

THE A-4 EVER

Skyhawk Association Journal Vol 22-4



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*Winter Board Meeting
March 9-12, 2017
Jacksonville, FL*

Winter 2016-2017
www.a4skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

By Pete Cole

Since the purpose of the digital winter edition of *The A-4Ever* Journal format is to focus on great articles with excellent, large format images, I will keep my Association business remarks brief and put out the word on upcoming events and dates of note. I will then go radio silent and prepare for a “zip-lip” recovery. Enjoy reading the outstanding articles!

Our Squadron Duty Officers (SDOs) are key people in keeping us connected and helping to get the word out when required. We had three volunteers step up to the plate this fall. Dave Thornhill has volunteered for the VA-204 billet. Assuming additional SDO duties are Bryan Chrysler, NAS Lemoore, and Larry Lassise, VT-4 and VA-76. Thank you Dave, Brian, and Larry!

The official list of squadron SDOs is posted on the Skyhawk website ‘FAQ-Research-Contact’ page, <http://a4skyhawk.info/page/faq-research-contact>, and while the majority of these are filled there are still some units that need an SDO. I would ask all members to please review the list on the website and see if there are any open units for which you would consider accepting the SDO responsibility. Several of our SDOs have agreed to host more than one unit, and we greatly appreciate their additional efforts. For Navy units please contact George Blosser, VP Navy, george.blosser1@gmail.com, and for Marine and foreign service units contact Steve Linder, VP Marines, steve.linder@1969.usna.com.

Since you are accessing this digital journal edition through the Skyhawk Association website, you will have noticed significant changes have occurred over the last couple of months. Once again, the transition of the site to yet another new hosting service has been a little frustrating for the web guys. Throughout this transition our webmaster Gene Atwell, his assistant Dave Weber, and their volunteer web team have been working diligently. They can use some help however and are looking for people to assist with simple updates. Basic computer skills only are required. Normal updates can be done with “copy and paste” and a basic text editor. If you would like to help, contact Dave Weber, twidget55@darw.com. Also, take a look at your squadron’s web page. If you can add or correct information, that would be appreciated.

If you have not checked out the DosEckes Production’s video story of “Lady Jessie”© and Dick Perry of VA-164, the link is provided on the Skyhawk Association ‘POD’ and ‘Video’ page, <http://a4skyhawk.info/article/pod> and <http://a4skyhawk.info/page/skyhawk-videos> respectively. This is a must view for all Scooter lovers! Arguably, this video sums up the *esprit de corps* of Naval Aviation in the history of the Naval Air War over Viet Nam. Further information on the story of Lady Jessie Beck can be found in the article by Jeanette Vaughn, “Lady Jessie Beck and the Navy Ghost Riders – Belle of Steel #12,” in the Summer 2015 edition of *The A-4ever*, Vol. 21-2, p.14.

While perusing the ‘Video’ page, check out the link to the Skyhawk Association YouTube Channel and Member Movies, <https://www.youtube.com/user/A4SkyhawkAssociation>, and the individual video links on the web, which are brought to you by our ‘videographer-in-chief’ Dave Dollarhide and other members.

Now Hear This! The word on upcoming events and dates of note:

A blast from Director Todd Frommelt, toddfrommelt6913@att.net: ‘99 Skyhawkers,’ Hun’s SoCal Marine Skyhawkers are doing their 1st Qtr breakfast on 23 January at the San Clemente Fisherman’s Restaurant, San Clemente, CA. Contact him regarding future SoCal Marine Skyhawker events.

Skyhawk Association Winter Board Meeting is set for 9-12 March 2017 in the Jacksonville, FL, area at the World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort. Reservations can be made by calling the Marriott Reservation Center at 888-740-7020 and asking for the A-4 Skyhawk Association rate. Although the rate cutoff date is 9 Feb, the hotel is already close to capacity, so don’t delay! POC is Director Dave Dollarhide, davedollarhide@msn.com. In addition to the board meeting, side trips and a Light Attack reunion at a nearby private airport with A-4/A-7 bubbas are being planned. Check out the ad in this issue and join us!

VA-163 and VA-164 have scheduled a Saints/Ghost Rider reunion at the Nugget Casino in Sparks, NV, 3-5 May 2017. POC for VA-163 is Richard (Ode) Odegaard, 775-626-0898, richard.odegaard@gmail.com. The POC for VA-164 is Jim Waldron, 410-409-1987. The Nugget reservation number is 1-800-648-1177, and the reunion Group Code is GVA163. Further information can be obtained from Ed Copher, ecopher@satx.rr.com, VA-163 SDO.

Skyhawk Association trip to Israel 2017: The *second* trip-of-a-lifetime is in the initial planning stages. As in 2015, we will attend the Flight Academy Pilot Graduation ceremony and air show at Hatzertim Air Base near Beersheba, which is scheduled for 29 June 2017. The POC is Director Terry Wolf, tairwolf@comcast.net. If you did not see his outstanding article on our 2015 visit, “A Week with Israel’s Last Skyhawk Pilots,” in the Fall 2015 edition of *The A-4ever*, Vol. 21-3, p.11, please check it out! The basic tour package will extend from Saturday evening 24 June to departure on Sunday 2 July. We are planning to have at least one evening get-together with our friends and retired counterparts from the Israel Air Force.

A-4s Forever!



The Prez Pete Cole



In memory of
M. Davis "Whizzer" White, D.D.S.
(1939-2007)
Founder of the Skyhawk Association

◆ ◆
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BOMBS AWAY!

• Winter 2016-2017 •

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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.net 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: VA-15 A-4Bs over the Florida coast after returning from their 1966 Vietnam combat cruise. Note the Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club patch on the tail and mission markings on the fuselage. Courtesy of Jerry "Possum" Terrell.

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE

1964 – 1966

PART I

By Col J.T. “Birdie” Bertrand

When the VMA-311 Tomcats began to stabilize in September 1963, no one realized that they would be the last Marine A-4 squadron stabilized for deployment to Japan to be dedicated to commitment to the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP). Nor did they realize that their deployment would quickly lead them to the expeditionary airfield in Chu Lai in response to the widening conflict in Vietnam. This is the story of the squadron’s journey from El Toro, California, to Vietnam during the years 1964–1966.

On September 1, 1963, VMA-311 was assigned to MAG-33, at MCAS El Toro and designated to replace VMA-121 at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, in March 1965.

In mid-October 1963, VMA-311 took delivery of twenty sparkling new A-4E aircraft. The “Echo” model of the *Skyhawk* was equipped with the powerful Pratt and Whitney J52 engine and theoretically, capable of speeds over 550 knots. The newer engine also provided greater fuel efficiency, significantly extending the airplane’s range in both high and low-level regimes. The A-4E had five external ordnance stations and could carry over 8,100 pounds of weapons. It also had a much improved pressurized air conditioning and heating system which kept one’s feet from freezing on long flights at high altitude or in cold temperatures.

In Japan, the squadron was to have alert commitments in the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP), for delivery of special weapons, i.e., nuclear bombs. (The SIOP is the war plan for the employment of strategic and theater air and naval forces in the event of a nuclear war.) Therefore, VMA-311 weapons training deployments included not only conventional weapons training, but considerable emphasis was given to special weapons delivery.

On April 18, 1964, LtCol Bernard J. “Stubby” Stender took command of the Tomcats, and the squadron began the process of “freezing” all deployable personnel in their present job assignments for the coming deployment to Japan. Once the squadron was “frozen,” it had 28 pilots, four ground officers, one Navy flight surgeon and 202 enlisted personnel.

The next year consisted of a very demanding and taxing training schedule. In March-April 1964, the squadron trained in Bullpup delivery. 1st Lts Kirby Schnell and Tony Capozza, the squadron’s Landing Signal Officers (LSO), started intensive Field Mirror Landing Practice (FMLP) sessions, and the squadron deployed to MCAS Yuma for conventional air-ground and special weapons training.

FMLP training continued at El Toro in May and June 1964, culminating with successful initial carrier qualifications aboard the USS *Hornet* (CVS-12) June 9-12, and from August 5 to 28, VMA-311 deployed to NAAS Fallon for conventional and special weapons training.

Part I of this story was originally published in The A-4Ever Volume 13, Number 1 (Winter 2007). Part II was originally published in The A-4Ever Volume 13, Number 2 (Summer 2007).



E ATTACK SQUADRON 311



Home at Iwakuni. VMA-311's hangar.

On September 7, approximately 16 VMA-311 pilots reported to Marine Corps Base, Pickle Meadows, California, for Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) training. Capt Cary Watkins was the senior officer in charge of that rather rowdy gaggle of pilots, and it goes without saying that these pilots didn't want to be there. Marines from other organizations were also at the school. Following briefings by the school and organization into teams of 6-8 people, the pilots were to live off the land and evade the Communist Circle Trignons (Control Group) who were trying to capture the students. 1st Lt Dick Norris' team was the only team in the previous four years from which no member was captured. In the evasion process, Norris took his team over an 11,000 ft. mountain. The "communists" simply couldn't climb that high – Norris damned near couldn't either! *continued...*

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

In October 1964, the squadron deployed to Yuma for two more weeks of weapons training, followed by more FMLP training in November 1964. The squadron re-qualified aboard USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34) December 6-8, and later aboard *Yorktown* (CV-10). VMA-311 had no incidents or accidents while carrier qualifying. For performance aboard the USS *Oriskany*, the Chief of Naval Operations sent a Letter of Commendation to the squadron, congratulating the unit on the best boarding rate recorded by any Marine Corps squadron.

In addition to the intensive special weapons training during deployments to Yuma and Fallon, Tomcat pilots received many hours of ground school instruction by Marine Air Weapons Training Unit-PAC (MAWTU) at El Toro. In early January 1965, the squadron underwent a 10 day Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI) at MCAS Yuma under the close scrutiny and grading of MAWTU. The squadron set up and operated out of a tent city on the base. The exercise was designed to test, to the degree possible, the

squadron's ability to operate in an expeditionary environment. A complete operation order was generated, barbed wire and internal security measures undertaken and a field kitchen established to provide meals. The air portion of the ORI culminated with a 16-plane strike on a target area that the squadron had never used before, some 325 miles north of Yuma. The planning for and execution of the strike was graded excellent by MAWTU.

Immediately following and in addition to the ORI, the squadron was given a Nuclear Ordnance Readiness Mission (NORM). Every individual pilot in the squadron was graded by MAWTU on their special weapons and conventional weapons delivery scores. The squadron was also given the special privilege of participating in an Operational Suitability Test (OST) of a nuclear weapon. The weapon was a typical nuclear device, minus the "stuff" that would enable it to detonate nuclear. 1st Lt Gerry Madison delivered the OST on target, and the weapon detonated as a high explosive bomb. At the conclusion of the ORI and NORM, the squadron was certified as fully qualified to assume their SIOP mission in Japan. *continued...*



Be it ever so humble. Bob and Dick Polhamus (twin brothers) outside the Animal Farm houch (JO BOQ). Dick was a pilot with VMO; Bob with -311.

1964 – 1966



Somewhere over the Pacific enroute to Iwakuni, Japan.



Arrival at staging area in Cubi Pt, Philippines. L-R: Gus Xavier, Monty Doyel, L.T. "Tom" Preston, Sneaky Shea, George "Greek" Psaros and Don "Digger" Rowe.

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

However, the training continued. February 1965 found the Tomcats at NAAS China Lake firing Shrike anti-radiation missiles. The remainder of February and March 1965 was devoted to in-flight refueling training and preparations for a trans-Pacific (TRANSPAC) movement of the aircraft.

Just prior to the TRANSPAC, the squadron took delivery of 20 newer A-4E aircraft, and the pilots were familiarized with wearing the exposure suits (poopy suits) needed for flying over-water profile missions during cold weather. Poopy suits were very difficult and time consuming to get into and out of and were aptly named. If you were dressed in one of these suits and had to hit the toilet in a hurry, chances were that you would have some “POOPY” in your suit before you got it off.

Of note, the new airplanes had a problem with new fuel transfer valves. After being in cold temperatures (cold soaked) for over four hours, fuel transfer ceased – not a good deal when on a six hour flight. To solve the problem, each airplane was retro-fitted with older fuel transfer valves, and five hour profiles were flown on each aircraft. All of this happened within two weeks of the TRANSPAC to MCAS Iwakuni. With this last minute evolution completed, VMA-311 was completely ready for an 8000 mile TRANSPAC and a 13-month deployment to the Far East.

By one estimate, in the 12 months prior to departing for Iwakuni, members of the squadron had spent about 165 days deployed away from El Toro (and home) for training.



The Tomcat Ready Room: Dick Norris (R); Kirby Schnell, LSO, (L); Gerry Madison (facing); Sneaky Shea (back to camera) playing Ace Deuce in the ready room.

1964 – 1966

The TRANSPAC commenced on March 23, 1965. The overall squadron movement was code named *Operation Hammerhead*. The first echelon of 10 aircraft, led by LtCol “Stubby” Stender, had two in-flight refuelings from KC-130 aircraft and almost six hours of flight time enroute to landing at MCAS Kaneohe. The second echelon of 10 aircraft, led by Maj Jack Parchen, followed the next day. Staging through Wake Island and NAS Atsugi, all aircraft arrived at Iwakuni by March 31. Only one section of aircraft was delayed by maintenance problems.

The one-day rest periods in Hawaii and on Wake Island were needed to allow the KC-130 refuelers to position themselves for the follow-on flights. Of course, the rest days also allowed the pilots to hang out on Waikiki to rest their weary butts and visit exotic Polynesian restaurants. On Wake Island, the pilots explored the World War II fortifications, toured the island and visited the Pacific Search and Rescue (SAR) headquarters, where at the “SAR” Bar one could purchase a beer for the exorbitant price of 25 cents. One of the small ironies of the operation was that the “orders” for the movement had been written as “group travel.” The disbursing officer at Iwakuni decided that the two nights at Kaneohe and Wake, and the one night at Atsugi, had been incidental to the mode of travel, and this decision limited the participants to collecting a maximum of \$1.75 per diem. Thus, the squadron pilots had traveled over 8,000 miles in six days and could only collect \$8.75 per diem! To be sure--*it was the Marine Corps way...* The \$8.75 barely covered three beers at a very cheap bar in Honolulu. *continued...*



Sampling the local culture. Cherry Blossom Festival, Iwakui.

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

The VMA-311 aircraft were greeted at Iwakuni by Col John Noble, Commanding Officer of MAG-12. Following eight hours of “in” briefings (consisting of a welcome aboard by the colonel, a G-3 brief, a G-2 brief and, of course, the standard infamous and interesting GI hygiene films), VMA-311 relieved VMA-121 of the SIOP mission and assumed the “Ready” status special weapons missions. It all happened within 72 hours of arrival in Iwakuni.

The Ready status required two aircraft on a hot pad, with pilots on 30-minute standby; two more aircraft and crews on two-hour standby; and four additional pilots and aircraft on eight-hour alert. That was eight pilots, eight “loading officers” and a squadron duty officer, most all of whom were lieutenants. However, all squadron pilots except the commanding officer stood the ready status alert. Of course, this meant that the possibility of a snake ranch in the village was completely out of the question because 17 officers and supporting enlisted had to be on the base at all times to handle these duties. It meant a lot of “sitting in your hooch time” at night, with liberty only one or two nights a week-- if you were lucky. In modern terms, the duty was **24/7**. Exciting!

