast.net so we can get an application to you.

■ Save the date: The Skyhawk Association Annual Meeting will be in conjunction with the Tailhook Convention, 10-13 September in Reno. More details to follow as we firm up the agenda.

SEMPER FI AND A-4s FOREVER,
Jigger
[zerocep@ec.rr.com]

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

■ To the Editor:

Enjoyed the online edition – easy to use.

Thanks for what you do.

Jay Lillie

[jaylille@comcast.net]

■ To the Editor:

The photo purporting to show an A4G passing at low level down the side of MELBOURNE is incorrect (RAN low pass, page 31, Winter 2014/15). This is an A-4K (Kiwi RNZAF) passing down the side of a Royal Navy Invin-cible Class (visiting the Shaky Isles - the Land of the Long White Cloud). The ladder on the port side of the ski jump may be seen on the far right of the photo with a smidgeon of the ski jump in view.

Phil Thompson

[philliptompson2@bigpond.com]

(Ed. Note: Phil provided this photo of a section of A-4Gs of VF-805 in a deck-level fast flyby of Melbourne in 1969. A barricade is visible in the lower right-hand corner).



■ To the Editor:

Bob, would be nice if we could download (the digital issue) as a .PDF so we could read on our iPads.

Rich Sugden M.D.

Jackson, WY

[rsugdenmd@gmail.com]

■ To the Editor:

Good morning, Bob. Haven't opened it yet (the digital issue), but you all get an attaboy.

OBTW, I just read Dave Leue's obit in the Sunday's San Diego Union Trib. He was a legend in the Light Attack community, and he continued flying after retirement. Didn't we see him at the last Hook on the vendor's row with his recent book?

Ya know, the F-8 blog run by Bull Durham [fly_navy@mac.com] sends out a missive weekly, or more often if something is going on. Among other Crusader stuff, he mentions the passing of any Crusader pilot that comes to his attention. It's a nice touch, especially when former shipmates chime in with the accomplishments, accolades and foibles of the deceased. The surviving families seem to approve of it, often chiming in, in fact many of the notifications come from them. And it's a way for them to stay connected to the community when the member is on his final approach.

The passing of Dave could be put out to sa-99, if a system were up. Sort of a weekly sa-journal with time sensitive info. Maybe one is, and I've just been missing it?

tfbIII, any comments?

T.R. Swartz

[crusader791@gmail.com]

■ To the Editor:

Thank you very much for great winter edition! I found interesting topics in it.

All the best,

Tamas Szorad

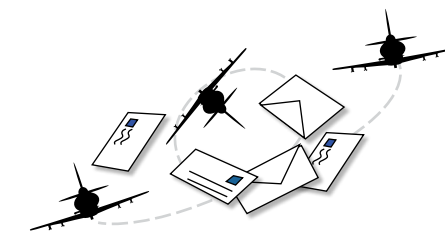
Hungary

[t.szorad@gmail.com]

■ To the Editor:

Raven:

Reference Mr. Francillon's letter [Fall 2014 issue] about his photo flight



over Mount Shasta in September, 1982, his letter and the picture brought back some memories because I was in the lead A-4 in the flight. His front seat pilot in the T-bird that day was Pete Hanner.

Thirty-two years of Happy Hours have erased my memory of the name of my wingman. Dash Two: If you are out there - come up Button One! It so happens that Mr. Francillon and I live not far apart. We have plans for a reunion to agree on what great pilots we were and what a great photographer he was. Thanks for the memories.

T.R. White "Smoke"

[trandmaryjo@aol.com]

■ To the Editor:

Great job on the digital edition. While I prefer the paper editions, I am forced to admit that hanging onto paper has far less attraction than in the old days. I am forced by the Master Chief (wife of course) to chuck old treasures, especially paper, weekly. This digital edition is easy to read and the photos crystal clear - and the added bonus, Puresome's work at the end + word that he is now published. I will be ordering shortly.

A-4's Forever!

Baldy

John Wilcox

[scooterdriver@me.com]

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



THE FIRST COMBAT USE OF THE WALLEYE WEAPON

PART II

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 system at the US Naval Museum of Armament and Technology at NWC China Lake, CA. The ceremony also coincided with the 50th anniversary of the initial fleet introduction of the Walleye. This article was excerpted from his remarks, and Part I was published in The A-4Ever, Fall 2014. A copy of that issue can be purchased by emailing the editor at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.

Part I of this story ended with a description of a major CVW-21 Alpha Strike which employed Walleye weapons against the infamous Thanh Hoa bridge in North Vietnam. Despite accurate hits on the bridge, it was not destroyed.

Part II

Not long after this strike, the *Bon Homme Richard* was enjoying an off line period in Subic Bay, PI. Unbeknownst to us, Skipper Smith and Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp were on a secret mission to meet with President Lyndon Johnson on the Island of Guam. During the so called "Guam Conference" CDR Smith presented a plan to the President for a surgical strike on the Hanoi thermal power plant using the recently combat-certified Walleye. This target had been off limits heretofore because it was located in a heavily populated civilian area of Hanoi, and a conventional iron bomb strike would produce unacceptable collateral damage. President Johnson approved the mission, and the day after CDR Smith returned to NAS Cubi Point, the ship was underway at flank speed for the Tonkin Gulf. The weather refused to recognize the urgency however! Low ceilings and rain had closed in around Hanoi. It was nearly a week later, the afternoon of 19 May 1967, that the weather cleared enough to attempt the strike (although the cloud cover was marginal). Pressure to complete this important mission had been mounting, so Skipper Smith took the gamble. He selected himself and LCDR Mike Cator, in his estimation the two most qualified Walleye pilots, for the strike. The Alpha

strike was kept small, flack suppressors weren't included since the target had such a high level of civilian housing around it. Iron Hand airplanes, F-8s for fighter cover and the two Walleye bombers made up the combat package.

Things did not go well. The Walleye pilots could only catch glimpses of the target through the cloud cover, and they were only able to lock on auxiliary buildings inside the power plant compound. Because the target was in the Hanoi area, the North Vietnamese threw everything they had at the strike group. Two F-8 pilots were shot down and had to eject right in downtown Hanoi. They were both captured and became POWs. We had to wait until the next day for bomb damage assessment because the photo recon airplane from the USS

Kitty Hawk, which was tasked to provide BDA right after the strike, was shot down while trying to get pictures. Unfortunately, it was obvious from the BDA photos that the power plant had not been damaged and was still operational.

Homer Smith was due to be relieved as Commanding Officer of VA-212 to take command of an east coast air wing. He had some latitude in choosing his change of command date and had elected to extend one more line period to complete the Walleye combat Op Eval and take out the Hanoi thermal power plant. Also, he wanted to accumulate a total of 200 combat missions before leaving the squadron. On 20 May, 1967, the Skipper launched on his 197th combat mission, a Walleye strike on the Uong Bi thermal power plant about



VA-212 A-4s on deck with Walleyes loaded. Photo via the author.

twenty miles east of the North Vietnamese city of Bac Giang. LT Tom Taylor was his wingman and the second Walleye bomber on this strike. Homer released his weapon and was hit hard by antiaircraft fire during his pull out. His airplane became uncontrollable, forcing him to eject. CDR Smith was seen standing up after landing in his parachute and was unbuckling his torso harness when he was taken prisoner. However, Homer Leroy Smith died while a captive of the North Vietnamese.