Within 15 days of settling in at MCAS Iwakuni, the squadron was alerted to a possible deployment to Vietnam. Rumors were flying everywhere. The first elements of a Marine Expeditionary Brigade, including MAG-16, had landed near Da Nang on March 8, 1965. VMFA-531, with F-4B aircraft, and VMCJ-1, with F3D-2Q aircraft, deployed to Da Nang in April. By then, plans were being made for MAG-12 and its two A-4 squadrons (VMA-225 and VMA-311) to relocate to an expeditionary airfield 50 miles south of Da Nang, in an area named “Chu Lai.” Shortly thereafter, both VMA-225 and VMA-311 had their squadrons’ nuclear posture (SIOP commitment) of **24/7** degraded by higher headquarters so that more time and effort could be put to planning for possible/probable deployment to Vietnam. This change also allowed more time to explore the native population around the Four Corners area in the town of Iwakuni. Then, suddenly, the rumor became official that the squadron was going to Vietnam – pucker, pucker, **PUCKER!!!!**

It was hard to believe that the squadron was going off to war. One of the “ring-knocker” lieutenants in the squadron said at an all pilots meeting, “I’ll believe all this stuff about Vietnam when MABS (Marine Airbase Squadron) leaves town.” The executive officer responded that MABS was in the process of loading out and departing that very day. That was a wake-up call and the end of all speculation!!! **continued...**



Advance party of VMA-311 departing Iwakuni to

1964 – 1966

All Officers Meeting. Stubby Stender puts out word about deployment to Vietnam.



load aboard the LST – next stop, Vietnam.

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

The Tomcats in 1964-66:

1. LtCol Bernard E. Stender (CO)
2. Maj Jack Parchen (XO)
3. Maj Speed F. Shea (OpsO)
4. Maj Donald L. Rowe (MaintO)
5. Capt Leonard T. Preston (ASO)
6. Capt George C. Psaros (Logistics)
7. Capt Cary Watkins (Admin)
8. Capt Miles Mixson
9. Capt Anthony Capozza
10. 1st Lt Rod Daley
11. 1st Lt Richard L. Norris
12. 1st Lt Gerald Madison
13. 1st Lt Brendan McKay Greeley
14. 1st Lt Thomas K. Griffith
15. 1st Lt Roy Stocking
16. 1st Lt Robert Polhamus
17. 1st Lt Monty Doyel
18. 1st Lt Lyle Prouse
19. 1st Lt Kirby Schnell
20. 1st Lt Steve Sewell
21. 1st Lt Eugene J. Shea
22. 1st Lt Thomas Eldridge
23. 1st Lt Richard L. Johnson
24. 2nd Lt Bill Burg
25. 2nd Lt Augusto Maria Xavier
26. 2nd Lt Thomas Hampton
27. 2nd Lt Jerome T. Bertrand
28. 2nd Lt Ellard B. Jarrell

Ground Officers:

1. 1st Lt Don Stone
 2. 1st Lt Robert Nieuman
 3. 2nd Lt Aram Najarian
 4. CWO-3 William Wenglare
- Flight Surgeon: Navy Lt Lowell T.
"Zeke" Niebaum
- Sgt Major: SgtMaj Adam

Before leaving Iwakuni, MAG-12 conducted a so called "group grope" launching 24 A-4s from -225 and -311 on May 11, against an island target several hundred miles southwest of Iwakuni. The 12 VMA-311 aircraft were led by Lt Kirby Schnell, since Stubby Stender had radio trouble shortly after take-off and had passed the lead to Schnell, his favorite section leader. Everyone in the squadron always suspected there was something wrong with LtCol Stenders' helmet or his airplane (WL 00) because the electrical problem kept recurring.



Mac Greeley sitting on his personal effects wondering w

1964 – 1966

In mid-May, the squadron's expeditionary equipment was loaded aboard an LSD, the USS *Comstock* (OIC Maj Jack Parchen) and an LST, the USS *Washoe County* (OIC Capt Tony Capozza accompanied by SgtMaj Adamski). This advance element of six officers and about 75 enlisted men embarked on May 16 and sailed south for Chu Lai, landing on May 24.

In the meantime, VMA-311's airplanes and pilots remained at Iwakuni awaiting departure orders. The pilots mostly had a good time and things got a bit wild and risqué – after all, the squadron was headed off to war. The base commander, a Navy captain, was annoyed by (perhaps jealous of) all the good

times the remnants of the squadrons were having. "Some" Navy wives (accompanied tour wives) were complaining about the behavior of the squadron personnel. One or two of them were sympathetic and joined the party. The culminating event was the demolition derby, in which several personal motor vehicles, which were purchased in Japan by squadron members (VMA-225 & VMA-311) and which no one wanted to buy, were actually destroyed by one method or another. The base commander went "high and right" and was definitely glad to see the squadrons gone.

May 29 - 30, 1965, were sad, but exciting days. VMA-311 departed in flights of four for NAS Cubi Point, with all aircraft arriving by May 30. VMA-225 had begun departing for NAS Cubi a couple of days prior. NAS Cubi Point was to be the staging facility that MAG-12 squadrons would use for movement to their new home at Chu Lai, RVN. Over the next 7-10 days the squadrons awaited instructions to fly off to Chu Lai, usually in flights of two or four. (Staggered departures were necessary because the runway and adequate parking areas were still under construction.) While awaiting fly-off orders, squadron members occasionally visited Olongapo for some debauchery. All VMA-311 airplanes and pilots were in Chu Lai by June 15.

(Ed. Note: Col Bertrand wrote this piece in February 2005. Bill Burg, Tony Capozza, Jack Harris, Dick Jarrell, Jack Parchen, Lyle Prouse, Don Rowe, Kirby Schnell, Steve Sewell, Speed Shea, Roy Stocking, and Cary Watkins contributed. Stay tuned for the next installment, "Tomcats Go To War," in the Spring '07 issue of the A-4Ever.)

continued...



where in the hell in Vietnam the squadron was going.

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE

1964 – 1966

PART 2 – THE TOMCATS GO TO WAR

As you will remember: When the VMA-311 Tomcats began to stabilize in September 1963, no one realized that they would be the last Marine A-4 squadron stabilized for deployment to Japan to be dedicated to the Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP). Nor did they realize this deployment would quickly lead to the expeditionary airfield in Chu Lai in response to the widening conflict in Vietnam. This is the Part II. Part I was published in The A-4Ever, Vol. 13, No. 1, Winter 2007.



The BOQ.

THE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

Some 50 miles south of Da Nang, Chu Lai was just inland from a long bay on the South China Sea. The runway was about 500 meters from, and parallel to the beach, and was located in a long, flat dry lake bed – which turned into a shallow lake during the monsoons of October through December. The airfield was planned to be 8,000 feet long and 102 feet wide – constructed of aluminum planks, called M2 Matting. Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 10 and engineers from the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing labored to build the runway from May until mid-June; however, only 3,700 feet of runway and one short taxiway had been completed by June 1. An arresting gear (MOREST) was installed to facilitate arrested landings.

The final installation was properly called an expeditionary airfield.

VMA-311's advance party (which arrived by ship) pitched in and assisted MABS-12 in erecting tents on the sand for housing, as well as working areas for

the two squadrons. Chu Lai living was rather primitive, at least in the beginning; but it was on the beach with cool breezes and damn few mosquitoes. Because it was not close to a large population, there wasn't much danger of attack. Plus, Marines had established good security around a wide perimeter (TAOR) of the base.

On June 1, four aircraft from VMA-225, led by Col Noble, CO of MAG-12, landed at Chu Lai. A four-plane element from VMA-311, led by LtCol Stender, was delayed one day at Cubi Point and landed at Chu Lai on June 2. The four aircraft were immediately refueled, armed and equipped with two Jet Assisted Take Off (JATO) bottles. Shortly thereafter, a flight of four aircraft, led by Maj Parchen and consisting of three other pilots who had traveled to Chu Lai in the advance party (1st Lt Roy Stocking, 1st Lt Dick Norris and 1st Lt Gerry Madison), launched to strike Viet Cong forces attacking the city of Quang Ngai, 20 miles south of Chu Lai.

continued...



Be it ever so humble – Chu Lai from the air.

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

From the very beginning of flight operations at Chu Lai, there was a shortage of JP-5 on base. The solution was to make a JATO takeoff with ordnance, fly to a KC-130 airborne tanker, load up with fuel, go to the target, return to the tanker, and then land. The next flight would do it all over again. Within a few weeks the fuel “crisis” was over and more normal operations prevailed (especially after the runway was lengthened to 8000 feet).

JATO takeoffs became routine. So routine in fact, that when Chu Lai received a large batch of JATO bottles, no one thought to look at what kind of JATO bottles MAG-12 had received. The JATO bottles came in two types: 15 degree bottles and 30 degree bottles – the 30 degree bottles were designed for KC-130 aircraft.

Late one afternoon at dusk, an aircraft was loaded with one 15 degree bottle and one 30 degree bottle. When the bottles were fired during the takeoff roll, a sideways moment was created, sending 1st Lt Dick Jarrell’s aircraft almost completely off the runway before getting airborne. The pilot radioed the tower and told them that something was terribly wrong, but the word never got passed to the squadrons.

Later that evening when it was completely dark, 1st Lt Monty Doyel had the same thing happen; but that time, the aircraft did go off the runway, plowed through the dirt, hit the landing mirror, clipped off parts of the crash truck and ripped a drop tank to pieces, miraculously becoming airborne while dripping fuel all over the area. The difference in the two takeoffs was literally night and day – the pilot during the day could see and “caught” the relative motion. The pilot at night couldn’t see, and therefore could not react fast enough.

After flying around for 15 minutes and almost running out of JP, Lt Doyel was told he had to eject. His words were discouraged, almost tearful, “Oh no!” He ejected in the dark at sea and was picked up by a helicopter. (The aircraft engine was left running at idle, because there had been a case in which an ejection seat had not fired and a power-on controlled crash landing is a better alternative than an uncontrolled one without an engine.) After his ejection, the *Skyhawk* continued to fly around aimlessly, and it was quite a dangerous air show for those watching from the beach at Chu Lai. The airplane had everyone



Lyle Prouse in his suite. Officers lived eight to a tent.

1964 – 1966

1st Tomcat combat mission after arriving from Cubi Point.

L-R: Roy Stocking, Jack Parchen, Dick Norris, Gerry Madison.



looking up and ducking. Maj Speed Shea was airborne at the time and attempted to no avail to shoot the meandering plane down. The A-4 flew for 12-15 minutes after the ejection, eventually running out of fuel (or stalling) before it crashed in the South China Sea. Needless to say, flight operations ceased that evening until the problem with JATO bottles was figured out.

Throughout June, MAG-12 aircraft continued to arrive at Chu Lai as revetment parking spaces and taxiways were developed on the airfield. The rear guard personnel of VMA-311 arrived from Cubi Point on 17 June. Elements of VMA-214 (Blacksheep) started arriving at Chu Lai on June 22. By that time, most of the full 8,000 feet of runway was available for takeoffs, and JATO was no longer necessary; however, almost all landings made use of the arresting gear (MOREST), requiring an LSO for every landing. With the Blacksheep in town, 60 aircraft were aboard Chu Lai.

The 8,000 foot runway didn't last long because the ground on which the M2 matting had been laid was mostly sand. Within 90 days, the runway was cut in half, and the old section was torn up to allow backfill with a new sub-surface using red clay from the nearby hills. After that was accomplished, the runway was resurfaced with matting. Throughout the first 4-5 months at Chu Lai, the runway was a work in progress with sections being torn up and replaced or repaired on a continuing basis. Consequently, JATO take-offs and arrested landings remained commonplace.

On August 10, four VMA-311 aircraft conducted a special strike in the Northern I Corps area, marking the first use of CBU munitions (cluster bomb units) by Marine forces.

From August 18-24, 1965, MAG-12 aircraft participated in Operation STARLIGHT, in support of a 7th Marines amphibious-heliborne search and destroy operation south of Chu Lai. This very successful operation was recognized by a Presidential Unit Citation for MAG-12 squadrons.

On September 19, 1965, Col Leslie E. Brown took command of MAG-12, replacing Col John Noble.

During October, VMA-225 pilots assigned to the SIOP mission at Iwakuni reached their milestone of one year of overseas time and returned on individual orders to CONUS. Newly arrived pilots of VMA-224 took over their airplanes. On October 15, the first elements of VMA-211 began arriving at Chu Lai. When that movement was complete, four squadrons and eighty airplanes were on the base: VMA-311, VMA-214, VMA-211 and VMA-224.

In the early hours of October 28, ten to twelve Viet Cong penetrated the TAOR and attacked the flight line at Chu Lai, where they were engaged by members of the crash crew and MAG-12 security forces. Eight VC were killed. The VC attackers managed to totally destroy three MAG-12 aircraft and damage several others. VMA-311 suffered only minor damage. *continued...*

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

The Tomcats in 1964-66:

1. LtCol Bernard E. Stender (CO)
2. Maj Jack Parchen (XO)
3. Maj Speed F. Shea (OpsO)
4. Maj Donald L. Rowe (MaintO)
5. Capt Leonard T. Preston (ASO)
6. Capt George C. Psaros (Logistics)
7. Capt Cary Watkins (Admin)
8. Capt Miles Mixson
9. Capt Anthony Capozza
10. 1st Lt Rod Daley
11. 1st Lt Richard L. Norris
12. 1st Lt Gerald Madison
13. 1st Lt Brendan McKay Greeley
14. 1st Lt Thomas K. Griffith
15. 1st Lt Roy Stocking
16. 1st Lt Robert Polhamus
17. 1st Lt Monty Doyel
18. 1st Lt Lyle Prouse
19. 1st Lt Kirby Schnell
20. 1st Lt Steve Sewell
21. 1st Lt Eugene J. Shea
22. 1st Lt Thomas Eldridge
23. 1st Lt Richard L. Johnson
24. 2nd Lt Bill Burg
25. 2nd Lt Augusto Maria Xavier
26. 2nd Lt Thomas Hampton
27. 2nd Lt Jerome T. Bertrand
28. 2nd Lt Ellard B. Jarrell

Ground Officers:

1. 1st Lt Don Stone
 2. 1st Lt Robert Nieuman
 3. 2nd Lt Aram Najarian
 4. CWO-3 William Wenglare
- Flight Surgeon: Navy Lt Lowell T. "Zeke" Niebaum
Sgt Major: SgtMaj Adam

Monsoon rains – totaling 30 inches per month – settled in at Chu Lai from October through December. The rains contributed heavily to the rapid erosion of the red clay foundation that the aluminum runway was laid upon. Runway conditions became very poor, and everything on or near the runway was covered with an ugly coating of brownish red mud.

In November, the Tomcats began participating in both day and night "classified" operations against the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. The heavily fortified positions of radar-controlled anti-aircraft artillery – the "Guns of Tchepone" – made that location a foreboding, unpopular and dangerous target area. From November through February, the squadron started receiving Mk. 4 gun pods, which greatly helped MAG-12 execute close air support (CAS) missions.

On November 25, 1965, LtCol Jack Harris replaced LtCol Bernard Stender as CO of VMA-311. The XO, Major Jack Parchen (The Black Tortilla), left the squadron to become the CO of MABS-12.

During this period, all the squadrons at Chu Lai went through personnel reassignments (especially pilots) from top to bottom, in order to facilitate smoother transitions for aircrews when their rotation date came up (based on one year in combat). The intent was to spread the combat experience level in each squadron, to facilitate the assignment of replacement pilots when they began to arrive.

During December 1965, VMA-311 rotated out of country to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, for a planned thirty days of refitting and a well-deserved rest and recuperation (R&R) period. The period stretched to sixty days total. For the rotation, the squadron traded their A-4E aircraft for A-4Cs, because the more capable "E" model was needed in country. When the squadron left Chu Lai for Japan, the "frozen" squadron concept in the Marine Corps, as VMA-311 had experienced it, came to an end.

VMA-223 replaced VMA-311 at Chu Lai when the Tomcats departed for Iwakuni –leaving MAG-12 with a full complement of eighty airplanes and four squadrons. That rotation set up the future R&R schedule for all A4 squadrons assigned to MAG-12.