With the loss of CDR Smith, CDR Marv Quaid assumed command of VA-212. On June 10th, the weather cleared completely over North Vietnam, and Skipper Quaid led an alpha strike with four Walleye bombers to finally destroy the Hanoi thermal power plant. All four Walleyes struck the main power plant building, with three flying through windows and the fourth locking on and flying through a door on the roof of the building. This attack completely shut down the power plant, denying electrical power to the city of Hanoi for a considerable time. However, the mission was accomplished at great cost. Two of the four Walleye airplanes were hit and damaged, but managed to get back to the ship. One of the VF-24 MiG CAP airplanes was hit, forcing the pilot to eject near downtown Hanoi. He was captured.

The Walleye had achieved full operational status, and was a great addition to our weapon capabilities. My own personal experience with the Walleye proved that no extensive pre-deployment training on the weapon was required. I was able to successfully deliver the weapon on target in combat because the weapon was easy to use. Of course, during both combat cruises I had heard a great deal about the lessons learned during the Op Eval, but I had never even seen the Walleye cockpit display before my first and only Walleye mission, on the last day of July, 1968.

Skipper Quaid had rotated home to assume command of VA-122, the new A-7 Corsair II RAG. Our XO, CDR Dave Coe, had been with the squadron just a short while and was too newly assigned to assume command. For that reason, CAG D.B. Miller, had recommended that his operations officer, CDR Allmann take command of VA-212 until the end of the deployment, just two months away. We had just recently returned to the line and our operations were confined to an area of North Vietnam just south of the 19th parallel. The Johnson Administration had



LT Tom Taylor (on left) was TAD from China Lake to fly with VA-212 during the combat op eval of the Walleye. CDR Homer Smith on right was skipper of VA-212 when shot down in May 1967. He later died in captivity. This photo was taken just prior to the mission which was the first combat employment of the Walleye. Photo via the author.

stopped the bombing campaign north of the 19th parallel in April 1968. Our efforts were to interdict supplies on the way to enemy forces in South Vietnam. The last standing steel bridge in our area of operations was located near the Laotian border, just west of the village of Vinh Son on the Song Ca River. The Song CA made a large loop, and the North Vietnamese had dug a canal cutting off the loop to vastly shorten the distance water craft had to travel. There were two bridges across this canal, the first having been previously destroyed. The second bridge was our target. It was a major feature, linking Route 7 from Laos to Vinh Son. We were never able to determine what the North Vietnamese found so valuable around Vinh Son, but it was a hot bed of antiaircraft gun sites of various sizes, up to big 88 and 100 mm radar-controlled guns. We used to joke that it must have been the location of the North Vietnamese antiaircraft gunner's school!

Skipper Allmann probably shouldn't have taken on leading this mission. As a member of the CAG staff, he had only been allowed to fly tanker missions, no direct combat. At this point, he had no combat experience, but squadron skippers were expected to lead major strikes so he must have felt obligated. We briefed that I would be his backup. I would trail him during the target run, and if his Walleye malfunctioned or he missed, I would try

to take out the bridge. If his Walleye drop was successful, I was to wheel around and drop my Walleye on the area where repair work being done to the first bridge. We were the only two bombers, and the rest of the Alpha strike consisted of fighter TARCAP, Iron Hand cover and flack suppressors. On route to the target, before going feet dry, we performed the site alignment procedure with the Skipper using my tail pipe to mark his gun sight, and then me doing the same on his airplane. We crossed the Song CA well south of Vinh Son and turned north to begin our runs from west to east. The rest of the Alpha strike airplanes split off to cover their various threat areas, with the TARCAP wheeling overhead.

It did not go well. Cdr. Allmann was unable to get a lock on during his first run. He pulled up, and the entire formation had to wheel south and west to get set up for another run. Making multiple runs over the same target, especially from the same direction, was a recipe for getting your butt shot off, so everyone was very nervous. The Skipper began his second run with me taking interval behind him. He called "bomb release" and immediately transmitted "I had a lock on when I let it go." I knew instantly that a backup run would likely be necessary. I broke in a hard right 360 turn and acquired the bridge. I placed the grease pencil dot in the middle of the

continued on page 8...

RADM Feightner USN (ret) Honored by Blue Angels

Rear Admiral Edward L. “Whitey” Feightner, who was the first CAG to take A-4s on cruise, was invited up to the 2014 Cleveland Air Show over the Labor Day weekend.

He was feted as the oldest living Blue Angel and greeted by the current team, which was performing at the event. Whitey flew with the 1952 team and is widely remembered as one of only two aviators to fly the radical Chance Vought F7U-1 Cutlass in Blue Angel colors. He and then-Lt. Harding C. “Mac” Macknight had several adventures flying the futuristic-looking Cutlass, probably one of the most unusual fighters to ever achieve squadron service, albeit for a short time.

Then, Admiral Feightner went up in retired Marine Corps Major General Joe Anderson’s all-black L-39 Albatross, once a jet trainer for the Soviet Union. With his name appropriately painted on the canopy rails, Whitey returned to the skies, actually flying the lithe little trainer around the pattern himself. After landing, the nearly 95-year-old (birthday, October 14, 1919), World War II ace (9 kills in the Pacific) declared he was ready to go up again, alone. Who can blame him? Looks like a great time for everyone.

We’ll be reviewing Peter Mersky’s long-awaited biography of Whitey (from the Naval Institute) in the next issue or two.

(Ed. Note: RADM Feightner was Guest of Honor at the Skyhawk Association annual luncheon in October 2006.)



An appropriate reward!



The Blues congratulate Whitey. Photos via Peter Mersky.



RADM Feightner and MajGen Anderson strap on the L-39.

WALLEYE WEAPON

span and shifted my scan to the small TV screen display in the cockpit. Amazingly, during all of this maneuvering, we had yet to observe gunfire from Vinh Son. For that reason, I was able to concentrate on flying smoothly and holding the double cross hair gate on the center of the bridge. As soon as the bridge structure filled the gate, I pulled the gun trigger to lock the weapon on and pressed the bomb release switch. The satisfying jolt of the weapon leaving the wing helped me initiate a sharp pull up since the airplane was suddenly 1000 pounds lighter. The pull up slowed me below the speed of the Walleye, and I was able to roll ahead and observe the white Walleye through

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

the top of my canopy as it flew right into the bridge. While the weapon did not completely drop the bridge, it blew all the road surface off of it and left one side of the structure hanging below the other, indicating major structural damage.

The development of precision guided weapons has greatly improved our ability to defend the nation. We now have the capability to efficiently strike targets with no or very limited unintended collateral damage, while shielding the combat flight crews from greater hazard. The Walleye weapon was the first to offer these capabilities, and I am very proud to have been a part of its history.

(Ed. Note: author Steve Gray can be reached at CaptSRG@aol.com. For more information, check out his highly-acclaimed book Rampant Raider: An A-4 Skyhawk Pilot in Vietnam.)