During the personnel reassignments, 1st Lt Lyle Prouse, an original member of VMA-311 who had been transferred to VMA-223, was tapped by BGen Marion Carl to be his *aide-de-camp*. Lyle and the general eventually became life-long friends.

While at Iwakuni, the squadron took advantage of the Japanese culture and planned a skiing trip to Miho (Mt. Daisen). Led by the new squadron CO LtCol Jack Harris, 25 Tomcats conned an MCAS Iwakuni C-47 pilot to fly the squadron to Miho and pick them up three days later. The squadron went BIG, and rented TWO rooms at the mountain-top lodge. People slept on futons, thirteen to a room, with a couple of guys sleeping

1964 – 1966



Who can ever forget? The smell of s . . t burning in the morning!

in hall closets. The trip was planned as an opportunity to break a leg, arm or whatever, in order to stay in Japan and not return to Vietnam. The maintenance officer, Maj Don “Digger” Rowe, actually broke his leg and spent the duration of his overseas tour at Iwakuni. He visited the New Manhattan and Sorrento Bars in Iwakuni every night – just to show off his cast and make everyone think he was some kind of war hero!

During the time VMA-311 was in Iwakuni, VMA-211 suffered its first combat casualty when 1st Lt Tom Eldridge was killed on December 29, 1965. Eldridge had transferred to VMA-211 from VMA-311 during the aircrew re-assignments and was still in country. He was hit by .50 cal. ground fire while on a strike south of Chu Lai. Severely wounded, he attempted to return to the airfield but crashed about 12 miles south of Chu Lai.

Following 60 days rest, LtCol Jack Harris led the squadron back to Chu Lai on February 15, 1966, and

VMA-214 flew off to Iwakuni for their R&R. Two hours after LtCol Harris landed, he and his wingman were refueled, rearmed and launched on a mission. The Tomcats were back!

For the rest of 1966, it was business as usual: two hops a day. Slowly, more replacement pilots started to appear; new living quarters (hard-back tents) went up; several new hangars capable of holding 1-2 airplanes were erected; hard-back working spaces with plywood floors were constructed; the runway was permanently extended to 8000 ft. (shortened only occasionally); the chow hall was going good and so was the food; a barber shop was established; and facilities and creature comforts, in general, were getting better. The war was becoming more routine. There was a rumor that construction was planned for a new 12,000 foot concrete runway about 1 mile west of Chu Lai; however, the members of the “frozen” VMA-311 would never see that construction begin. *continued...*

THE TOMCATS OF MARINE ATTACK SQUADRON 311

On March 10, 1966, the original contingent of VMA-311 suffered another combat loss when 1st Lt Gus Xavier was killed about 80 miles west of Da Nang. He was on a mission in support of an outpost of U.S. Special Forces and ARVN troops in the A Shau Valley which was under heavy attack. According to his citation: *"Xavier, the leader of a two-plane flight from Chu Lai, arrived over the camp in predawn darkness and ordered his wingman to orbit above the cloud cover. Xavier descended through the overcast under the glow of parachute flares dropped by an Air Force C-130. He maneuvered his Skyhawk around the mountains and made a low-level bombing pass on the enemy positions. In the face of heavy ground fire, he made*

a second pass, this time strafing the NVA with 20 mm. cannon fire. Xavier failed to pull out and crashed into the side of a mountain. For his actions, Lieutenant Xavier was posthumously awarded the Silver Star."

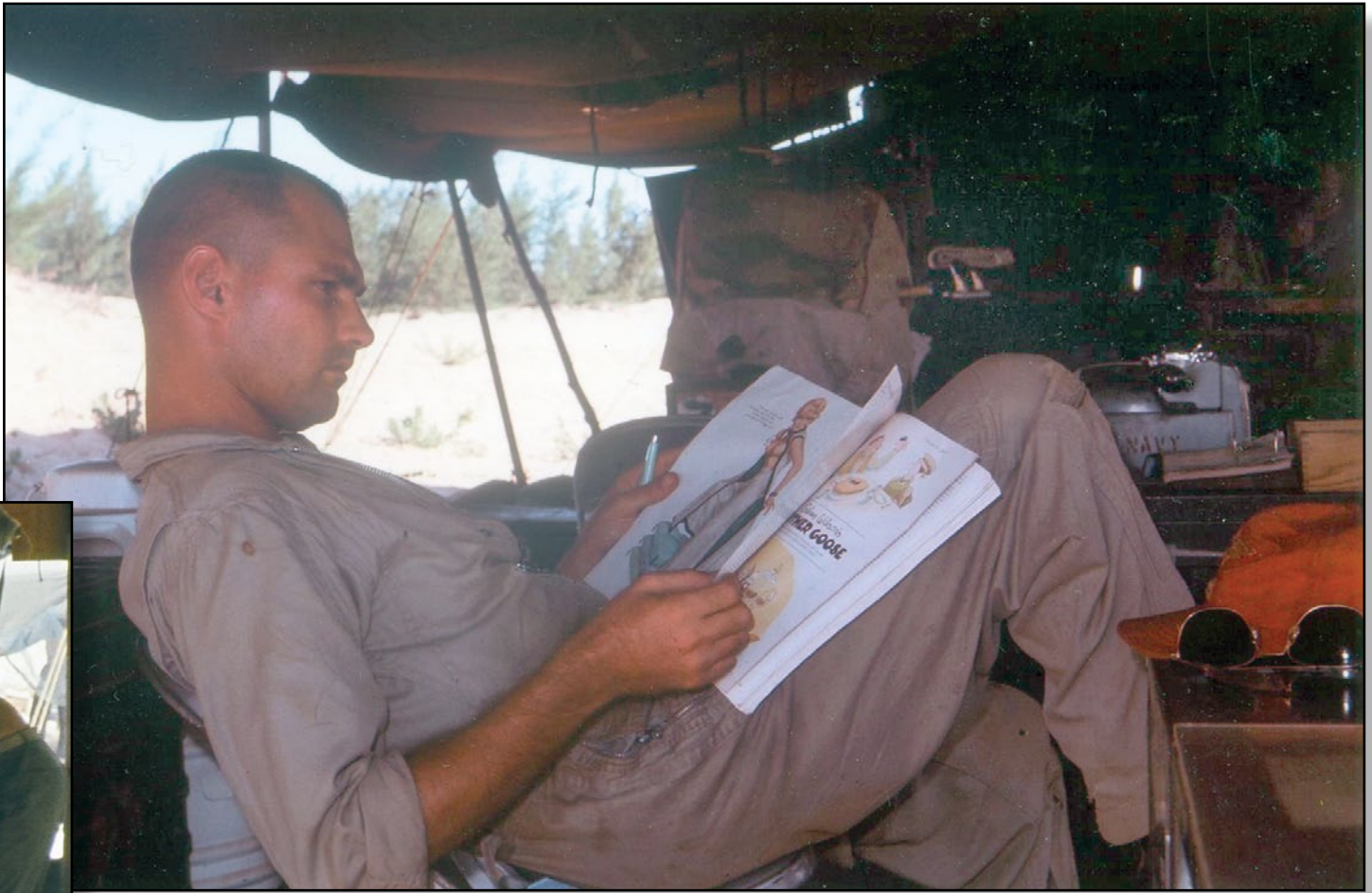
Up until that time, (considering "unit" integrity), VMA-311 had not lost a single pilot. Most every pilot in MAG-12 considered the Chu Lai runway to be the greatest hazard to aviation they had ever seen, or were likely to ever see again.

By late April 1966, the Marines who had deployed with VMA-311 to Japan, and then to Vietnam, were beginning to find their way home. The last original VMA-311 pilot left Chu Lai for CONUS on April 25, 1966.



Speed Shea in the Operations tent – scratching his head and trying to figure out why he joined the Marine Corps.

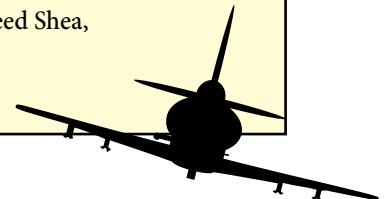
1964 – 1966



Cary Watkins, studying his NATOPS prior to ready room quiz. NATOPS?

(Ed. Note: The Vietnam War was far from over for the Tomcats. The squadron left country for the last time on 27 January 1973, having flown a total of 54,625 combat sorties, dropping 105,000 tons of ordnance during the conflict. CO LtCol John Caldas dropped the last -311 bomb in country.)

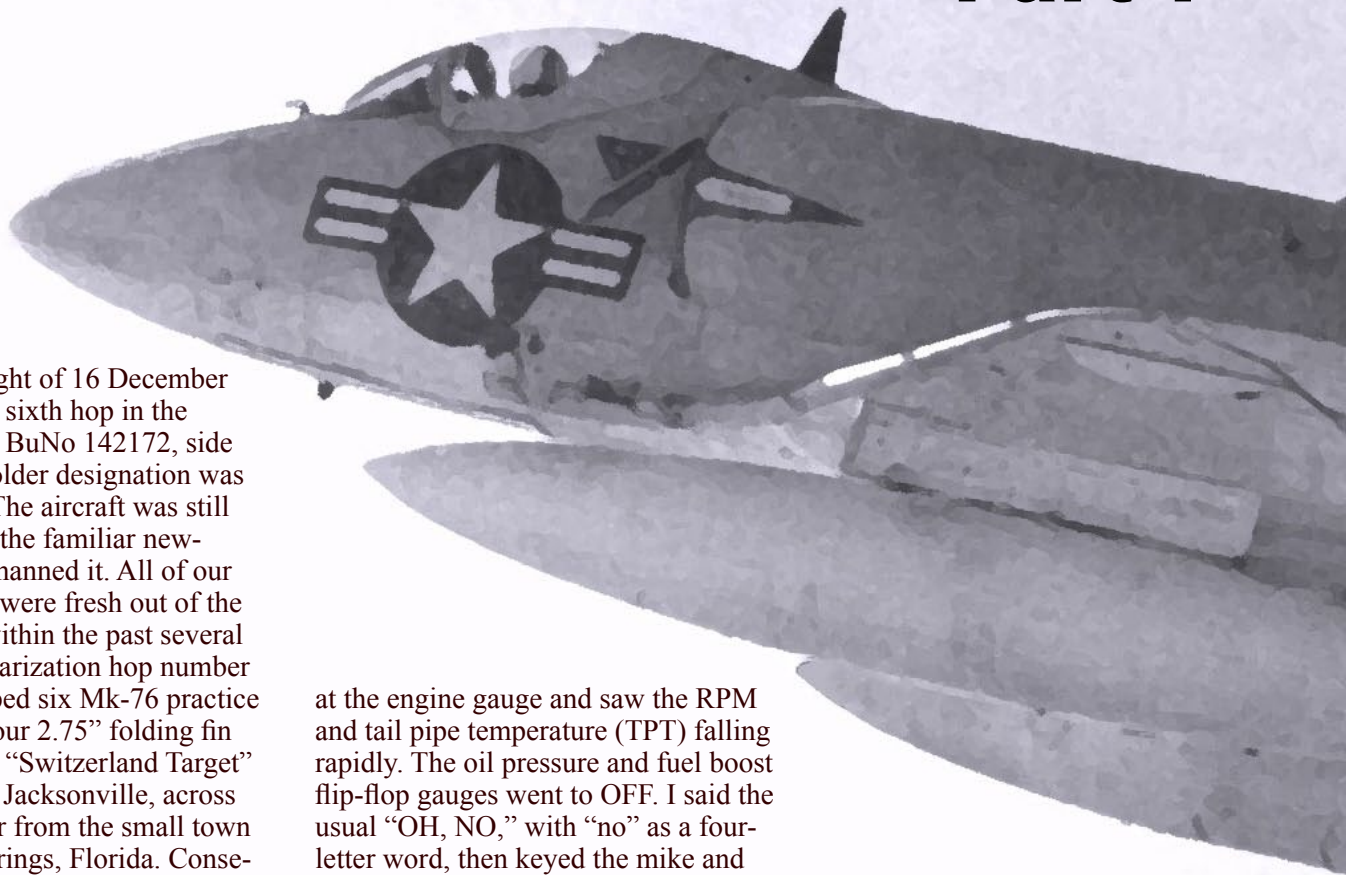
Note: About the author: following flight school, Col J. T. “Birdie” Bertrand joined VMA 311 as a 2nd Lt. After his tour at Chu Lai, he returned to civilian life and became a pilot for Continental Airlines. Birdie stayed in the Marine Corps Reserve and retired with 31 years service, having flown almost every model of the A4. With BGen Jay Hubbard, Col Bertrand helped organize the MCAS El Toro Historical Foundation which gave birth to the Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum, now located at MCAS Miramar. Col Bertrand wrote this piece in February 2005. Bill Burg, Tony Capozza, Jack Harris, Dick Jarrell, Jack Parchen, Lyle Prouse, Don Rowe, Kirby Schnell, Steve Sewell, Speed Shea, Roy Stocking, and Cary Watkins contributed.



Early Skyhawk Flame-Out Problems

By Meredith W. "Pat" Patrick, CAPT, USN (Ret)

Part 1



The ill-fated flight of 16 December 1958, was my sixth hop in the A4D-1 (A-4A BuNo 142172, side number 325--the older designation was current in 1958.) The aircraft was still very new and had the familiar new-car smell when I manned it. All of our A4D-1s in VA-44 were fresh out of the Douglas factory within the past several months. On familiarization hop number five, we had dropped six Mk-76 practice bombs and fired four 2.75" folding fin aircraft rockets on "Switzerland Target" just south of NAS Jacksonville, across the St. Johns River from the small town of Green Cove Springs, Florida. Consequently this was my second bomb and rocket hop in the A-4.

We took off mid-morning, rendezvoused a four-plane formation led by the executive officer (XO) of VA-44 (the East Coast A-4 RAG at that time) and proceeded to the same target. We made a low-altitude, 500-knot pass over the target to set the trim tabs for release conditions and broke up the formation to establish a safe interval between aircraft. As the junior ensign, I flew the number four position. We fired the rockets first with a release from a 30-degree dive angle at about 1,200 feet above ground level and 500 knots true air speed.

On my third firing pass, I pulled up in a four-*G* climb and pushed the throttle forward. Instead of the usual acceleration, I felt the aircraft decelerate rapidly. My body leaned forward into the shoulder straps, and I heard the engine begin to unwind. I glanced

at the engine gauge and saw the RPM and tail pipe temperature (TPT) falling rapidly. The oil pressure and fuel boost flip-flop gauges went to OFF. I said the usual "OH, NO," with "no" as a four-letter word, then keyed the mike and broadcast, "Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! Baker Boy 325, flamed out, pulling off the target." I then told the XO, our flight leader, that I would trade airspeed for altitude and try a relight going over the top when I reached the optimum relight speed of 220 knots. He "rogered," and told me he had me in sight.

As I went over the top of the arc at 5,500 feet and 210 knots, I pushed the nose over slightly and adjusted airspeed to 220 knots indicated air speed (IAS). I went through the relight procedure and waited for the TPT to start to rise. It never did. We had no fuel flow gage in the A-4A; nor did we have any other diagnostic instruments like those available in current Navy jets. So I held the airspeed at 220 and tried one more relight procedure. As I completed each of the four simple steps for a re-light, I read it off to the flight leader and asked him if I was forgetting anything. He told me, "No, you're doing all you can."

I really didn't want to eject and explain why I had just destroyed a \$425,000 aircraft. During the second attempt, I saw the altimeter descend through 3,000 feet and heard the XO say, "Quit fooling with it and get out. Eject now." I glanced up and saw that I was headed toward a small cross-roads village, so I turned right toward a swampy area. I had been holding the nose up to stop the descent because the ejection seat was only good to altitudes above 1,000 feet and 125 knots IAS, straight and level. When I pulled the face curtain, the airspeed was 125, altitude 1,800 feet and rate of descent about 2,000 feet per minute. When I pulled the face curtain, the canopy separated and I was blasted out of the aircraft.