Close to the Fight at Chu Lai

Pioneering expeditionary airfields with fixed-wing tactical aircraft
by Capt Jimmy “Scooby” Braudt

Ed. Note: this article was first published in the Marine Corps Gazette November 2013. Used with permission.

In April 1965, a high-level conference assembled in Honolulu was attended by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara; GENs Earle G. Wheeler and William C. Westmoreland; and several other cabinet members, admirals, and ambassadors. The result of the conference was a consensus agreement that 5,000 more Marines needed to be deployed to the burgeoning conflict in Vietnam, organized into 3 reinforced battalions and 3 fixed-wing jet aircraft squadrons.¹ This meeting formed the genesis of the establishment of an enclave that would become known as Chu Lai Air Base.

The amazing speed at which the airfield was initially put to use is a testament to the ingenuity and engineering skill of the Navy’s Seabees and the Marine Corps’ Marine Air Base Squadron (MABS); but more importantly, the capability to launch combat sorties so soon after construction began, even from a shortened airfield, proved the Marine aviation concept of the importance and advantage gained from being “close to the fight.” The ability to operate in an austere environment and from short, hastily constructed runways proved to be an essential skill that still holds true today. Launching and recovering combat-laden fixed-wing jets from a 4,000-foot runway required precision flying and construction inventiveness, and put a new spin on the term “close air support.”

Although the massive air base at Da Nang had been in constant operation since 1957, planners realized that another airfield would be needed in the Republic of Vietnam to ease its heavy traffic burden. Representatives from

>Capt Braudt is an AV-8B Harrier pilot. He deployed with the 31st MEU from December 2011 to June 2012. He is currently deployed in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, Regional Command-Southwest, with Marine Attack Squadron 311.



A MAG-12 A-4E takes off from Chu Lai, 1965. The berthing area is next to the flight line. (Photo by Col J.R. Bertrand, USMC(Ret). Collection assembled from MAG-12 pilots of VMA-311 and VMA-211.)

the U.S. Pacific Air Forces Command estimated that about 11 months would be required to build a concrete airfield at a new location. The escalating tempo of the war in Vietnam, however, demanded that an airfield be constructed and put to use as quickly as possible. Realizing the need for a rapid buildup and keenly spotting a distinct opportunity, then-Fleet Marine Force Pacific Commander, LtGen Victor H. “Brute” Krulak, suggested the airfield be built according to a concept unique to the Marine Corps.

Still in the early stages of development, this concept employed metal

runways and taxi-strips. The program, called “short airfield for tactical support” (“SATS”), had been developed to meet Marine Corps requirements for the rapid construction of short expeditionary airfields—in effect, shore-based carrier decks. SATS components included catapults and arresting gear in order to launch and recover aircraft in a limited distance. When Secretary McNamara asked how long it would take to build such a field, Gen Krulak responded, without hesitation or bravado, that he could construct the 8,000 foot runway in 25 days (about 8 percent of the time the Air Force estimated for the same feat).

continued...

On 25 April 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson approved the recommendation to land Marines at Chu Lai for the construction of the airfield.²

Chu Lai is literally steps from the Dung Quat Bay on the South China Sea in the province of Quang Nam. Located on the skinny waist of Vietnam, it would provide immediate close air support to nearby units operating in the I Corps area of responsibility, and offered a short trip to targets on the Ho Chi Minh trail in neighboring Laos.

LtGen Krulak's foresight and discerning wisdom cannot be overstated. By choosing a site approximately 60 miles south of Da Nang, he all but guaranteed that Marine aircraft stationed at the future airfield would be controlled by a *Marine* direct air support center for the use of *Marine* units needing close air support. This was a source of dismay for the Air Force, which wanted control of all fixed-wing aircraft in theater. Incidentally, in an attempt to speed up the process and get construction underway, and upon learning that the site had no name, LtGen Krulak chose to name the airfield himself. True to form, he named it *after* himself: "Chu Lai" is the Mandarin Chinese pronunciation of "Krulak."³

The end result would be an airfield with an 8,000 by 102 foot runway, a 7,916 by 36 foot parallel taxiway, four 300 by 36 foot cross taxiways, and parking and maintenance facilities for 3 tactical squadrons.⁴ The aluminum matting required for the runway, taxiways, and supporting areas totaled 1.4 million square feet. A staggering lesson for anyone planning an amphibious operation, the infrastructure in place at the time must be considered. Chu Lai had no port facility, paved roads, docks, or berthing. The construction teams would be starting from scratch, and just getting the building materials and supplies on shore would be a difficult exercise in determined logistics.

Initial planning by the landing force included the possible use of amphibious tractors and helicopters due to the expectations of an opposed landing; however, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, assured the landing force that



Southeast Asia. (Map from olive-drab.com)

the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and its embedded U.S. Army advisors would secure the landing site.⁵ On 7 May 1965, 1,400 Marines and Navy Seabees waded ashore.⁶ During the initial phases of unloading the matting, the sand was found to be so fine that beach matting had to be brought in and tires deflated just to gain traction for the vehicles. Despite the many obstacles, the Navy beach group and the 3d MarDiv unloaded and transported more than 10,925 tons of equipment

and supplies across the beach from 7 to 12 May 1965.⁷

Almost immediately after landing, MABS-12 Marines and Seabee construction crews commenced an intense struggle against time and nature. The energy-draining heat and humidity topped 100 degrees daily, and the fine sand and laterite clay wreaked havoc on the operation. The effect it had on the bearings, brake linings, and clutches of the tractors and dump trucks required the units to borrow equipment from

the 3d Engineer Battalion at Da Nang, eventually leaving it with only one tractor.

By 31 May 1965, scarcely 24 days after the landing, the airfield was capable of recovering and launching tactical aircraft. Although the project was far from complete, the Marines had accomplished the mission and eight A-4 Skyhawks from Marine Attack Squadron 225 and Marine Attack Squadron 311 arrived, taking arrested landings on the short runway. Illustrating its importance, that very same day, the Skyhawks were armed and launched to conduct close air support strikes in support of ARVN units barely 6 miles north of the field, a harbinger of things to come for the pilots at Chu Lai.⁸

Soil stabilization would prove to be a huge problem for construction crews as they continued work on the runway and taxiways, especially during the rainy season.⁹ The solution was to mix the sand with a thick layer of local laterite clay soil. Despite these efforts, constant use and the pounding of the runways by C-130s delivering bombs required that the runways would have to be rebuilt, one-half at a time.¹⁰ This left 4,000 feet of usable runway, significantly shorter than the takeoff roll of a combat-laden Skyhawk, and not nearly enough for the normal landing of an aircraft hurtling down the runway at over 140 miles per hour.

It would be 6 years before the Marine Corps would purchase its first vertical/short takeoff and landing aircraft, the Hawker Siddeley AV-8A Harrier. The solution at Chu Lai was thus more complicated than the vectored-thrust technique that the Harrier and F-35B Lightning use today to operate from shortened runways. Getting the combat-loaded jet safely airborne without the use of directional nozzles or a catapult (as on aircraft carriers) required the use of jet-assisted takeoff (JATO) bottles for every takeoff.

Every landing also required taking a "trap" with the aircraft's tailhook engaging arresting cables across the runway at a precise angle of attack in order to stop before the end of the short runway. By attaching two JATO bottles (actually rocket motors) to the sides of the aircraft, the newly arrived A-4 Skyhawks



An A-4E Skyhawk with VMA-311 on the ramp at Chu Lai. (Photo from Bertrand Collection.)

"We were trapped on landings, JATO'd on takeoff. Refueled en route to our primary target. Loaded to the hilt with ordnance, we couldn't take off with much fuel. We did close air support in all weather."

***—LtCol Robert W. Baker,
CO, VMA-225,
1965***

had access to an extra 9,000 pounds of thrust for takeoff.¹¹ Even with this provision, however, the available runway was sufficient for only lightly loaded aircraft. To avoid sacrificing the amount of ordnance brought to the fight, the A-4s launched with only the minimum amount of fuel required to get airborne and rendezvous with a refueling tanker that was circling nearby. The missions in I and II Corps were often so near that the pilots could take off, refuel airborne, employ their ordnance in direct support of the ground combat element, and catch a trap in less than a half hour.¹²

Having an expeditionary airfield so close to the fight was soon found to be a two-edged sword. In July 1965, Marine leadership realized that the isolated runway was an ideal target for the Viet Cong, and by August evidence had accumulated of a growing Viet Cong presence only 12 miles south of the airfield in the village of Van Tuong.¹³ To

prevent a major attack, Operation STARLITE was launched on 18 August 1965. This amphibious operation is widely cited as the first major engagement of the Vietnam war and was lauded as a smashing success in maneuver warfare in the littoral arena.¹⁴ In this textbook three-pronged search-and-destroy mission, artillery from 4th Battalion, 12th Marines, and aircraft from Chu Lai and Da Nang pounded the beaches prior to the amphibious landing by 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, while the other half of the attacking force, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, was inserted by helicopter.¹⁵ Soon the regimental-sized force began their sweep and the first large-scale battle of the Vietnam War proved that the Marines would not be beaten in a traditional battlefield. In an example of true MAGTF integration, Marine infantry units partnered closely with artillery, air, armor, and naval fire support to overwhelm the Viet Cong.

MODEX

Tail Letters and Side Numbers

By Dave Dollarhide

Questions concerning the meaning of the term MODEX have come up during inquiries to the Skyhawk Association. The words behind the letters in the acronym have long since been forgotten, but for the past 60 years or so, the term relates to the identifying markings on U.S. Navy and Marine aircraft. Though not totally taken from official documents, the following discussion offers the generally known definition of the term.

“On 12 December 1946, the Visual Identification System of Naval Aircraft was modified by CNO. Under this change the tail codes assigned to the carriers were now reassigned to individual air groups (and) a combination of letters and numbers came in use.” (UNITED STATES NAVAL AVIATION 1910-1995).

The use of the term “MODEX” probably came into use during the same time frame.

Since those early days, aircraft have displayed one or two letters on the vertical stabilizer and a number on the side of the forward fuselage. **The combined “Tail Letters” and “Side Number” are called the MODEX**, which identifies the aircraft visually and is used in certain radio transmissions.

This description is reinforced indirectly by the Navy’s instruction, OPNAVINST 3710, which states the following concerning call signs when planning a flight with Air Traffic Control: *“It is strongly recommended that squadron MODEX (NJ213, DB214) be used in flight planning.”* (As a side note, when in an operational/tactical environment, pilots use their assigned “call sign” and “side number” when transmitting on the radio [Indian Chief 301, Battle Cry 412, etc.]. Each unit’s “call sign” is assigned by the joint Army/Navy/Air Force publication, JANAP 119.)

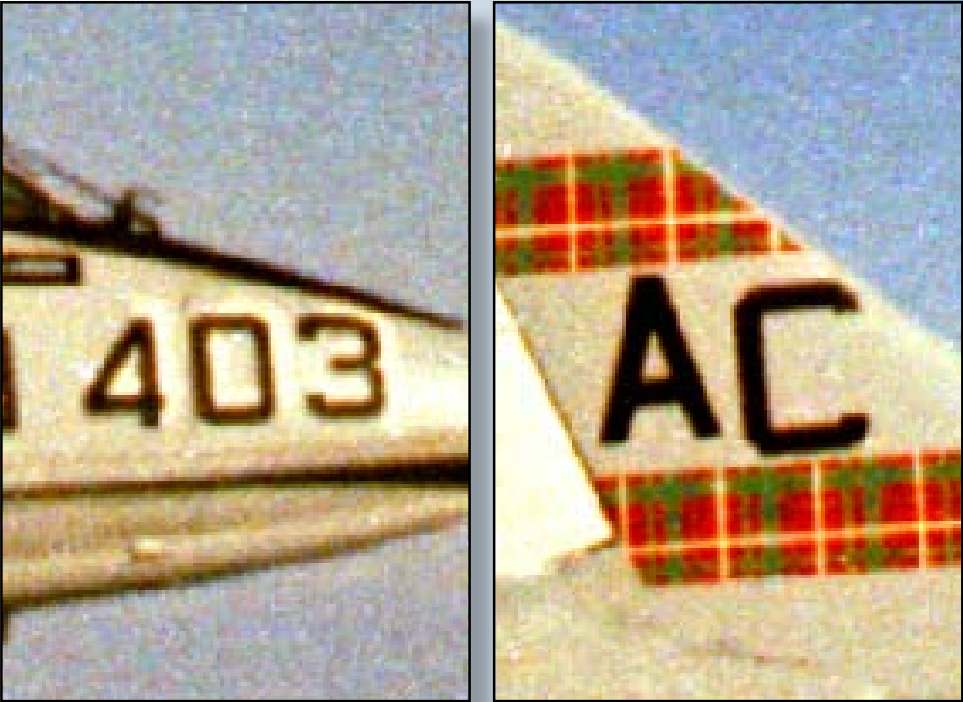
An airplane’s MODEX will change each time it’s assigned to a different unit (squadron) and identify the aircraft in relation to other aircraft in that unit and other units within the overall command structure. However, the Bureau Number (BUNO), marked on the rear fuselage and manufacturer’s steel data plate, never changes, remaining with the aircraft throughout its life.

Tail Letters and Side Numbers have different meanings, depending on the command. Additionally, the process of assigning identifying letters and numbers varies greatly between the Navy and Marine Corps. In general, they associate the airplane to the responsible commands and differentiate it from other aircraft.