So far so good, but I quickly found out that I was still in real trouble. Flashback: *In between my sophomore*

Part I of this saga was originally published in
The A-4Ever Volume 14, Number 1 (Spring 2008).
Part II was originally published in
The A-4Ever Volume 14, Number 2 (Summer 2008).



and junior years at the University of Florida, I had spent three years in the Army, during the Korean War. I had gone through parachute training as an enlisted troop in December 1952, and had 22 static-line parachute jumps while serving with the 10th Special Forces Group in 1953 and 1954. In the early stages of training, we had to climb up into a tower about 20--30 feet high, wearing a parachute harness; hook up to a cable that descended at about a 10--15 degree angle, jump out and slide down to the ground. The training taught us to exit the airplane in the right position and then to make a proper parachute-landing fall when we contacted the ground. There was always a grizzled old sergeant at the bottom of the slide. (He was probably about

30 years old.) As soon as you jumped out of the tower, he would scream at you, "You had betta open yo' eyes, look around, and see what you can do fo yo' sef." (All paratrooper sergeants had southern accents.) That translated to: "Don't expect everything to work as advertised; as soon as you clear the aircraft, t open your eyes and take care of any malfunctions."

I reached up, grasped the face curtain firmly and pulled hard with both hands. When the curtain pulled out most of the way, I heard a loud, "BOOM," felt a sharp pain in the small of my back, and was blown clear of the aircraft. As soon as I was out in the air-stream, I could picture my instructor at the bottom of the cable slide training device. I could hear him shouting in that pronounced southern accent, "You had

betta open yo' eyes, look around, and see what you can do fo yo' sef." Consequently, as I cleared the aircraft I threw the face curtain back out of the way and looked around to see what I could do for myself. It made the life or death difference, because I was still attached to the seat by the para-raft lanyard. The lanyard was a yellow nylon ribbon that connected the survival raft located under the aircraft seat to the pilot's flotation gear.

The bright yellow-colored lanyard was wrapped around the shoulder harness locking handle on the left side of the ejection seat, holding the seat snug up against my right hip. I quickly reached out with my right hand and pulled the seat in toward me to get some slack. I then unwrapped the para-raft lanyard with my left hand, and threw the seat forcefully away from me. *continued...*

Early Skyhawk Flame-Out Problems *continued...*

Next, I felt for and found the D-ring for manually opening the parachute. I pulled it hard to try and beat the automatic actuator. It was like pulling on a well-anchored cable; it would not budge. I was plunging, head first, toward the tops of pine trees near the edge of the swamp at which I had aimed the aircraft. My first thought was, "You are a dead man." I tilted my head back, looked toward the ground, and saw a huge dark red-to-orange fireball exploding out from among the trees, as the aircraft hit the ground near the edge of the swamp. I then looked down at the nearest pine tree and could see individual pine needles. My heart nearly stopped, because I knew that if the parachute were not on its way out by now, I really was dead.

Normally, it's eerily quiet when you are falling through the air, and I could hear a whirring noise. It was the familiar sound of rubber bands popping as the parachute was deploying. Rubber bands are used to hold the shroud lines, risers and panels in place when the parachute is packed. They make a whirring sound when they pop in sequence as the parachute opens.

The automatic actuator had fired when I threw the seat away. It had kinked the steel cable leading to the D-ring, which was why I could not pull it. My heart started to race again, as I looked at the pine needles and tried to tell whether the chute was going to open in time. I shifted

There was almost no wind, so the parachute just collapsed around me. It was a good thing, because all I could do was lie there for a few seconds. Almost immediately, however, I could feel a big grin growing inside my oxygen mask as a tremendous sense of elation welled up inside me. I stood up, popped the oxygen mask off, took my helmet off and looked up at the beautiful blue sky with puffy white, fair weather cumulus clouds drifting by. *Life was good.* The pine needles smelled like expensive perfume and my whole body unwound as I looked up at that beautiful sky and shed a few tears of elation and relief. I hurt all over, but it didn't matter. I was alive with no broken bones or other serious injury.

The A-4A parachute was only 26 feet in diameter and was designed for survival, not for a comfortable landing. My back hurt like hell from the ejection, because the older seats were fired by a 37-millimeter cannon shell and were not as friendly as the rocket motors used today. The hard impact with the ground didn't help. (Many of my contemporary pilot friends have had serious, long-term, back problems stemming from their ejections. I have been extremely fortunate and have had no long term effect at all.) We had no survival radios, so I popped an orange smoke signaling device in the intersection of the dirt roads where I had landed. I then spread my chute out, and stood in the

"My first thought was, 'You are a dead man.' I tilted my head back, looked toward the ground, and saw a huge dark red-to-orange fireball exploding out from among the trees, as the aircraft hit the ground near the edge of the swamp."

away from the thought that I was a dead man, and said to myself, "*Oh, shit, man this is going to be close, this is really going to be close.*" I then felt a hard jerk at my shoulders when the chute opened with me falling headfirst, face down toward the trees. The hard jerk swung my feet and legs down toward the ground and straightened me out. I had no time to enjoy the feeling, because I was probably less than a hundred feet off the ground. I could see to my right front a Y-shaped intersection where three dirt roads joined. I grabbed the two risers in that direction and pulled down hard on them to start a slip toward the little opening formed by that Y intersection. I had to lift my legs up to clear the last pine tree, but I made it into the small clearing and smashed into the Florida sand. I tried to do a parachute-landing fall to cushion the impact, but my timing was a little off and the impact stunned my whole body.

middle of it to make myself more visible for rescue.

In less than ten minutes, a reconnaissance version of the F9F-8 flew overhead and rocked his wings to let me know he had me in sight. He circled my position and guided the helicopter in. Roughly ten minutes later, I could hear the helicopter approaching and popped another orange smoke. I rolled up the parachute, held on to it to prevent it from getting sucked up into the blades and got out of the way. The helicopter landed in my little clearing, and we exchanged big smiles and enthusiastic thumbs-up signals. They loaded my parachute and me aboard and flew me over to the helicopter pad next to the hospital at NAS Jacksonville. The flight surgeons checked me over, gave me three fingers of rot-gut brandy and a bottle of aspirin, and then released me in time for happy hour.

In typical Navy fashion, the aircraft history card wasn't updated to reflect the accident cause.

Official USN history card for BuNo142172

22 Mar 1957 - BAR FA - El Segundo, CA
01 May 1957 - VA-83 - NAS Oceana, VA
23 Dec 1958 - VA-172 - Aboard USS *Saratoga*
28 Feb 1958 - VA-172 - NAS Cecil Field, FL
06 Sep 1958 - VA-44 - NAS Jacksonville, FL
16 Dec 1958 - Accident - NAS Jacksonville, FL
16 Dec 1958 - Striken - 1AA1
16 Dec 1958 - (VA-44 AD-325) engine flamed out due to fuel exhaustion near NAS Jacksonville, FL
Ens. Pat Patrick ejected safely.



VA-44 patch

The Accident Investigation

The mishap board had asked me for a detailed statement of what happened, and I gave them probably more detail than they wanted. They did not let me read their draft report, however, until it was essentially complete. At that time, the Operations Officer, CDR Jim Homyak, called me in and let me read the almost smooth, draft. The story the report told was that the aircraft, BuNo.142172, side number 325, had flown a field carrier landing practice hop the night before, and when it was returned to the line, the ground crew failed to refuel it. I manned the aircraft the next morning and failed to complete the checklist, including the push-to-test of the fuel gauge and check of fuel quantity. The aircraft would have had only about 2,500 pounds of fuel onboard, which was exactly the amount that I would have needed to take off, rendezvous, get to the target and make three rocket passes. Consequently, I had run the aircraft out of fuel and would have had no symptoms prior to flame-out. We had no low-fuel warning light in the A4D-1. The mishap board said it was 100 percent pilot error.

While I was reading this report, I was picturing the huge orange-red fireball I saw while falling, face down toward the pine trees, waiting for the parachute to open. I thought, "No way!" I described the fireball to CDR Homyak, and he agreed to go back out in the helicopter and take another look. He found that the swampy area where the aircraft impacted had been severely burned for 25 yards around the impact point and agreed that the aircraft was clearly not out of fuel at impact. He also noted that there was a substantial amount of JP-4 still floating on the water in the hole formed by the crash. The cause was changed to "undetermined." I have been very suspicious of mishap boards ever since.

After four working days and a weekend off, recovering from the soreness, I was back in the cockpit.

This was one of about nine aircraft that the A-4 community lost during the fall and winter of 1958-1959. The flameouts were occurring without any warning symptoms; and we lost about four pilots because several of the flameouts were at an altitude too low to eject. We would learn on 21 February 1959, the probable cause of the majority of the flameouts we experienced. *continued...*

Early Skyhawk Flame-Out Problems

By Meredith W. “Pat” Patrick, CAPT, USN (Ret)

Part 2

*Ed. Note: Ensign Pat Patrick suffered two catastrophic engine flameouts in A-4B aircraft in just over two months – surely a world record of some sort (especially considering that he survived to finish a long and productive Navy career). Part I of this saga was published in **The A-4Ever** Volume 14, Number 1 (Spring 2008).*

Not Again!

I ditched A4D-1 bureau number 142176 (side number Baker Boy 326) on 21 Feb, 1959. That was one of the coldest days that Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Florida, had experienced in several years. While I was briefing the instructor pilot (IP) on my navigation and weapon delivery plan, it was 27 degrees. The

at 41,000 feet. In fact, I have timed the climb out from the weapons release escape maneuver in a clean A-4A at less than six minutes from 100 feet to over 40,000. (The climb schedule was 370 knots indicated to .80 indicated *Mach* number).

We flew down the East Coast of Florida to just south of Homestead AFB, turned and crossed the Everglades, then returned up the West Coast of Florida to Deadman’s Bay. It was an incredibly beautiful day with crystal-clear visibility and a few puffy cumulous clouds. As we cruise climbed from 41,000 to just over 47,000 feet during the high altitude portion of the flight, I could see the entire peninsula of Florida and I thought, “Man, this is the life for me.”

was involuntarily leaning forward in the shoulder straps. I glanced to my right to pick up the instructor pilot who was sliding by on my right side with full speed breaks extended. I shook my head as he went by and deployed the emergency ram air turbine (RAT) to keep electric power and hydraulic pressure while I set up for another relight attempt.

I had read everything I could find about flying since I was about eight years old, and one consistent bit of advice from all of the old aviators had been to always have a place to go when you are in trouble. They counseled that when you change operating areas you should always look around and find the safest place to go when the engine quits. I had selected the two-mile-wide section

“My fallback plan was to fly to the middle of the river, line up with the long axis of the river, stall the airplane, and eject. That would allow the aircraft to fall into the river and do no harm to the people and houses on either side of the river.”

temperature had climbed only to 29 when I hit the water just before noon.

I was scheduled that Saturday morning for a high-low navigation flight with a simulated nuclear weapon delivery at Stephens Lake target near the end of the flight. The target was just south of NAS Cecil Field, Florida. I had two 150-gallon droppable fuel tanks on the wing weapon stations and a 1,200-pound, concrete filled “shape” simulating a Mk-12 nuclear weapon on the centerline bomb rack.

After takeoff, the instructor pilot flying chase and I climbed to 41,000 feet. The A-4A weighed only 8100 pounds dry and had 7800 pounds of thrust, so at light weights it climbed like a rocket. Even with the extra fuel and shape, it took us very few minutes to level off

I then descended to 100 feet at 420 knots and flew in to the target. I led our two-plane formation on the final run in to the target at 100 feet and 500 knots. I delivered the weapon with a 45-degree medium-angle-loft maneuver and went over the top, inverted, while executing the half-Cuban-eight escape maneuver. We ran out away from the target at the planned 1,100-foot burst height and 570 knots indicated air speed. When clear of the simulated safe overpressure ring, we climbed to 5,500 feet, turned across the Orange River Bridge, and headed north up the St. Johns River to enter the traffic pattern for runway 5 at NAS Jacksonville.

Soon after crossing the bridge and near the east bank of the St. Johns River, I felt that awful deceleration again. I

of the St. Johns River just northeast of NAS Jacksonville. My fallback plan was to fly to the middle of the river, line up with the long axis of the river, stall the airplane, and eject. That would allow the aircraft to fall into the river and do no harm to the people and houses on either side of the river. The shallow river was also a good parachute landing spot close to both helicopter and boat rescue facilities. It was also close to the hospital at NAS Jacksonville if I needed medical treatment quickly.

At that time, however, runway 27 looked like a good option for a flame-out approach. I really didn’t want to eject, especially since from recent experience I knew how much it hurt. I traded airspeed for altitude while turning in toward runway 27, broadcast the *Mayday*, and

told the tower my intentions. The tower and the instructor pilot both “rogered” and the tower cleared me and gave me priority for the landing. As I turned through about 45 degrees position, I was descending again through about 5,200 feet with a little excess airspeed, but not enough to make the runway. My landing gear and flaps were still up, and drop tanks still on. I could soon tell I wasn’t going to make it. The velocity vector that I drew with my mind’s eye ended in the water about 50 feet short of the concrete seawall. The flame-out approach was no longer a good plan.

I immediately shifted back to the original plan and headed for the center of the wide section of river. I still had electric power from the RAT and told the IP what I was up to. He “rogered” and kept position by doing a weave back and forth over the top of me as I headed the few thousand yards up the river. I kept bleeding off airspeed so as to reach a stall as high off the river as I could manage.

When I arrived over the center of the river headed north, I pulled the nose up into the stall. I was at 2,800 feet and 112 knots. The aircraft shuttered and banged as it entered the stall, and I pulled hard on the face curtain with both hands. I pulled hard three times against a hard metal stop and it didn’t budge. I knew immediately that I was dead because never before (or since) was I able to recover an A-4 from a full stall in less than 3,200 feet. (Of course, I have never practiced one starting in the very dense air at 3,200 feet, either.) My next thought after, “*You are dead,*” was, “*At least you can look good.*”

What I meant was that I wanted to show my squadron mates that I never gave up and was fighting it all the way. So, in order to “look good,” I released the face curtain and noticed that the aircraft nose had already fallen through the horizontal and was nosing over toward the river while I had been pulling on the face curtain. I grabbed the stick and

shoved it further forward to increase airspeed as rapidly as possible.

During the stall, the left wing had rocked down into a near 90-degree angle of bank, so as I shoved the stick forward, I was now aligned 90 degrees to the long axis of the river, headed almost due west, instead of paralleling the long axis. While pushing the stick forward with my right hand, I reached down to the emergency release handle, pulled it, and blew the drop tanks off the wings. I had wanted to land on them if I could have shot the flame-out approach, but now I needed them gone for two reasons: to get airspeed as quickly as I could to recover from the stall; and to have the flat undersurface of the wing and fuselage available to ditch on without having a drop tank dig in and cartwheel me at impact.

I also locked my shoulder harness with my left hand, just in case. I still didn’t really believe that I could pull this off, but that was a part of looking good. They would find me properly set up when they fished my body out of the water. When the drop tanks blew off, the airspeed needle zoomed up immediately to 155 knots and I started trying to pull the nose up to round out the descent.

During the stall, I had no electric power and therefore no radio, but when the airspeed came up the RAT began to function. Consequently, I again had electric power and better hydraulic boost for the controls. I pulled back on the stick until I felt the airflow just begin to separate from the wings, then began to ease off and pull again to the edge of separation. I kept it, by feel, at or near the optimum angle of attack until I rounded it off about 10 to 15 feet clear of the water. When I had stopped the descent and still had not hit the water, I thought, “Hey, maybe!”