SAMPLING OF NAVY AND MARINE TAIL LETTERS – 1995			
(UNITED STATES NAVAL AVIATION 1910-1995)			
Navy Carrier Air Wings	Marine Fighter Attack	Marine All Weather Fighter Attack	Marine Attack
CVW-1 AB	VMFA-115 VE	VMFA(AW)-121 VK	VMA-211 CF
CVW-2 NE	VMFA-122 DC	VMFA(AW)-224 WK	VMA-214 WE
CVW-3 AC	VMFA-212 WD	VMFA(AW)-242 DT	VMA-223 WP
CVW-5 NF	VMFA-235 DB	VMFA(AW)-225 CE	VMA-231 CG
CVW-7 AG	VMFA-251 DW	VMFA(AW)-533 ED	VMA-331 VL
CVW-8 AJ	VMFA-312 DR		VMA-513 WF
CVW-9 NG	VMFA-314 VW		VMA-542 CR
CVW-11 NH	VMFA-323 WS		
CVW-14 NR	VMFA-451 VM		
CVW-17 AA			
RCVW-4 AD			
RCVW-12 NJ			
CVWR-20 AF			

- MODEX of Navy carrier-based aircraft.**
- Tail Letters
 - The first letter in the tail letters indicates the overall Atlantic or Pacific command/geographic area of the United States, generally stated as “east coast” or “west coast.” The letter “N” is used on the west coast and “A” identifies the east coast.
 - The second letter indicates the air wing.
 - Side Numbers
 - The first digit in the side number is assigned by the air wing and indicates the squadron. Example: A-4 squadrons usually displayed 3XX, 4XX, or 5XX, while fighter squadrons were assigned 1XX and 2XX.
 - The second two digits of the side number are assigned by the squadron and indicate the specific aircraft.
 - There is a little known fact concerning the side numbers of carrier based fleet aircraft. Since around 1960, the numbers 8 or 9 have not been used in the last two digits. The only numbers utilized are 00 thru 07, 10 thru 17, etc. This is most likely due to the fact that early airborne surveillance computers used the octal numeral system (Usage of the digits 0 thru 7). This system for side numbers is still in place today, though computers are much more sophisticated.

- MODEX for Marine aircraft.**
- Tail letters are assigned to individual squadrons by Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) as needed.
 - Side numbers usually contain two digits to differentiate aircraft in a squadron.
 - Marine squadrons who are assigned to Navy Carrier Air Wings, mark their airplanes using the Navy system.



Example of USN markings on A-4B 142741 (AC403).

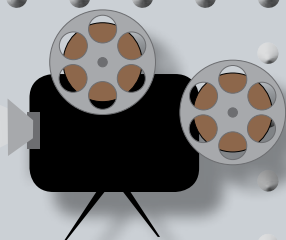


Example of USMC markings on VMA-142 A-4 (MB02).

OPERATION HOME MOVIES

8MM FILM-VIDEO TAPE-DIGITAL VIDEO

Dave Dollarhide



Over the years, the Skyhawk Association has done an incredible job of documenting A-4 history through photos and written stories. However, until this past year, we failed to pay attention to the incredible amount of Scooter history out there in the form of movies.

About the time the A-4 came along and grew in numbers, so did small 8mm movie cameras for home use. We know where that went, from film to VHS/Beta videotape and now digital movies with incredible quality. Cockpit, flight deck and airport movie cameras have been whirring away throughout the years, capturing all kinds of cool scenes...and now we have YouTube, Vimeo and other sites on the web in which to share those experiences.

We started *OPERATION HOME MOVIE* a year or so back and now have a dedicated Video Page on a4skyhawk.org. In addition, we've cranked up a dedicated Skyhawk Association YouTube Channel at <http://a4skyhawk.org/content/association-videos>.

A link on our site will take you to the YouTube Channel, while other links there will connect you to a few A-4 movies found on the internet. Our YouTube Channel is dedicated to historical

and recent home movies from Skyhawk members and other enthusiasts. Both film and videotape can be converted to a digital format and we have a growing number of movies. Go to both places, give it a look-see and enjoy all the Scooter flicks. On the *Home* page, select *Skyhawks*, then *Videos*, then links as you desire...simple as that.

Got home movies to share?
Contact Dave Dollarhide at davedollarhide@msn.com.

ASSOCIATION VIDEOS

VIDEO PAGE

[Skyhawk Association YouTube Channel](#)

Public A-4 Video Links - Individual Links

US NAVY/MARINES	FOREIGN	CIVILIAN
Discovery Wings - A-4	RNZAF A-4 Skyhawk Tribute	Tico Warbird Show 2014
Douglas A-4 Skyhawk	VF-1 A-4s	Tico Warbird Show 2013
Blue Angels A-4 Six Ship Landing		2013 Thunder Over Michigan
A-4 Skyhawk - Classic Marines Attack Aircraft		Skyhawk 518 Planes of Fame Airshow
Douglas Promo Video		ATSI: Top Aces A-4N check flight
USS Shangri La 1969 A-4 traps with refueling drogue extended		Skyhawk 518
		First A-4 Flight in 39 Years

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A-4 Skyhawk Sixty Years of Flying
139 views • 3 months ago

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30 views • 2 years ago

Read?

you think
we *read*?

GOING DOWNTOWN: The War Against Hanoi and Washington

Jack Broughton
Crown Publishing Group, 1988.
300 pages, Kindle, \$9.99.
Reviewed by CDR Jack Woodul, USNR (ret)

(Ed. Note: Jack passed on this review with the following email comments:

Chaps:

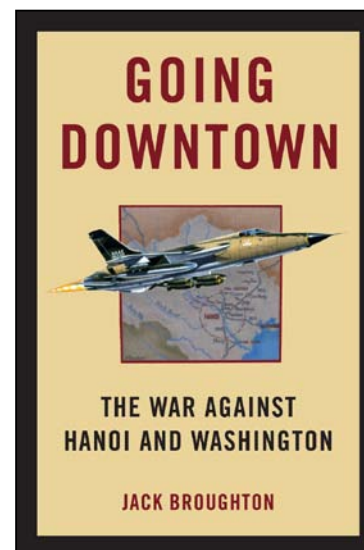
COL Jack Broughton's book, GOING DOWNTOWN, has been out in hardback for some while, and several CCs have written worthy reviews. My ebook editor at Pacifica Military History has just published it as an ebook on Amazon, and he asked me to review it. I had read it long ago, and the reread got me rather riled up. I counted several sacks of potatoes and waited a couple of days before writing. I kept the rant factor down to a low boil. YP).

One of the missions I was tasked with as a Navy attack pilot off my carrier in the Tonkin Gulf was that of RESCAP, where two of us would loiter off the coast of North Vietnam over an Air Force HU-16 amphibian and wait for a call that someone had been shot down and needed help so a rescue effort could be mounted. Usually, these calls were not long in coming,

and, frequently, off we'd go after what we called "The Duty Downed F-105 pilot." It was that common. The F-105 "Thud" was mainstay of the Air Force's attack efforts against North Vietnam, and it was the plane that COL Jack Broughton flew and led with uncommon zeal in this book.

This is an account of the one percent of all the forces in a combat area that actually carry the spear, in this case, Thud pilots. It is the story of the immense disconnect between those spear carriers and those directly involved with supporting that war effort, and those directing from Washington through the absurd layers of command and control from the rear with the gear that had their own war going against that one percent.

COL Broughton was a true warrior, proving that in Korea, and leading from the front against North Vietnam. His combat accounts are bang-on accurate and stirring. But the true theme of this book is Keeping the Faith. COL Broughton led and took care of his fellow warriors against the efforts of a determined enemy



and egregious mandates from the highest level of our government. He fought just as determinedly against the whims of the command layers of empire builders of his own service, and, finally, against peers and friends that largely locked step with those empire builder's agenda to take his career. They had lost the faith, certainly of those in actual combat.

Taking care of his own people eventually cost COL Broughton dearly. He became the bull's eye of a general's personal vendetta, and the inevitability of the process toward his general courts martial in the face of sanity will make the reader's teeth grind. But some faith is restored by the results, which ended in his protecting his two fellow pilots and coming away with an admonition and small fine.

The appeal finally cleared even that verdict and expunged it from his record. But he Kept the Faith. In that war, especially, it was everything.

If this reviewer had the opportunity to meet COL Broughton, he would get the snappiest salute possible. Then I would like to shake his hand.

(Ed. Note: COL Broughton, who during his fabled career was awarded four DFCs, two Silver Stars and the Air Force Cross, passed away during October 2014. His first book, Thud Ridge, is a must-read.)



NEW MEMBERS

Join or renew, and give someone a one-year gift membership for \$20 more.
Contact Terry Cooney at skyhawkasn@gmail.com or at 2421 Clubside Dr., Beavercreek, OH 45431

Adeeb, Allan - Tavernier, FL
Amacker, Charles - Roswell, GA
Carton, Nicholas - Neskowin, OR
Childers, James - Paducah, TX
Dawson, Robert - Carmel Valley, CA
Dettle, Joe - Columbus, NC
Doerner, Leon - Fairfax Station, VA
Drysdale, Ross - Scarborough, Queensland, AU

Emerson, Stephen - Orlando, FL
Hall, David - South Dartmouth, MA
Johnson, Olaf M. - Vancouver, WA
Jones, Michael - Greer, SC
Larrabee, Jane - Bryan, TX
Margolis, Myron - Lake Forest, CA
Moylan, Daniel - Glenview, IL
Nickell, Paul - Germantown, TN

Northing, James - San Diego, CA
Painter, Dewey - Jacksonville, FL
Ramin, Glenn - Las Vegas, NV
Roales, Frank - Vincennes, IN
Smith, Charles - Lakeland, FL
Stromberg, Russ - Kirkland, WA
Wilhelm, Fred D. - Waverly, OH
Workmon, Chris - LaPlac

TINS!*

From Pete Cole, Skyhawk Association Director

A USS *Hancock* Association buddy from VA-55 sent me some pictures of VA-212 (my squadron) birds he had from the '73 cruise. The attached pic of Modex 305 was included.

A Russian "Trawler" was giving us (the *Hancock*) fits off Yankee Station in '73. You know... the usual BS like crossing the bow during flight ops and just being a general nuisance. Well one day the Rampant Raider ordies decided to fight back!



"Super-secret" missile on VA-212 A-4F. Photo via Pete Cole.

They parked this VA-212 bird with the obviously un-aerodynamic missile on the port side of the ship for full viewing. The Ruskies came along side and were snapping Polaroids like mad. What a bunch of bozos! Bet that went over big in the Kremlin!

TRIVIA ANYONE

from Dave Dollarhide



Send your answers to:
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Here are two answers to: "What is the purpose of this hole in the nose-wheel door? Someone must know!"

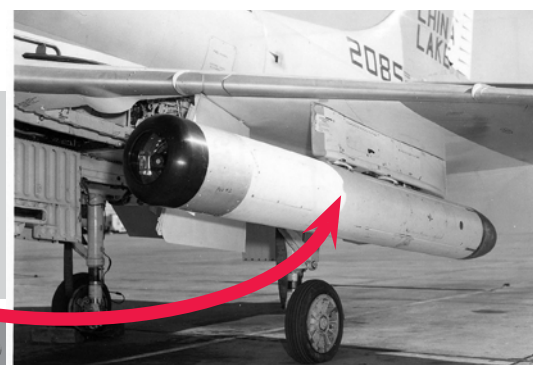
- From Bob Schneider of A-4/LLC:
"I'm guessing on the hole in the nose gear door as: where the missile antenna was plugged into the adapter flange. Our C's and Lima's we acquired still had some of the antennas on them or were plugged with round discs using countersunk screws to hold in place. Don't know if they were part of the Walleye system or not."
(Ed. Note: we think Bob is referring to the Bullpup antenna, which was mounted aft of this spring loaded door.)

- From Cliff Ruthrauff:
"Reference the trivia question about the hole in the nose-wheel door, I don't know, for sure. It's hard to tell from the photo, but...It looks like it could be a drain hole to eliminate moisture, in the wheel well, collected during foul weather take offs. Just a guess."



Dave Dollarhide responds:

"There is nothing written on this little spring loaded door that only opens into the wheel well. In the 60s, I remember an instructor in VA-44 telling me it provided a small amount of air pressure in the wheel well to assist in manual gear extension. It was discontinued at some point, so I guess whatever the reason, it was deemed unnecessary. I guess there is no definitive answer, so it makes for a good puzzler."



Next Question:

What is this?

R.G.'s ART



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

(R.G. Smith #0709)

Blue Angels in Echelon

F-18 *Hornet*
A-4F *Skyhawk*
F-4J *Phantom*
F-11 *Tiger*
F-1 *Cougar*
F-9F *Panther*
F-8F *Bearcat*
F-6F *Hellcat*

Used with permission.
[www.rgsmithart.com]

SCHEDULING

Reunions & Requests



PLAN AHEAD

- **Skyhawk Assn Mid-year Board Meeting:** April 24-25, 2015, Holiday Inn Fairborn, Dayton, OH. Contact is Terry Cooney [tcooney8@gmail.com]. Members are invited. Watch POD at www.a4skyhawk.org for details.
- **Marine Corps Aviation Association 2015 Symposium and Reunion:** May 14-16, San Diego, CA. See www.flymcaa.org for more information.
- **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, 2014.
- **All-Marine Skyhawk Reunion:** October 8-11, 2015, Embassy Suites downtown, 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.



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Tally Ho Tow



SIZE DOES MATTER

Modelers' Corner

Collecting Vintage Plastic Model Airplane Kits

Craig Kodera
Specialty Press, North Branch, MN. 2014
128 pp. Ill. \$29.95.
Reviewed by Peter Mersky

Going through this softbound book is taking a trip down memory lane. I started building plastic model airplanes when I was about six, right in the heart of the chronological scope of this medium-format book. One of the unique aspects of the book is the author is one of this country's premier aviation artists. His works are almost narrative in nature and technique; he tells a complete story with every beautifully done canvas. It was, therefore, a pleasure to learn how much of his time was spent seeking out and building early kits by Aurora, Revell, Lindberg, Monogram and other lesser-known companies that pioneered what has become a major hobby industry. Red Messerschmitt 109s, yellow Japanese Zeros, sleek prop airliners with colorful airline markings and esoteric offerings from companies that just didn't have the staying power were all part of that period of the 1950s and early 1960s.

The book also focuses on the unique box art, the illustrations that enticed prospective buyers of all ages, but usually eager young hobbyists, to lay down their dollar or two—that's all the kits cost for the most part at that time—for the colorfully printed boxes of molded plastic parts on "trees." How many times each week did I go to my neighborhood toy or hobby shop hoping to discover a new arrival by Revell or Monogram, experiencing the thrill of finding a new kit that I quickly snapped up.