I could hear the IP’s voice on the radio. His voice was very deliberate; he was enunciating every word carefully,



because he knew he did not have time to say it twice. He said, “You had better put it on, you are running out of river.” I had planned to hold it off the water until I reached 125 knots then ease it onto the river very flat. His call was just in time because as I glanced up, I could see very large trees, very close.

I glanced at the airspeed indicator, saw 135 knots, and thought, “That’s close enough.” I then eased off on the back-pressure against the stick to put the belly of the aircraft onto the water as flat as I could. Because my eyeballs were now less than seven feet off the water, I could see that I was drifting very slightly to the right with a quartering tail wind. There were very small ripples on the water, which gave me good depth perception but not enough wave height to catch a wing tip. The conditions were near perfect for impact.

When the aircraft hit the water, I can remember starting forward and to the right and then it was lights out. There was no pressure and no pain of any kind. I just entered a very deep sleep instantaneously. The next awareness I had was waking up with my head hanging down on my chest and the helmet feeling very heavy. I could not believe it. I was still alive. *continued...*

Early Skyhawk Flame-Out Problems *continued...*

No one had ever survived a ditching in an A-4 or F-8, the two newest aircraft in the fleet at the time. I could see translucent light straight up and thought I was resting on the bottom of the shallow river. I thought, "Okay let's get out of here." Emergency procedures say pull the ditching handle and it will blow the canopy off and cut you loose from the seat with your parachute and para-raft still attached. So, I pulled the ditching handle on the right side of the seat and stood up. I banged into the canopy, which was still locked and closed. I sat back down and thought, "*You have got to be s_____ing me. What else can go wrong?*" My next thought was, "I have survived this ditching and I am not going to die in this airplane." I reached for my survival knife, which was strapped to my right calf and started to pull it out to scribe an X in the Plexiglas and bash my way out. We had been taught this for a last-ditch escape effort.

Before I got the knife all the way out of the scabbard, I thought, "Wait a minute, dummy, you haven't tried the manual open handle." So I slid the knife back into the scabbard and reached over with my left hand with a backhand motion and pulled the canopy handle aft. Boom! The canopy blew aft and up a few feet, but it was still attached behind the seat. I stood up, put my right foot onto the seat, and pushed the canopy further out of the way with my helmet. I was very surprised to learn that I was still on the surface and the river was just beginning to flow over the canopy rail and into the cockpit as the aircraft settled toward the bottom.

I learned later from the air controllers in the tower, who could see all of this plainly, and from the IP who was also a close-in witness, that it was only about 12 seconds from when the splash went up until I crawled out of the cockpit. The reason I thought I was on the bottom was that the huge splash was still subsiding while I was going through all of the emergency procedures and made it look like I was under water.

The IP said he could not believe what he saw. The little A4 left a small rooster tail in the water just before impact, but

when it hit the water it did not plane or skip across the water as he thought it would. It dug in, stopped within the length of the aircraft, and turned almost 90 degrees to the right while stopping instantly. It then was totally obscured as the huge splash went up and covered the aircraft completely for the next several seconds. When the splash subsided, the IP was very surprised to see that the aircraft looked essentially intact and was still afloat.

I pushed away from the aircraft as it settled and inflated one side of my Mk-3C flotation gear. I then started working on getting rid of my parachute and para-raft and realized that I was tangled up with the para-raft lanyard and a couple of shroud lines from the partially opened parachute. I couldn't get the shoulder harness fittings released with my flight gloves on. They were very slick when wet. So I took off the gloves, released the fittings, and once again reached for my knife. It was still there. I pulled it out, cut the para-raft lanyard and shroud lines, then put it back in the scabbard.

Those cuts freed me from the parachute and life raft, but it was all I could do with my hands. When I pulled them out of the water I couldn't believe what I saw- my hands were so cold they just stopped functioning. It looked like my fingers were locked in a partially curled position. I wanted to inflate the other half of my flotation gear, but the hands just didn't work.

I could hear a helicopter approaching, and when I looked toward the sound there were two HS-3s with Marine markings just crossing the riverbank headed for me. I thought, "Well, at least one thing is going right; that is a very fast response." As luck would have it, the two Marine helicopters were departing on a cross-country flight, returning to New River, North Carolina, and just happened to time their departure right for me. One of them had an old "horse collar" rescue device and lowered it to me from a hover. My hands didn't work, but I managed to work my right elbow through the horse collar, roll through to my right, and hook it with my left elbow too. They reeled me up and delivered

me, once again, directly to the hospital at NAS Jacksonville.

The flight surgeons only kept me long enough to fill out some forms and reassure themselves that I was uninjured. I had a dark bruise under my right eye from having stretched the shoulder harness far enough to make contact with the glare shield. I also had a minor cut on my left thumb from cutting it while freeing myself from the entanglement. Other than that I was just sore all over. Every muscle and bone seemed to hurt, but all body parts were intact.

The aircraft that I ejected from two months earlier in December 1958, was Baker Boy 325, and the one that I ditched in February was Baker Boy 326. The Operations Officer, Commander Homyak, announced to the ready room that I would never, ever, be allowed to fly 327.



This accident prompted several important changes to the A-4A and A-4B and subsequently to all modern jets. Because I could not eject and was able to ditch the aircraft pretty much intact, the long-running problem with the engine was finally diagnosed conclusively. We had lost many A-4As over the previous three months. (I believe we lost nine aircraft and four pilots, but my memory is not clear on the exact numbers.) The engines had quit with no advance warning of any kind. Except in this case, the evidence was destroyed when the aircraft crashed and burned. Included among the destroyed aircraft was the A-4A I had ejected from following a flameout on 16 December 1958.

Lessons Learned, and Fixes

This ditching revealed the reason for the numerous flameouts. The spline that connected the high-pressure fuel pump to the engine's accessory gear drive was failing after only 20 to 100 hours of operation. Instead of being mounted on a firm track to keep the spline normal to the plane of rotation, the pump was mounted on four bolts. When any bolt loosened, the pump would lose its alignment normal to the plane of rotation and the spline (which operated at extremely high RPM) and would grind itself to a nub immediately. This instantly shut off all fuel flow to the engine and an abrupt flame-out resulted with no warning and no chance for a relight. *continued...*



From Dave Dollarhide

This is said to be the first successful A-4 ditchingI never heard of a successful ditching in a Scooter before reading this. This was Pat Patrick's second engine failure in just a few weeks. I got it from Skip Wood, who watched the event from the seawall.

It also takes me back to another A-4 ditching in the St. Johns River, just before I joined the reserves in 1970. Chuck (Spanky) Kellahan lost his engine turning final for RW 27 at NAS JAX, but didn't punch out. As I recall, he blew the canopy, then hit the water just short of the runway. For some reason, he didn't have his shoulder straps connected and was killed when his head hit the top of the windscreen. There was speculation that he had removed the harness to allow him to twist around in the cockpit during the dogfight just prior to returning to NAS JAX.

Then there was Dan Condon, who punched out at the other end of the runway around 1973. I was flying his wing and watched the fire from his ejection seat. The airplane pan-caked into the Ortega River, followed by a good chute and just half a swing before hitting the water. I called out the helo, while circling at a few hundred feet over his head. It was the weekend and boats were all over the place. One pulled up to Dan, filled with drunken A-7 pilots from Cecil on a ski trip. They were applauding the impromptu air show and wanted to know if he wanted a "pull" around the river. I took this photo the next day.

Early Skyhawk Flame-Out Problems *continued...*

As soon as the cause was determined, all A-4A and B aircraft were grounded for inspection and replacement of the pump mounting. The extent of the problem was apparent when all remaining A-4As and Bs on the VA-44 ramp (about 60 aircraft) were inspected and about 30 percent of them were found to be on the verge of failure. Fixing this problem alone certainly reduced the A-4 accident rate by a very large factor.

Additionally, the failure of the ejection seat resulted in the addition of the alternate ejection handle between the pilot's legs to back up the face curtain which was at the top of the ejection seat behind the pilot's head. Prior to this accident, Navy jets had had only a face curtain with no alternate handle. Many crewmen were later saved because under high-g loads they could not reach the face curtain, but could eject by pulling the alternate handle. Also, in the event of a problem immediately after catapult launch, the alternate handle can be activated faster than the face curtain. Clearly, the addition of the alternate handle proved to be useful beyond the original intent of providing a backup in the event of face curtain failure.

Seven years later, in October 1966, the Chief Petty Officer who had supervised the ejection seat shop at VA-44 when I had the accident had a confession for me on the day of his retirement from VA-125 in Lemoore, California. At the time, he told me that the problem with the ejection seat was a bad design. According to his story, the routing of the cable between the face curtain and the actuators was faulty. According to him, they had figured out a fix so it wouldn't happen again. His confession was that they had lied about the design problem. The riggers had just installed the cable wrong, and it was pulling in the wrong direction when I yanked on the face curtain. A change was made so that the cable could only be routed in the correct direction.

Also, because I had demonstrated that a pilot could survive a downwind ditching at 135 knots, a pressure relief valve was installed in the side of the cockpit to equalize pressure and allow the pilot to get the canopy open and exit more easily under water. Before that time, there had been no survivors of ditchings in A-4 or F-8 aircraft, so there had been no incentive to be concerned about underwater escape.

Because I had trouble releasing the parachute connections with wet gloves in the water after escape, new "Koch fittings" were also designed with serrated edges to allow actuation with slick, wet gloves.

Many lessons were learned from this experience, and the key fixes were made quickly, before A-4s were allowed to fly again. In addition to all of the necessary mechanical fixes that this accident brought about, the biggest lesson learned was, "Don't ever give up. Keep fighting it all the way, even if it is just to look good."

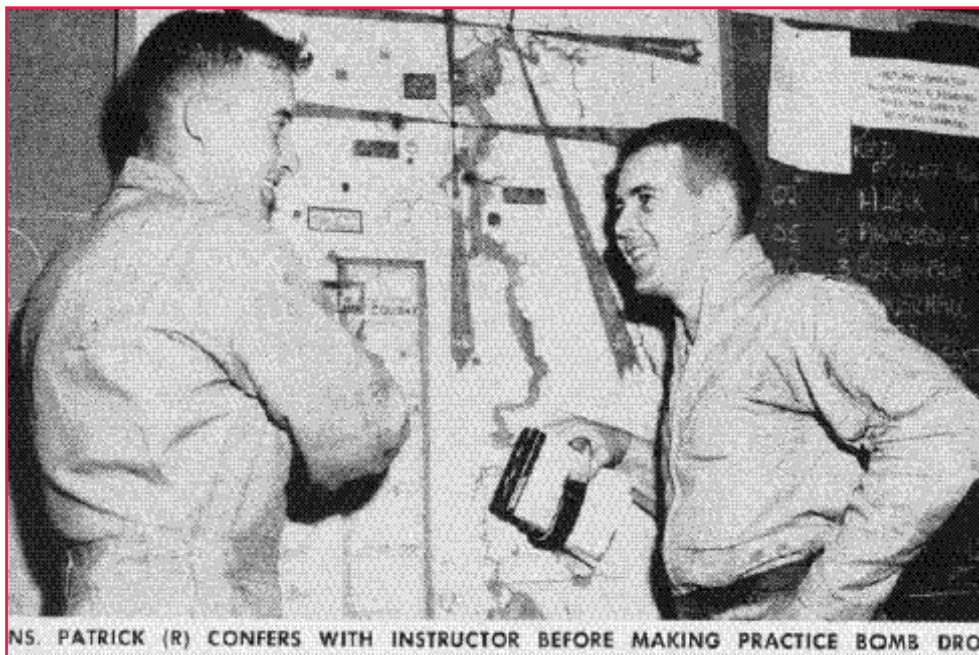
USN History – A-4B 142176

21 Mar 1957 - BAR FA - El Segundo, CA
25 Apr 1957 - VA-83 - NAS Oceana, VA
25 Dec 1957 - VA-172 - Aboard USS Saratoga
28 Feb 1958 - VA-172 - NAS Cecil Field, FL
23 Jul 1958 - VA-44 - NAS Jacksonville, FL
21 Feb 1959 - Accident - NAS Jacksonville, FL
28 Feb 1959 - Striken - 1AA1
21 Feb 1959 - (VA-44 AD-326) engine flamed out and ditched in St John's River, FL - Ens. Pat Patrick rescued

Scooter's Forever!

THEN AND NOW

From Pat Patrick: I can't remember if I told you guys that when I did a study at the Center for Naval Analyses a few years ago, I uncovered the accident statistics for the A4 in 1958 and the same data for the F/A-18C an equivalent strike fighter for the year 2001. The accident rate for the A4 was 80 per 100,000 flight hours (actually in those days the number was related to 10,000 flight hours so it was 8 per 10,000 flight hours). The same number for the F/A-18C was 1.77! It is 44 times safer to fly strike fighters today than it was in 1958. Now that is real progress. And, a lot of us worked very hard for many years through several careers to make that happen. An interesting pun is that "that was no accident."



NS. PATRICK (R) CONFERS WITH INSTRUCTOR BEFORE MAKING PRACTICE BOMB DRO

DOUGLAS AIRCRAFT COMPANY

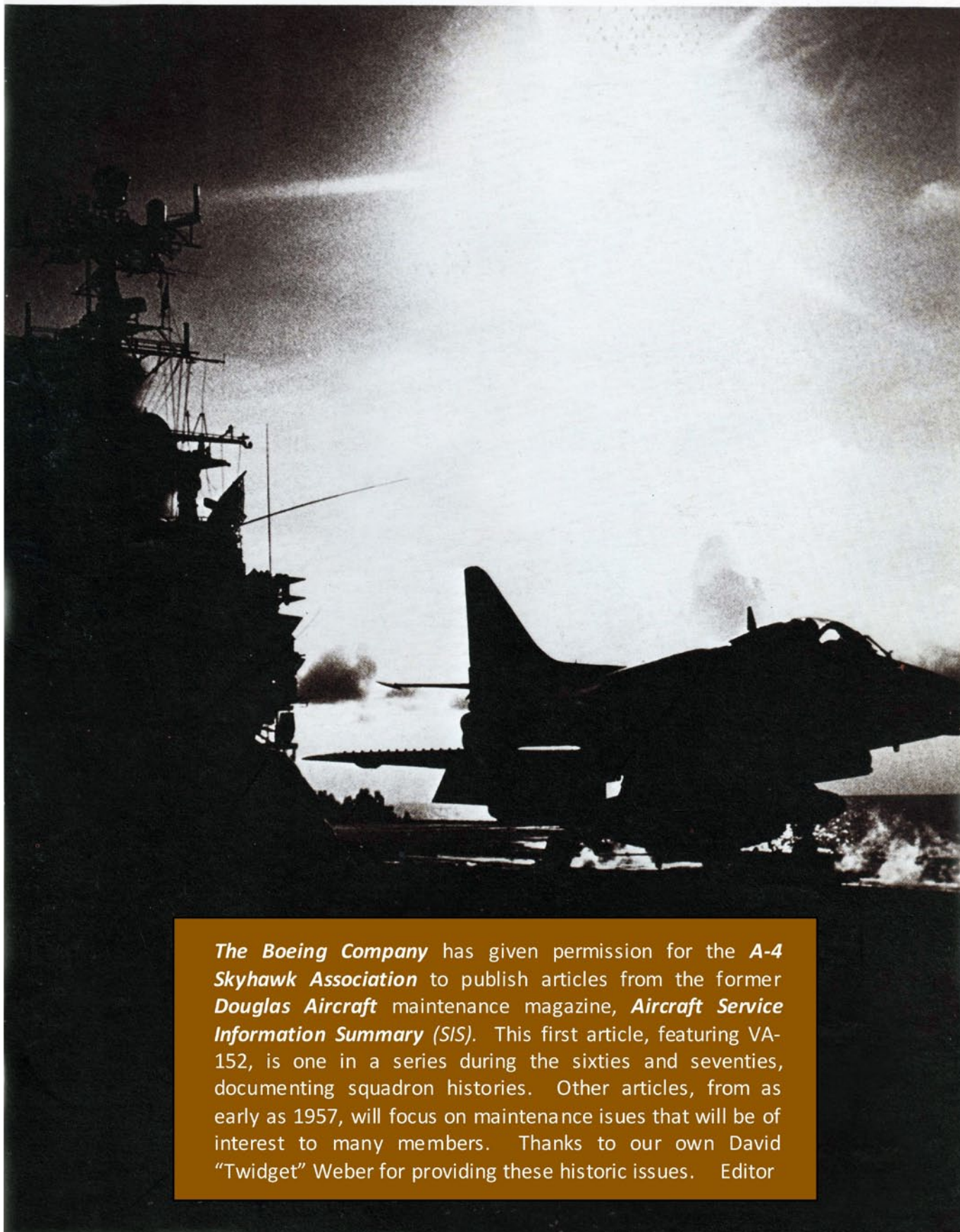
MCDONNELL DOUGLAS



FEBRUARY 1970 ISSUE

SIS

SERVICE INFORMATION SUMMARY



The Boeing Company has given permission for the *A-4 Skyhawk Association* to publish articles from the former *Douglas Aircraft* maintenance magazine, *Aircraft Service Information Summary (SIS)*. This first article, featuring VA-152, is one in a series during the sixties and seventies, documenting squadron histories. Other articles, from as early as 1957, will focus on maintenance issues that will be of interest to many members. Thanks to our own David "Twidget" Weber for providing these historic issues. Editor