Now, the model industry has grown to include not only the kits themselves whose prices have jumped to many times their predecessors' cost, but also

the support stables of peripherals like paints, decals, highly detailed individual parts such as landing gear, cockpits and armament. No modeler of any serious intent today can simply build a kit right from the box. There are too many add-ons not to consider that will spice up the finished model—detailed ejection seats, the various bumps and bubbles that denoted a specialized variant of the basic aircraft, unique insignia and markings—somewhat pricey, but nonetheless vital to complete the detailed replica of the subject aircraft.

This is a fun book written by a highly knowledgeable author who has gone through the experience as a boy and has taken that experience with him into adulthood as a successful pilot and illustrator. Not to be missed, especially if you are thinking about finding an older kit to start a collection.



Visit [\[www.a4model.a4skyhawk.org/models/modelers.htm\]](http://www.a4model.a4skyhawk.org/models/modelers.htm)



USMC Skyhawkers Reunion!

8-11 October 2015

POC's: Mark Williams -- roger.wilco@comcast.net

Todd Frommelt -- toddfrommelt6913@att.net

Base Hotel: Embassy Suites, San Diego Bay Downtown

Schedule of Events:

Thursday: Welcome Reception

Friday: Flying Leatherneck Museum, Miramar O'Club Lunch, Balboa Park Touring

Saturday: Touring on Own and Hotel Banquet



FROM THE ATTIC

Mailbag



The Attack Hospitality Suite gets more popular at Tailhook every year. This picture, taken during Hook 14, shows MiG-killers Royce Williams (at left) and T.R. Swartz relaxing in the suite.



Lt(jg) Al Crebo of VA-212 heads his mortally-wounded Skyhawk towards USS Bon Homme Richard. (Photo via Boom Powell and Gary Verver)

“Part of the large Alpha strike on the Haiphong Ammunition Depot on 25 April [1967], Crebo’s A-4E (BuNo 151102) was damaged by a SAM, losing most of its vertical tail and various fuselage panels and systems. Crebo could only lower his nose gear and arresting hook, making a safe recovery aboard ship impossible. He ejected close to the carrier and was retrieved by helicopter. After a medical check, Crebo was back on the flight schedule the following day! He received the Silver Star and Purple Heart for this harrowing mission.” (From *US Navy and Marine Corps A-4 Skyhawk Units of the Vietnam War*, by Peter Mersky.)

During a very successful air-to-air mission on 18 November 1952 during the Korean War, LT Royce Williams, USN, flying a F9F-5 Panther, BuNo 125459, of VF-781 aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34), engaged seven Soviet Air Force MiG-15 fighters, shooting down at least three, but probably four. The MiGs had launched from Vladivostok and were headed toward Task Force 77.

His Panther sustained significant damage from enemy cannon shells. Though he safely returned to his carrier, the fighter was so badly damaged that it was pushed over the side.

LT Williams was awarded the Silver Star for this action.

On 1 May 1967, LCDR Theodore Swartz, flying an A-4C of VA-76 from USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CV-31), shot down a MiG-17 with 5” Zuni rockets, while attacking Kep airfield in North Vietnam. He received the Silver Star for that mission.

This was the only air-to-air victory by a Skyhawk pilot during the Vietnam War.

★TAPS★

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

Leue, David E. • 25 January 2015 • Clovis, CA
 Lerps, David A. • 21 October 2014 • Kailua, HI
 Marron, Ronald • 6 December 2014 • Flagler Beach, FL
 Martin, Donald L. • 22 October 2014 • Manhattan Beach, CA
 Pesenti, Frank • 28 September 2014 • Gardnerville, NV

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



SoCal Marine Skyhawkers... At It Again

Hun reporting

It’s been a while since Raven’s had room in one of the Journals to mention our quarterly breakfasts out here, but we **knew** you were wondering if we were still carrying on! We are! Here are some shots from our January breakfast! Some 30 of us gathered to welcome two new guys and bid adieu to a plank holder moving away (Jon "Racquet" Ingersoll, 4th from the left), for good food and for fine camaraderie.

And that last one is the point...the camaraderie. Light attack, Skyhawk camaraderie. You can do it too! Back in 2007 we started off with 3 of us with no contact list, just word of mouth. Now, with a contact list still growing (nearly 100, mostly in San Diego and Orange Counties), we regularly get over 30 Skyhawkers coming to the breakfasts and have a blast! Contact one of the BOD members to help you go through the Association roster for your locals. I’m betting there are more of your buddies around than you think!



Generals Cooke and Davis.



Rico Jones, Jon Ingersoll.



Doc Blanchard, Jim Barksdale.



Jon, Hun, Jack Enke.



Skyhawk camaraderie.



Norm Marshall, Ray Bright, Chris DeFries.

Puresome Unplugged

~ YP's Excellent Adventures ~

From The Hook magazine

The Further Adventures of
YOUTHLY PURESOME

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



Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

Ready Room-O-Rama:

The Trials of Captain Zoderly

It was a rite of passage in those days. Pink-cheeked, milk-fed squadron new guys, intoxicated with actually being embarked on USS Boat and new to most things nautical, were charged with the heavy responsibility of maintaining the ticker tape log. All the while, their minds were clouded with a million details, like navigating from their staterooms to the ready room, wardroom and the flight deck, much like well-motivated rats in the below-decks maze. Their predicament left them easy prey for squadron predators that included everybody else. It was a conspiracy of the highest order.

The ticker tape machine itself was a hulking, pre-historic monster that dominated the forward corner of the ready room. In pre-high tech fashion, a huge, yellow screen dominated a steel structure of purest battleship gray. Inside, a ticker tape machine of arthritic antiquity chattered away, spewing out printed tape that was shown on the yellow screen before being discharged from the clanking apparatus.

Messages arrived on the screen with a fanfare of typewriter clatter—launch and recovery data, weather and other bits of information.

Aviators rigged up in g-suits, torso harnesses and survival vests waited in their ready room chairs for the announcement of no-sweat day-hops, dark and stormy night launches or the odd Alfa strike as they anticipated the clatter that would announce “pilots-man your

planes for the umpty-ump launch.” It was less fun than watching the Pilot Landing Aid Television (PLAT) but more important.

A High-Visibility Collateral Duty— A JO's Opportunity to Excel

The machine's spew provided junior officers an opportunity to excel in a collateral duty of high-visibility importance. Anxious to avoid “exceeded by all others” in fitness reports, JOs readily responded to the challenge of gathering up the rat's nest of ticker tape, cutting it into strips and neatly pasting it into green-covered Navy ledgers, very much like the sacred Squadron Duty Officer log. At some point, the conscientious JO would be asked to get the thing signed by some short-fused senior officer, like the Skipper of the Boat or the air officer, who would likely have the poor new guy's beautocks for wasting his valuable time with such crap. Which it was, but it was crap of the finest quality—an officer version of the “seabat” or “mail buoy” games that salty sailors played on the more gullible of young snuffies.

Once the ticker tape logger had found out he'd been well and truly had, a public ceremony was held in the ready room. The honoree would be presented with an award, usually a fish medal, inscribed with his name and rank. ENS Fish was then free to join the conspiracy against the next poor new guy to show up.