Douglas Aircraft Company Service Information Summary february 1970

HISTORY OF ATTACK SQUADRON 152

Attack Squadron 152 has a unique history of mission, men, and aircraft. VA-152 was originally commissioned in 1943 as VF-152, a fighter outfit. The squadron flew the F6F "Hellcat." As an integral part of Cdr. David McCampbell's "Fabulous Fifteenth," squadron pilots helped earn the coveted Presidential Unit Citation for strikes against Wake and Marcus Islands, the Philippines, Palau, the Ryukus, Formosa, and the Bonins. They participated in the Marianas Turkey Shoot when 402 Japanese aircraft were destroyed. In October 1945, VF-152 was decommissioned.

In 1946, the squadron was again commissioned and moved to NAS Alameda, California with CAG-15. There, they conducted Fleet Exercises flying their F8F "Bearcats" aboard the USS Boxer and the USS Valley Forge. In December 1949, the squadron was again decommissioned.

With the advent of the Korean conflict, reserve squadrons were activated. VF-713, a reserve F4U "Corsair" squadron, hailing from Denver, Colorado, was soon to become VF-152. During the Korean conflict, the squadron deployed aboard the USS Antietam (CVS-36) in 1951 and aboard the USS Princeton in 1953. It was during this period that the present squadron insignia was designed and the squadron became known as "The Fighting Aces."

The primary mission of the "Aces" was close air support and by the end of the cruise not one aircraft escaped being hit by enemy fire. Unfortunately, three pilots lost their lives in combat during the Korean conflict. The lives of these pilots were venerated in the design of the squadron insignia in the form of three drops of blood emanating from the spade that has been pierced by the arrow.

In September 1953, the "Fighting

Aces" returned to their new home at NAS Moffet Field, California and traded their battered "Corsairs" for the F2H-3 "Banshee," a night all-weather interceptor. Deploying with the "Fighting Lady" (USS Yorktown) in July 1954, the "Aces" went west to provide continuous night surveillance over the Tachen Islands for the Chinese Nationalists evacuation operation.

In 1956, the "Fighting Aces" became the "Friendly Squadron" and joined Air Task Group Four aboard the USS Wasp (CVS-18). Following this cruise, Fighter Squadron 152 became Attack Squadron 152. In an immediate measure to counter movements of the Chinese Communists to invade the Quemoy-Matsu Islands, VA-152 deployed aboard the USS Bennington (CVS-20) after only seventy-two hours notice. On 12 January 1959, they arrived home and ended 5½ years of flying jet aircraft. At this time, the squadron traded their "Banshees" for Douglas A-1 "Skyraiders," affectionately known as the "Spad."

The squadron's first "Spad" cruise to WESTPAC began in August 1959 with CAG-15 on the USS Hancock (CVA-19) during which the "Friendlies" won the CNO Safety Award. Following the Hancock cruise, VA-152 went aboard the modernized USS Coral Sea (CVA-43) for three more WESTPAC cruises during 1961 through 1963.

Early in the Viet-Nam conflict, VA-152 designated a group of pilots, known as "Detachment Zulu," to train the Viet-Nameese Air Force and operated from Saigon. Soon after, the "Friendlies" made three cruises on board the USS Oriskany (CVA-34). During this period, armed reconnaissance, strike, and rescue missions were flown over North and South Viet-Nam. At the same time, the squadron adopted a new nick-

name, the "One Hundred and Fifty-Second Light Bombardment and Twilight Pursuit Squadron," a name more fitting its attack role.

In 1965, the squadron flew 1944 combat missions in the Douglas "Skyraider" against various targets in North Viet-Nam and assisted in many spectacularly successful Rescue Combat Air Patrol missions in which both Navy and Air Force pilots were rescued from the clutches of the enemy. It was during this cruise that the first enemy surface-to-air missile was fired at a squadron "Skyraider" and was successfully evaded. Although many lives were saved and the damage inflicted on the enemy was heavy, the gain was not without cost. Two pilots were lost and two others were listed as missing in action. As part of the Air Wing-Ship team, the squadron received the Navy Unit Commendation.

Again in 1966, as part of Air Wing Sixteen, the squadron embarked aboard the Oriskany to return to air combat over North Viet-Nam. In addition to assisting in several daring rescues of downed Air Force and Navy pilots deep in Viet-Nam, the squadron's Douglas "Skyraiders" paired up with the faster and less vulnerable Douglas A-4 "Skyhawks" in a team effort to seek and destroy enemy war materials, men, and equipment. This team's versatility resulted in prolonging the active combat role of the "Skyraider" and inflicting heavy damage on the enemy. The story of the damage to the enemy may well have been called a "dissertation on roast enemy truck" for this is truly descriptive of the way enemy trucks looked after they met the squadron's devastating "Skyraiders." At a time when it appeared the enemy was suffering the most, the Oriskany suffered a disastrous fire, which prevented further flight operations. In this fire, forty-four officers and men lost their lives—two of whom were members of the squadron. In addition, two pilots were killed and two were missing as a result of direct action with the enemy. Again, the squadron received the Navy Unit Commendation.

After the Oriskany was repaired, the squadron returned to the Gulf of Tonkin in 1967 as a member of the same Air Wing–Ship team. With the emphasis of operations placed mainly on large scale attacks against targets in the Northeast Triangle of North Viet-Nam, which are the most heavily defended areas, and with enemy defenses on the increase, the squadron was restricted from over-land operations except when conducting Rescue Combat Air Patrol. On the second day of operation, the squadron suffered its only combat loss of this cruise. One day later, the squadron participated in a daring rescue effort in an area twenty-five miles south of Hanoi. This effort was extended for an additional five days and resulted in two of three Air Wing Sixteen pilots being rescued while evading imminent capture by the enemy. The remainder of the cruise was highlighted by several additional rescues of Navy and Air Force pilots from enemy territory and the destruction of many enemy waterborne logistics craft. As the cruise came to a close, it ended nostalgically for it meant the retirement of the Douglas “Skyraider.” The “One Hundred Fifty-Second” was the next to the last squadron to fly the venerable old “Spad” in combat operations. For their efforts, the squadron was again awarded the Navy Unit Commendation.

In a rapid evolution, which is typical of the unique history of the squadron, the pilots, men, and equipment from two other squadrons were ordered in, and in less than five months, the squadron found itself in the Mediterranean embarked aboard the USS Forrestal (CVA-59) as part of Air Wing Seventeen, flying Douglas “Skyhawks.”

Although squadron personnel recall with pride the squadron’s nicknames of “Fighting Aces,” “Friendlylies,” and the “One Hundred and Fifty-Second Light Bombardment,” a new nickname was sought more fitting to the role and conditions that the outfit had more recently encountered. Because of this, a new squad-



ron nickname was adopted and now the squadron is known as the “Mavericks.”

In a salute to the ability of the Douglas “Skyhawk” to get in the air and stay in the air, the squadron dazzled other squadrons of the wing by

amassing over 3000 shipboard sorties from the Forrestal without an aircraft accident.

The squadron is presently shore-based at NAS Alameda grooming its “Skyhawks” for another combat cruise in Southeast Asia.

SKYHAWK LOGBOOK

21 July 1966: Shot Down. Tally Ho!

By Neil Levin

(Ed. note: Neil Levin says he wrote a series of vignettes from his Skyhawk days because "I needed to get something out that I had bottled up for a long time." As a result, "I never have the war dreams that I used to have. Maybe some other Skyhawk pilots will be encouraged to write some of their memories if they at least know I gave it a shot.")

Tally Ho was the code for aerial combat missions flown over North Vietnam. On July 21, 1966, I was leading a flight of four A-4 Skyhawk attack jets. After blowing up a bridge that had two major highways and a railroad crossing it, my aircraft was shot down by enemy anti-aircraft guns, probably one or more 155mm

cannons. I am writing this 30 years later, yet my thoughts about what happened that day are crystal clear in my mind, as if they were locked up all that time. It's time to release them. Following are my thoughts about what was one of the most exciting days of my life.

This is no easy target. In the last three days, six aircraft from the Air Force and Navy have been shot down and three pilots have been killed trying to destroy this bridge. One of our Marine flights tried this morning, but couldn't get near the target because of heavy flak. Keep alert and follow my lead. Let's go flying!

We are airborne. God, I love this. Twenty miles from the target. Dive for

the deck. Full throttle, max speed over 615 mph, tree top level, on course for the target. Step up on my wing, guys. I don't want anyone hitting a tree. Funny thing – we are each carrying six 500-lb bombs and flying so low that a kid could knock us out of the air by throwing his lunch box up at us. Got to stay low because our only chance to get through enemy defenses is to completely surprise them. My wingmen are hanging in good and tight. I will spread them out into combat formation just before we pop up at the target. There's the river checkpoint. Spread out and pop up to 7,000 feet on my signal. Arm bombs and POP UP NOW. Attack! Attack! OK,



7,000 feet – there it is, dead ahead. Jeez, I could almost walk on all this flak. Roll inverted hard now – bridge in bombsight. Pull hard in dive on target – 3,500 ft., bombs away. Got it dead center! Target destroyed. Call off wingmen before someone gets hit. Don't give them an easy target. Tracers zipping all around me. Pull hard and keep jinking. POW!! Real heavy thud rocked the aircraft. I'm hit bad. Also, pain in my side. Smoke in the cockpit – hit air vent and blow it out. Tailpipe temperature over 1,000 degrees Centigrade. Max is 650. Wingmen are screaming, "You're on fire, EJECT, EJECT." Still climbing. Gave Mayday with my position. I have to send my wingmen home before they get too low on fuel to make it. All my training says to eject now before this thing becomes a fireball and blows up. If I do, I will probably be captured. If I can make the 25 miles to the Gulf of Tonkin, I might have a chance. Hell, I'm going for it.

Still together and five miles out over the Gulf. It's getting real hot in here and the engine is gone. I have to go now. Pull the curtain handle over my face, brace my back, and lock my legs and feet. WOW, what a kick in the pants. I'm tumbling over and over. There goes the seat falling away from me. The chute should open automatically at 10,000 ft., so I have to fall a mile. Grab rip handle in case it fails, and I have to, open it manually.

There, it opened. My God, look at my plane! It's just a fireball. Now it's blowing up before it hits the water. Looks like I guessed right. It was time to get out when I did. It's so quiet up here. I'd better pay attention to what's happening. I must have a 35-knot wind blowing me back toward land. Uh-oh. Not only that, but there are two enemy patrol boats coming after me. My God, they're shooting at me while I'm dangling in the parachute!

OK, if they want a fight, they'll get one. Called for help on my radio. Two Air Force and two Navy planes responded. Remember your forward air controller training years before. Give them headings to your area and direct them with turn left, turn right commands to the target. It worked! They just blew both boats right out of the water.

I'm only 500 ft. above the water now.



Hook my raft lanyard to my harness and pull handle to blow it to full size. Now what? Sharks everywhere. I hope they were right when they say sharks are just as afraid of us. Well, I have my knife, pistol and shark repellent. Hope it works.

What's that? As if I don't have enough trouble right now, heavy artillery from the beach is firing at me, making 100 ft. water spouts. My private air force was low on fuel and had to leave. No protection for the moment. They will send a chopper to pick me up. Hope it's soon.

Another predicament. I hit the water OK, but got tangled in my chute and had to cut my way out of it. Artillery is getting closer. I'm in my raft and they're firing at it. They have the right range, but are off about 100 yards to the right.

Thank God! I can see two Marine choppers on the horizon. The enemy stopped firing. That means they see the choppers too and will throw everything at us when they hover to pick me up. I'm going to outsmart them. My training in naval gun fire spotting tells me that if I give them something to shoot at, they will correct to the opposite side. I'm dropping a smoke flare next to my raft. Let them shoot my raft while I dive in the water and swim to where they were shooting. They won't shoot there

again. They will bracket in on the smoke because they think that's where the choppers will go.

Lord, I haven't been good about praying, but as you know, I have only prayed for others, never for myself. I felt your presence in my plane and you, or someone, told me to go for the beach and when to eject. They have been shooting at me for 35 minutes now, and either they are bad shots or you haven't let them get lucky. Now I need a little more help to get out of this mess, and I sure would appreciate any you would care to give. Well that's all I have to say – Amen.

It worked. The sharks didn't eat me and one of the choppers swooped me out of the water with a horse collar. Here I am landing on the USS *Princeton*, a Marine helicopter carrier.

After a hot shower, I convinced the CO of a chopper squadron to fly me to land where I hitched a ride in an Army Caribou to my base in Chu Lai. We landed in a driving rainstorm and almost crashed. Seemed an appropriate way to end this day. After many martinis with my buddies that night in our make-shift officer's club, I got a good night's sleep.

(Ed. note: this story was first published in Skyhawk NEWS, spring/summer 2000, Vol 6.2/3.)



In the Gulf of Tonkin in 1967, a VA-153 A-4E takes the barricade aboard USS *Coral Sea*. The airplane had suffered combat damage from anti-aircraft (AAA) ground fire, preventing the left main gear from extending. The pilot's name is unknown. Photo by Gene Corsini, VA-153 pilot.



Puresome Unplugged

~ YP's Excellent Adventures ~

From the A-4ever, Summer 2009 Vol 15-1

The Night Thing

by Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

Certainly, the demon that used to live out there at *Mach One* was dead. By the time Puresome hit the tactics phase of the Naval Aviation Advanced Training Command, it was ordained that the student's first hop in the F-11 *Tigerjet* would include stroking the afterburner, stuffing the nose over, and no-big-dealing through the "sound barrier." But the Thing that lived at night around aircraft carriers, the Thing with yellow eyes and long teeth that could curdle the righteous stuff of the most steely-eyed Naval aviator, was alive and out there, waiting.

Even Air Force pukers knew about "night noises," mysterious moans and glicking sounds made by one's aircraft that were ominously amplified at night. Patrol pukers knew that night air sucked lift off the wings, and that night over the ocean sea was darker than forty feet up the gastrointestinal tract of the largest dinosaur. But carrier aviators knew the Night Thing was all of that, and on any given night could manipulate the vertigos, the sea, and both ends of the boat to make you look bad, or dead, or both.

Back at university, Puresome's dreams of Wings of Gold were occasionally troubled by sea stories from the fleet that percolated down to his NROTC unit. Night carrier qualifications involved haphazardly hurling an aircraft with a slow-to-spool-up engine at a heaving spot of iron in the ocean; and many who tried were found wanting, and sent off in humiliation to be chaplains' assistants in remote corners of the empire. And there were the dark images of the "Know when, then go!" poster of horrific Crusader prangs that seemed to regularly happen at night. But Puresome knew that there were many rungs of the ladder to hack before he had to face that particular malevolence, and he stuffed his nascent awareness of the Thing into a box and

put it on a far shelf in the back of his mind. But it growled and quivered and waited its time, never very far away.

By and by, Ensign Puresome found himself with Golden Wings, having climbed to the top of the training command pile, only to start over at the bottom of another pile as a "Firp," a Fleet Replacement Pilot, with the Tinker Toy RAG (Replacement Air Group) at NAS Oceana. The "Fist of the Fleet" Squadron would teach him all things *Scooter*; and deliver him to his fleet squadron as a fully qualified frabbing New Guy Nugget who didn't know squat and would be told, "Forget all that stuff you learned in the RAG, because this is how we do it in the fleet!"

All the while, Youthly was flying FAM (familiarization) hops, formation, doing low-levels, learning the fine art of idiot loop, over-the-shoulder bomb delivery of the Doomsday weapon and other such delights on weapons deployment to MCAS Yuma. Previous classes of Firps progressed to the stage of doing hundreds of field mirror landing practice landings, preparatory to the final exam of day and night carrier landing qualification. Each simulated carrier landing pass was closely graded by RAG LSOs (Landing Signal Officers), and Firps had to pass their cold-eyed scrutiny to earn their trip to the boat and carrier qualifications. Puresome watched and listened to their progress with studied indifference and real attention, knowing his day was coming.



Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

And so it happened that the class in front of Puresome went to the boat and three Firps had done their day traps and then refused to fly their night qualifications! They subsequently had their wings ripped off, their swords broken, and were hustled off to Vladavostock, all very publicly!

"*Jerbis Flinderbars!*" thought Puresome, "*it's alive!*" as something dark and evil YOUHAHAHA'ed its way to his mind's center stage.

This frabb-up at the boat constituted the ultimate Naval aviation sin: *it made people look bad*. Therefore, guano ran down hill until a great heap of it landed on the heads of the RAG LSOs respon-

"Night carrier qualifications involved haphazardly hurling an aircraft with a slow-to-spool-up engine at a heaving spot of iron in the ocean; and many who tried were found wanting, and sent off in humiliation to be chaplains' assistants in remote corners of the empire."

sible for certifying students as ready for the boat. Naturally, the LSOs passed on their pleasure at this condition to the lucky students of Puresome's class. They would not frabb up, or they would not pass *go*.

So Youthly flew his fanny off, doing six or seven bounces at Fentress, the auxiliary field set aside for this business, then popping back to hot-pit refuel at Oceana, and returning to Fentress for another go. LSOs snarled and their assistants wrote caustic descriptions of each pass. After a week of two-a-days, there was less yelling; and government issue ball-point pens didn't burst into flame as often, and the students graduated to two-a-nights. Puresome would emerge from these hops with his flight suit soaked and fuming, calooses on his butt, and a

real need for half a glass of good Scotch whiskey.

After nearly 200 simulated carrier landings, the hard-eyed LSOs were as satisfied as they were likely to get, and Puresome got his ticket punched for a trip to NAS Cecil Field and the USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, CVA-42. He listened with great attention to instructions in etiquette around the ship, so as not to play the complete *Delta Sierra* during his ten day and six night traps. No mention was made of the supernatural attraction of thunderstorms to aircraft carriers or possible poltergeist intervention.

The day traps on the *FDR* were fun. On the second day, four day traps were required before going out for night qualifications, and Puresome felt he handled the substantial sink-hole behind the boat with some competence. But, hanging around the rest of the day, waiting for his turn in the barrel that night caused an intense attack of what athletes call “adrenaline build-up,” and what Naval aviators call “the chickenshits.” Even watching the antics of the pre-autothrottle RA5Cs from Vulture’s Row failed to divert him much. Somehow, the wild flapping of their huge horizontal stabilizers and their ponderous wave-off performance, like a leviathan stuck in a tar-pit, seemed to prefigure a certain amount of doom. It did not help to have entirely too much imagination.

Which made it too easy to imagine that the red ready room lighting and the red goggles used for night adaptation had turned everything into some naval level of Dante’s inferno. The trip from the ready room up the escalator was red-lit, as was the flight deck, and the waiting A-4s hulked ominously in the gloom. As Puresome shoe-horned himself and his thoughts into the tiny A-4 cockpit, the Night Thing sensed an opportunity and grinned an evil grin.

Puresome’s first frabb-up was conceptual. Even though he had to fly his carrier approaches with his seat in the full up position so as to be able to see



over the nose of the *Scooter*, he figured that since he would be flying actual instruments in the black-assed night, he would take the catapult shot and fly the pattern with the seat full down, the better to see his instruments. It was a bad idea. He was not used to the seat position, was profoundly uncomfortable, and never managed to line up the TACAN needle and the boat on his first trip around the pattern. Cleverly raising his seat to the normal position solved his instrument scan problem, and the next pattern found Puresome staring at the dim, white drop-lights on the blunt end of the boat and following the meatball down the glideslope, more or less as advertised. But as he got “in close,” he remembered the sink hole that was there during the day and squeeze on a little extra power, and was amazed as the ball traveled upward and he sailed over the wires, his tailhook sending out a shower of sparks down the iron deck.

“Bolter! Bolter! Power and go!” hollered the LSO, and Puresome disappeared into the blackness. Something Evil cackled, but nobody really heard it.

His next pass was identical: Youthly couldn’t help himself, squeeze on a little power against the sink hole that had to be there, sailed over the wires and made more sparks in the night.

“Puresome, you are adding too much power in close and are sailing over the top! Easy on the power and just fly the ball, or you’ll bolter all night!”

“I will be frabbed if I will!” Puresome snarled into his mask. “I will do this!” He realized that there was no place for wailing, doomed dinosaurs or Dante’s gloom, only himself and what

he had to do. He fought the Evil Force to a draw, fixed himself on the job, and flew the *Scooter* around the pattern and trapped.

After refueling, he launched and banged out five more traps, even though the vertigos gave him the sensation of doing aileron rolls down final on the last pass.

“Does that give me a qual?” Puresome squeaked as he taxied out of the arresting gear in the red deck lighting that wasn’t nearly as ominous as it used to be.

The Air Boss allowed that it was. And the Night Thing would have had a hissy fit, but it was not its nature; and there would always be other nights.

Puresome knew that the Night Thing had not gone away, but was always there, waiting. Before his first night trap in his fleet squadron, he went to bed all afternoon and flew his approach a thousand times in his head, and he was ready when he almost lost it when he descended from a pinkie holding pattern in his Tinker Tanker down into the dark. Puresome started thinking about the night trap immediately after the catapult shot on every subsequent night hop, and it was never far from his mind, even while dropping flares and bombs on the godless, rat-eating commies. Sometimes, a good LSO with a calm voice could bring you aboard—despite all the efforts of thunderstorms and supernatural intervention.

The Night Thing might never be far away from Naval aviators, but Puresome knew the important thing was that you could kick its ass.



Read?

you think
we *read*?

Scooter: The Douglas A-4 Skyhawk Story

by Tommy H. Thomason
Reviewed by Bob Hickerson

Scooter, Tinker Toy, Mighty Midget, Bantam Bomber and Heinemann's Hotrod, the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk attracted what is surely a record number of nicknames for such a small aircraft. This plethora of nicknames reflects the affection felt by the many pilots who strapped it on (rather than strapped into it) during its successful half-century career in the U.S. naval forces. In fact, the Skyhawk, which enjoyed a production run of 2960 aircraft, soldiers on today in the air forces of Israel, Singapore, Brazil and Argentina, 58 years after its first flight in 1954.

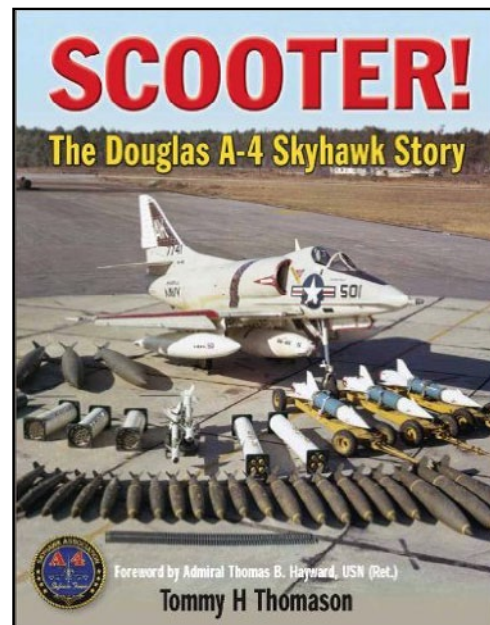
The A4D was the ultimate expression of the genius of Edward Heinemann (although AD Skyraider fans may argue that point), who was chief engineer for Douglas Aircraft in the early 1950s when the A-4 project first surfaced. Heinemann believed that the early jets of the day were too heavy and too complex. Bucking the conventional wisdom of the time, he proposed a simple design that would weigh in at half the expected weight, yet prove capable of meeting the Navy's operational requirement for a lightweight, carrier-based jet nuclear bomber.

Heinemann designed the A-4 to incorporate two seemingly incompatible characteristics: the capability to externally carry the large Mk. 7 nuclear weapon while not exceeding a wing span of 27 feet, 6 inches, the maximum span that could be accommodated on Essex-class aircraft carriers, without a complicated and heavy wing-folding mechanism. Despite its initial design to such specific requirements, the venerable A-4 proved to be very adaptable, and with the advent of the multiple carriage bomb rack, performed capably in a wide range of conventional missions.

Scooter enters a field crowded with excellent works on the A-4, and other reviewers have questioned the need for yet another treatise on this popular aircraft. Earlier books are more readable, more suitable as coffee table decoration or better sources on combat history and employment. Yet in my opinion, *Scooter!* fills a niche not yet taken by providing a comprehensive treatment of the Skyhawk's engineering design and development, an aspect of A-4 history worth preserving. That the author chose this emphasis is not surprising, considering his background in fight-test engineering.

Thomason describes well the many challenges encountered by Heinemann and his design team, especially the tradeoffs and compromises required to meet the design specifications while stripping every possible ounce of weight from the prototype. Especially well documented was the fact that early flight testing and operational evaluation demonstrated that Heinemann's team went too far with weight reductions and simplicity of design, resulting in the need for substantial changes in follow-on versions, especially in the flight control systems. Indeed, the A-4 grew in weight and complexity throughout its lengthy career, yet maintained its well-deserved reputation for making it back to the ship or base no matter how much combat damage it suffered.

To my mind, there's a lot to like about this book. Published in a large, attractive format, the work contains many unusual photos not found in other publications. To illustrate his technical points, Thomason includes many effective diagrams and graphs, some he created specifically for this publication. I also liked the inclusion of informative footnotes which point the reader to additional background information. Finally, Thomason includes sidebars with first-person accounts that I found fascinating, especially CAPT



Jeff Brown's comparison of the A-4 to the A-7, from the standpoint of a pilot that saw combat in both.

On the negative side, I was somewhat distracted by the lengthy comparisons to other aircraft which competed with the A-4 for the nuclear delivery mission in the early days of its development. Later, Thomason devotes an inordinate amount of space to a discussion of the Navy's 1960 VAX/VA(L) competition (the development of a replacement for the AD Skyraider and A4D Skyhawk), including a number of pages of A-7 pictures and description. Additionally, there are some errors in the identification of ordnance in picture captions (which the author has acknowledged and corrected on his blog).

However, in balance, the pluses far outweigh the minuses, and this book deserves a place in any serious Skyhawk library. It's not a fast or easy read, but it rewards the serious reader with an abundance of information not available in any other single work. It will prove invaluable to Skyhawk modelers, and any reader, no matter what his or her experience with the A-4, will learn something from virtually every page.

(Reviewed by Bob Hickerson. This review was first published in the *Proceedings of the U.S. Naval Institute*, December 2012.)



LIGHT ATTACK REUNION



- Saturday, March 11, 2017
- Dreamland Squadron Hangar, Haller Air Park (7FL4), 5323 Air Park Loop West Rd., Green Cove Springs, FL, located 49 miles south of the Jacksonville International Airport
- Fly in or drive in...bring a cool car.
- Formation flyovers, dinner, music and sea stories
- Arrive mid to late afternoon - your choice
- Dinner at 1900
- Till whenever
- **Reservation required, \$20 per person advance charge. Email Dave Dollarhide at davedollarhide@msn.com for details and directions**
- Held in conjunction with the A-4 Skyhawk Association Board meeting on Friday, March 10. For reservations at the World Golf Village Renaissance Hotel, call 1-888-740-7020 and ask for the A-4 Skyhawk Association rate.