It should not be surprising that the precocious anarchists Weed and Puresome saw through the scam early on.

The two had shown up at the Fighting Tinker Terror Squadron at about the same time and had been jointly selected as ticker tapers for the first at-sea period. Apart from the transparent stupidity of the whole endeavor, fledgling LSO Weed was clued in by his indulgent boss, Rocket Three — LCDR Paganuch. The ship's air boss, who was supposedly to sign off the offending logbook, must have had his bowel movement that week and volunteered to play double agent in joining in a scam against the squadron predators.

So the two enjoyed manufacturing possibly the most frabbed-up log in the history of Naval Aviation. Seniors howled, particularly those that had been the most Brasso and spitshined gullible.

The Next Victim Arrives

Finally the senior folks gave it up and, with great public ceremony, invested the two into the Order of the Fish. Both Puresome and Weed were smart enough to play along and act surprised, since it made the skipper happy. That, of course, was the name of the junior-officer game.

The next victim joined the squadron during the Operational Readiness Inspection as the ship steamed about south of Puerto Rico, with the air wing doing simulated battle for the benefit of old goats that graded the whole thing. LTJG Pee Nut showed up in the middle of all this stomping and saluting and was determined not to be found lacking. “Jest like Annapolis,” he thought as he adjusted his cap and transitioned into a maximum “A.J. Squared-Away” mode.

Pee Nut was a clear-eyed innocent who had emerged from Boat School relatively intact. He was instantly liked and accepted by the Reserve Junior Officer Association, but he was a stranger in a strange land whose inhabitants routinely ate their young. Pee Nut was ripe for plucking, and he did not have long to wait.

Pee Nut took to the ticker tape log like Galahad took to the search for the Holy Grail. Its excellence, he knew, would peg out his fitness report to the far left, “walks-on-water” column. His effort was a thing of true beauty, and Puresome and Weed couldn't believe it. Having now joined the sharks, they admired and encouraged his work.

But, in their infinite wisdom, the high rocket numbers sensed the proper time to climax the drama, and sent Pee Nut to the all-highest, the ship's skipper himself, CAPT Duke, for his signature.

Unfortunately, Pee Nut's timing was not the best. He showed up on the bridge during a crucial moment during an underway replenishment with an oiler, and CAPT Duke was not amused. At all.

“Get off my frabbing bridge!” was clear enough.

Pee Nut was quickly invested in the Order of the Fish, lest he try again and suffer permanent damage to his parts. It was hilarity of the best kind, and Pee Nut resolved not to get mad, but to join up and make sure the next guy got major frabbed.

He did not have long to wait.

The Invention of the Ultimate Ticker Tape Log

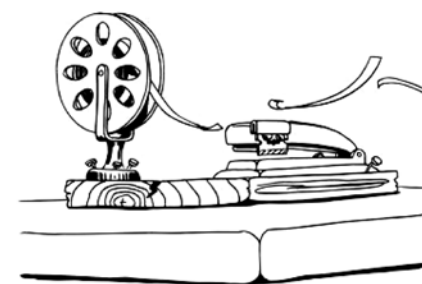
The future “Captain Z” showed up in WestPac and should have known better. He had been a sailor in a previous life, an actual snipe whose activities in the dark, steamy groins of naval vessels should have prepped him with native wariness. Indeed, he approached his peers with a great deal of suspicion. The chink in his armor, however, was that he never considered that the upper rocket numbers would frabb with him, especially

about such sacred trusts as a collateral duty. He was unaware of the major truth of Naval Aviation that “everybody will frabb with you about anything they can.”

The squadron, sensing a feeding frenzy, licked their chops and rubbed their hands in anticipation.

The future Captain Z did not disappoint. Using native “Ahmuran engine-uity,” he went mechanical and constructed a machine of diabolical cleverness to speed his work. An ordinary, battleship-gray Navy stapler was mounted on a piece of oak, a single-edge razor blade riveted to the head. A reel was fitted to the board and ticker tape spooled on it to feed just the right lengths of ticker tape down the board to be chopped by the blade on the stapler. “Z” could deal effectively with a prodigious amount of ticker tape with unprecedented accuracy, and those who saw him hard at work in the ready room or in his stateroom cheered him on with admiration and enthusiasm.

It was so much fun that those in the squadron were soon addicted and became ticker tape log junkies. The more Z chopped and pasted, the more time passed by. Z soon set a squadron record for keeping the log far longer than anyone in the history of Naval Aviation. Z beamed with pride in his accomplishment.



Enter Captain Zoderly

But finally, by the mysterious processes of consulting the sacred lambbones known only to skippers, it was decided that 'nuff was 'nuff. A ritual cake was baked for the occasion, an actual frozen fish was procured to be hung by string around the honoree's neck, and the Skipper of the Boat, CAPT Duke, was invited down to Ready Room 4-Starboard for the ceremony.

The unwary recipient was manning the duty officer desk when the phone rang. A rich voice, identifying the caller as the captain's orderly, announced that he needed to talk to the squadron skipper. The subject of the call, unbeknownst to the young SDO, concerned the details of the upcoming ceremony. Z, whose mind snapped to attention, went to high PRF as he stomped, saluted and sent someone after the skipper.

By now, the whole ready room knew something unusual was up. When the skipper hustled in, slightly irate at having been interrupted in managing the divine clockwork of the universe, he was understandably interested in “howcum.”

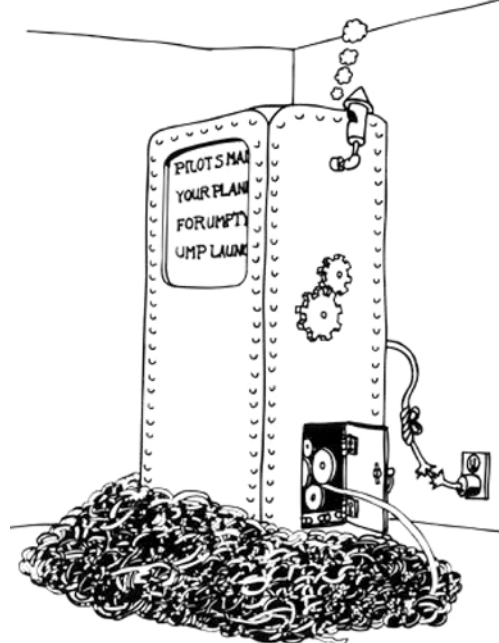
“Skipper!” the boy SDO barked in his most professional manner. “There's a CAPT Zoderly on the phone for you!”

As the skipper took the phone and began to speak, an inscrutable smile slowly crept across his Olympian features. Finishing the conversation, he looked down from great altitude to the competent young Naval Aviator manning the duty desk. In his best “Well done, thou good and faithful boy SDO” voice, he said, “That was the captain's orderly, son, not a CAPT Zoderly.”

Of course, no one noticed.

The award ceremony that night was the finest in the memory of even the eldest Naval Aviator. CAPT Duke cut the magnificently decorated cake. The decorative “Captain Zoderly—mega-fish forever” inscription took a little explaining, though.

And Captain Z wore his frozen fish like his new nickname for life — with embarrassed good grace and not a little pride.





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