IN SUPPORT OF THE A-4 SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION AND A-7 CORSAIR II ASSOCIATION

The A-4Ever Index

Summer 2004 to Fall 2016

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Rahn	Bob	Heinemann's Hot Rod Pt. I (from Tempting Fate by Bob Rahn)	Summer	2008	14.2	18 Skyhawk History
Tambini	Tony	A Simple Fix	Summer	2008	14.2	12 Maintenance/Ordnance
Turpen	Joe	Classic Airframes 1/48 TA-4J Skyhawk (Sneak Preview)	Summer	2008	14.2	15 Modeling
Woodul	Jack	High Country	Summer	2008	14.2	16 Puresome
Fuentes	Gidget	Honoring Admiral Stockdale	Fall	2008	14.3	20 Skyhawk History
Rahn	Bob	Heinemann's Hot Rod Pt. II (from Tempting Fate by Bob Rahn)	Fall	2008	14.3	14 Skyhawk History
Sapp	Denny	An Engine Fire in BUNO 154984	Fall	2008	14.3	13 Skyhawk History
Turpen	Joe	IPMS 2008 Best Skyhawk by Jim Clark	Fall	2008	14.3	22 Modeling
Veronico	Nicholas	Man on a Missile: Blue Angels Fly the A-4	Fall	2008	14.3	9 Skyhawk History
Verver	Gary	Blue Angel Split from Delta	Fall	2008	14.3	1 Cover
Woodul	Jack	Scooter Days at Yum'er	Fall	2008	14.3	18 Puresome
ATSI	Staff	Israeli A-4N Takeoff at Sunset	Spring	2009	15.1	1 Cover
Graham	Bill	Stolen Skyhawk! A LCPL Launches in 1986	Spring	2009	15.1	10 Skyhawk History
Olsen	Ken	The Oley Chronicles: Mishaps at Cecil Field	Spring	2009	15.1	14 Skyhawk History
Turpen	Joe	CARF Models' Large-scale Skyhawk	Spring	2009	15.1	22 Modeling
Vincent	Hal	More on Flight Testing: Early A4D Prototypes	Spring	2009	15.1	17 Skyhawk History
Wood	Drury	More on Flight Testing: Early A4D Prototypes	Spring	2009	15.1	17 Skyhawk History
Woodul	Jack	The Night Thing	Spring	2009	15.1	20 Puresome
Woodul	Jack	Kerosene Cowboys: Manning the Spare (Arrington)	Spring	2009	15.1	9 Book Review
ATSI	Staff	ATSI TA-4 Training Mission	Summer	2009	15.2	1 Cover
Gagne	Jon	Kingsville MWR Unveils the "King Kat"	Summer	2009	15.2	17 Skyhawk History
Gann	Harry	Besides, it's Fun to Fly, Part I of the series	Summer	2009	15.2	12 Skyhawk History
Mersky	Peter	The Rescue of Streetcar 304 (Fields)	Summer	2009	15.2	8 Book Review
Stratton	Dick	A Bad Day: Shot Down over North Vietnam	Summer	2009	15.2	18 Combat
Tullo	Frank	8 Thuds and a Scooter	Summer	2009	15.2	10 Combat
Turpen	Joe	TA-4J by Carlos Garcia	Summer	2009	15.2	23 Modeling
Woodul	Jack	The Tip of the Spear	Summer	2009	15.2	20 Puresome
Dollarhide	Dave	An Old Friend, continued	Fall	2009	15.3	11 Restoration
Gann	Harry	Besides, it's Fun to Fly, Part II of the series	Fall	2009	15.3	12 Skyhawk History
Marsh	Curt	Restoration: VMA-131's 158182	Fall	2009	15.3	23 Restoration
Mersky	Peter	Loud and Clear: the Memoir of an Israeli Fighter Pilot (Spector)	Fall	2009	15.3	19 Book Review
Rauch	Dutch	A-4A 139968 Display at USNA, Annapolis, MD	Fall	2009	15.3	1 Cover
Staff	Editors	Fund-raising Appeal - A-4A 139968 Annapolis	Fall	2009	15.3	2 Restoration
Turpen	Joe	IPMS 2009 Best Skyhawk by Wayne Bowman	Fall	2009	15.3	10 Modeling
Woodul	Jack	Jet Dive Bombing, circa 1960	Fall	2009	15.3	18 Skyhawk Operations
Woodul	Jack	Sojers	Fall	2009	15.3	20 Puresome
Arnold	Bob	A Trip to the Suburbs	Spring	2010	16.1	9 Combat
Carrara	Dino	ATSI: A-4 Skyhawks for Hire	Spring	2010	16.1	12 Skyhawk Operations
Mersky	Peter	Israeli A-4 Skyhawk Units in Combat (Aloni)	Spring	2010	16.1	20 Book Review
Shipman	Richard	Towing the TDU: The Mission No One Wanted	Spring	2010	16.1	16 Skyhawk Operations
Shlomo	Aloni	Excerpt IDF/AF A-4 Skyhawk Shootdown	Spring	2010	16.1	21 Skyhawk Operations
Snedeker	Sid	A-4B 142112 in Flight From Oshkosh to Waukegan, IL	Spring	2010	16.1	1 Cover
Staff	Editors	Skhawk Study Group: Restoration of WHF A-4B	Spring	2010	16.1	15 Restoration
Turpen	Joe	IPMS 2010 Preview	Spring	2010	16.1	22 Modeling
Woodul	Jack	Doggus Delicti	Spring	2010	16.1	18 Puresome
Filmer	Paul	McDougall Douglas TA-4J First Flight	Summer	2010	16.2	14 Restoration
Filmer	Paul	TA-4 N518TA in Flight Marana, AZ	Summer	2010	16.2	1 Cover
Rauch	Dutch	Aircraft Carriers at War (Holloway)	Summer	2010	16.2	22 Book Review

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Turpen	Joe	VF-126 TA-4J by Ricardo Ramos	Summer	2010	16.2	23 Modeling
Woodul	Jack	A Night on the Town	Summer	2010	16.2	18 Puresome
Young	Lucy	Scooter Soars over Middlebury, Vermont	Summer	2010	16.2	13 Restoration
Crist	Ken	A-4s Over Oshkosh at Airventure 2010	Fall	2010	16.3	1 Cover
Gann	Harry	The First TA-4	Fall	2010	16.3	6 Skyhawk History
Holloway	James L.	Tribute to the Tinker Toy Part I	Fall	2010	16.3	10 Skyhawk History
Kiely	Diej	U.S. Marine Corps Aviation Since 1912 (4th Edition) by Peter Mersky	Fall	2010	16.3	22 Book Review
Turpen	Joe	TA-4J Adversary Model in VC-8 Markings	Fall	2010	16.3	23 Modeling
Williams	Mark	Skyhawks Over Oshkosh	Fall	2010	16.3	16 Skyhawk Restoration
Woodul	Jack	Rockets in the Rain	Fall	2010	16.3	20 Puresome
Cameron	Jim	VA-23 Black Knights Host Reunion	Spring	2011	17.1	18 Reunions
Carlson	Ted	Blacksheep Old and New	Spring	2011	17.1	1 Cover
Frommelt	Todd	Skyhawks Still Slipping the Surly Bonds	Spring	2011	17.1	16 Skyhawk Operations
Frommelt	Todd	Centennial Kick Off at NAS North Island	Spring	2011	17.1	20 Skyhawk History
Frommelt	Todd	Israeli Pilot's Last Flight	Spring	2011	17.1	21 Skyhawk News
Holloway	James L.	Tribute to the Tinker Toy Part II	Spring	2011	17.1	8 Skyhawk History
Stanton	D.R. "Duke"	Ah, Memories of the High Jinks	Spring	2011	17.1	15 Skyhawk History
Turpen	Joe	Fujimi 72nd Scale A-4B Maverick Kit	Spring	2011	17.1	21 Modeling
Verhegghen	Robert	A Skyhawk for Belgium	Spring	2011	17.1	12 Skyhawk History
Woodul	Jack	A Near Thing	Spring	2011	17.1	22 Puresome
Dollarhide	Dave	The Dollarhide Log: Restoration of A-4C 149606	Summer	2011	17.2	15 Skyhawk Restoration
Hickerson	Bob	Bury Us Upside Down: The Misty Pilots	Summer	2011	17.2	18 Book Review
Hock	R.G.	Operation Rip Tide 1963	Summer	2011	17.2	12 Skyhawk History
Munro	Pete	Letters from Yankee Station	Summer	2011	17.2	10 Combat
Roth	Jim	Special Pilot	Summer	2011	17.2	16 Skyhawk Operations
Sele	Tim	Build Them Rugged: Ed Heinemann's Vision	Summer	2011	17.2	9 Skyhawk History
Smith	R.G.	A-4 Spotting on the Waist Cat	Summer	2011	17.2	19 R.G.'s Art
Stedman	J.J.	TA-4K 157914 Passes Half Dome in Yosemite National Park	Summer	2011	17.2	1 Cover
Woodul	Jack	Reluctant Shellbacks	Summer	2011	17.2	22 Puresome
Dollarhide	Dave	Skyhawk Ventures A-4C 149606 Takes to the Air	Fall	2011	17.3	1 Cover
Dollarhide	Dave	Skyhawk Ventures A-4C 149606 Takes to the Air	Fall	2011	17.3	9 Skyhawk Restoration
Dollarhide	Dave	AAA Hit Pulling Off Target with Rick Millson	Fall	2011	17.3	11 Skyhawk History
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McBride	J.J.	The Last Combat Cruise of the A-4 Charlies	Fall	2011	17.3	15 Skyhawk History
Powell	Boom	Le Ciel Faucon Francais - 1963	Fall	2011	17.3	12 Skyhawk History
Powell	Boom	Triple Sticks by Bernard Fipp	Fall	2011	17.3	18 Book Review
Smith	R.G.	High Flight	Fall	2011	17.3	17 R.G.'s Art
Turpen	Joe	Trumpeter 1/32nd Adversary A-4E Kit	Fall	2011	17.3	19 Modeling
Williams	Mark	Close Only Country in Horse Shoes, Hand Grenades and Nucs	Fall	2011	17.3	14 Skyhawk History
Woodul	Jack	Viva Espana!	Fall	2011	17.3	21 Puresome
Barnes	Jim	Remembering Bob Rahn	Spring	2012	18.1	13 Skyhawk History
Blair	David	Over the Side	Spring	2012	18.1	15 Skyhawk History
Chinn	Earl	TINS	Spring	2012	18.1	18 TINS
Corbett	Bruce	Crashing the First TA-4	Spring	2012	18.1	12 Skyhawk History
Editors	Staff	Fact or Fiction? Inverted Plugs	Spring	2012	18.1	14 Skyhawk History
Frommelt	Todd	Skyhawks Still Slipping the Surly Bonds - Redux	Spring	2012	18.1	8 Skyhawk Operations
Magee	Hugh	The Nam Dinh Strike	Spring	2012	18.1	16 Combat
Mersky	Peter	Scooter! The Douglas A-4 Skyhawk Story (Thomason)	Spring	2012	18.1	11 Book Review
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Sapp	Denny	Reflections - Viet Nam From Then to Now	Spring	2012	18.1	10 Skyhawk History
Smith	R.G.	A4D-1s Overhead	Spring	2012	18.1	17 R.G.'s Art
Turpen	Joe	Skyhawks in Styrene Part I	Spring	2012	18.1	20 Modeling
Woodul	Jack	Crubfoot Active	Spring	2012	18.1	23 Puresome
Atwell	Gene	A-4s for Malaysia Part I	Summer	2012	18.2	8 Skyhawk History
Duffer	Don	Flying the A-4 Skyhawk: A Great Retirement Job	Summer	2012	18.2	12 Skyhawk History
Frommelt	Todd	Sharing Some Skyhawk Heritage	Summer	2012	18.2	14 Skyhawk History
Hickerson	Bob	Skyhawks: The History of the RNZAF Skyhawk (Simms & Lee Frampton)	Summer	2012	18.2	21 Book Review
Magee	Hugh	No Surprise at Bai Thuong	Summer	2012	18.2	11 Combat
Simms	Don	RNZAF Skyhawks of Kiwi Red 1988	Summer	2012	18.2	1 Cover
Smith	R.G.	Royal Australian Navy A-4Gs over HMAS Melbourne	Summer	2012	18.2	17 R.G.'s Art
Stafford	Roy	Blues Photo Shoot (almost wipeout)	Summer	2012	18.2	16 TINS
Sweeny	Chuck	Do You Have a DFC?	Summer	2012	18.2	15 Skyhawk History
Turpen	Joe	Skyhawks in Styrene Part II	Summer	2012	18.2	18 Modeling
Woodul	Jack	Buffalo Bill	Summer	2012	18.2	22 Puresome
Cartwright	Allan	Dam Busters Photo Shoot	Fall	2012	18.3	34 Skyhawk History
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Frommelt	Todd	Flying Leatherneck Museum Unveils Restored A-4M	Fall	2012	18.3	32 Skyhawk History
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Smth	R.G.	TA-4 at Point Mugu	Winter 2012-13	18.4	9 R.G.'s Art
Turpen	Joe	Skyhawks in Styrene Part III	Winter 2012-13	18.4	18 Modeling
Winchester	Jim	Broken Arrow!	Winter 2012-13	18.4	16 Skyhawk History
Woodul	Jack	After the Beginning (poem)	Winter 2012-13	18.4	8 Poem
Woodul	Jack	The ShriII of the Bagpipes, The Roll of the Drums	Winter 2012-13	18.4	22 Puresome
Elmore	Larry	A-4s Forever (really!)	Spring 2013	19.1	14 Skyhawk Operations
Harris	Jack	Beer Run	Spring 2013	19.1	19 TINS
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Slocum	Scott	Skyhawk Ventures A-4C/Warbird Heritage Fdn A-4B at Oshkosh 2012	Spring 2013	19.1	1 Cover
Smith	R.G.	Blues in Echelon	Spring 2013	19.1	15 R.G.'s Art
Soderman	Arne	VA-164 Ghost Riders Reunite	Spring 2013	19.1	16 Reunions
Stratton	Richard	Tales of Southeast Asia: The First Day of the Rest of My Life	Spring 2013	19.1	7 Skyhawk History
Woodul	Jack	Gone West (poem)	Spring 2013	19.1	20 Poem
Woodul	Jack	The Rocket's Red Glare: July 4, 1965	Spring 2013	19.1	21 Puresome
McCoy	Earl	Skyhawk Ventures' A-4C Cover Photo	Summer 2013	19.2	1 Cover
Williams	Mark	Northwest Members' Event	Summer 2013	19.2	4 Skhawk History
Editors	Staff	Marine Corps A-4 Pilot First to be Saved by Seawars	Summer 2013	19.2	9 Skyhawk History
Sweeney	Charles	Summer of '72	Summer 2013	19.2	10 Skyhawk History
Williams	Rusty	VMA-214 1965-66: Kaneohe Bay, HI, to Chu Lai, RVN	Summer 2013	19.2	14 Skyhawk History
Umbley	Helmut	Who Packed Your Parachute?	Summer 2013	19.2	18 Skyhawk History
Alcorn	Ray	Tales of Southeast Asia: Don't Ever Miss Lunch!	Summer 2013	19.2	19 Skyhawk History
Schneider	Bob	Restoration of Fanny Hill - H&MS-14 Det N	Summer 2013	19.2	20 Skyhawk Restoration
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Penketh	Mike	Flying the F4U Corsair: A TINS Tale to End All	Winter 2013-14	19.4	17 TINS
Paul	Bob	New Beginnings for Proud Warriors: VMA-225 Chu Lai 1965	Winter 2013-14	19.4	22 Skyhawk History
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Lane	Fred	TA-4G Trainer Joins the Australian Fleet Air Arm Museum	Spring 2014	20.1	16 Skyhawk Displays
Woodul	Jack	The Sound of Round Motors	Spring 2014	20.1	21 Puresome
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Woodul	Jack	Fabled Fifteen:The Pacific War Saga of CAG 15 (Cleaver)	Summer 2014	20.2	11 Book Review
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Smith	R.G.	RAN A-4Gs over HMAS Melbourne (#359)	Summer 2014	20.2	15 R.G.'s Art
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Mersky	Peter	Solitary: The Crash, Captivity and Comeback of an Ace Fighter Pilot (Romm)	Fall 2014	20.3	6 Book Review
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Frommelt	Todd	Draken International and Its Kiwi Skyhawks	Fall 2014	20.3	12 Skyhawk Operations
Bittick	Johnny	The TA-4F Laser Designator	Fall 2014	20.3	16 Skyhawk History
Turpen	Joe	Building a VA-46 Skyhawk Model as a Memorial	Fall 2014	20.3	20 Modeling
Woodul	Jack	Cheating Grampaw Pettibone	Fall 2014	20.3	21 Puresome
Robinson	Mike	BAE Skyhawks in Transit Europe to Lakeland, FL.	Winter 014-15	20.4	1 Cover

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Woodul	Jack	Going Downtown: The War Against Hanoi and Washington (Broughton)	Spring	2015	21.1	15 Book Review
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Williams	Mark	Skyhawks In Middle Earth	Summer	2015	21.2	16 Skyhawk Displays
Dollarhide	Dave	TINS! Close Call in the Caribbean	Summer	2015	21.2	18 TINS
Mersky	Peter	Rupert Red Two (Broughton)	Summer	2015	21.2	21 Book Review
Woodul	Jack	Beaver Sinks the Royal Philippine Navy	Summer	2015	21.2	22 Puresome
Crebas	Frank	Draken A-4K with F-35 and F-16 at Edwards AFB	Fall	2015	21.3	1 Cover
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Amber	Rebecca	A-4 Skyhawks Support F-35 Operational Testing	Fall	2015	21.3	16 Skyhawk Operations
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Woodul	Jack	Way Up North	Winter	015-16	21.4	30 Puresome
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Frommelt	Todd	USS Midway Museum Meet the Pilots	Summer	2016	22.2	18 Skyhawk Operations
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Hanche	Morten	Air Combat in the F-35 - An Update	Fall	2016	22.3	15 Skyhawk Operations
Cater	Mike	Walleye Revisited	Fall	2016	22.3	16 Skyhawk History
Duffer	Don	Last Skyhawk in the Boneyard	Fall	2016	22.3	18 Skyhawk History
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