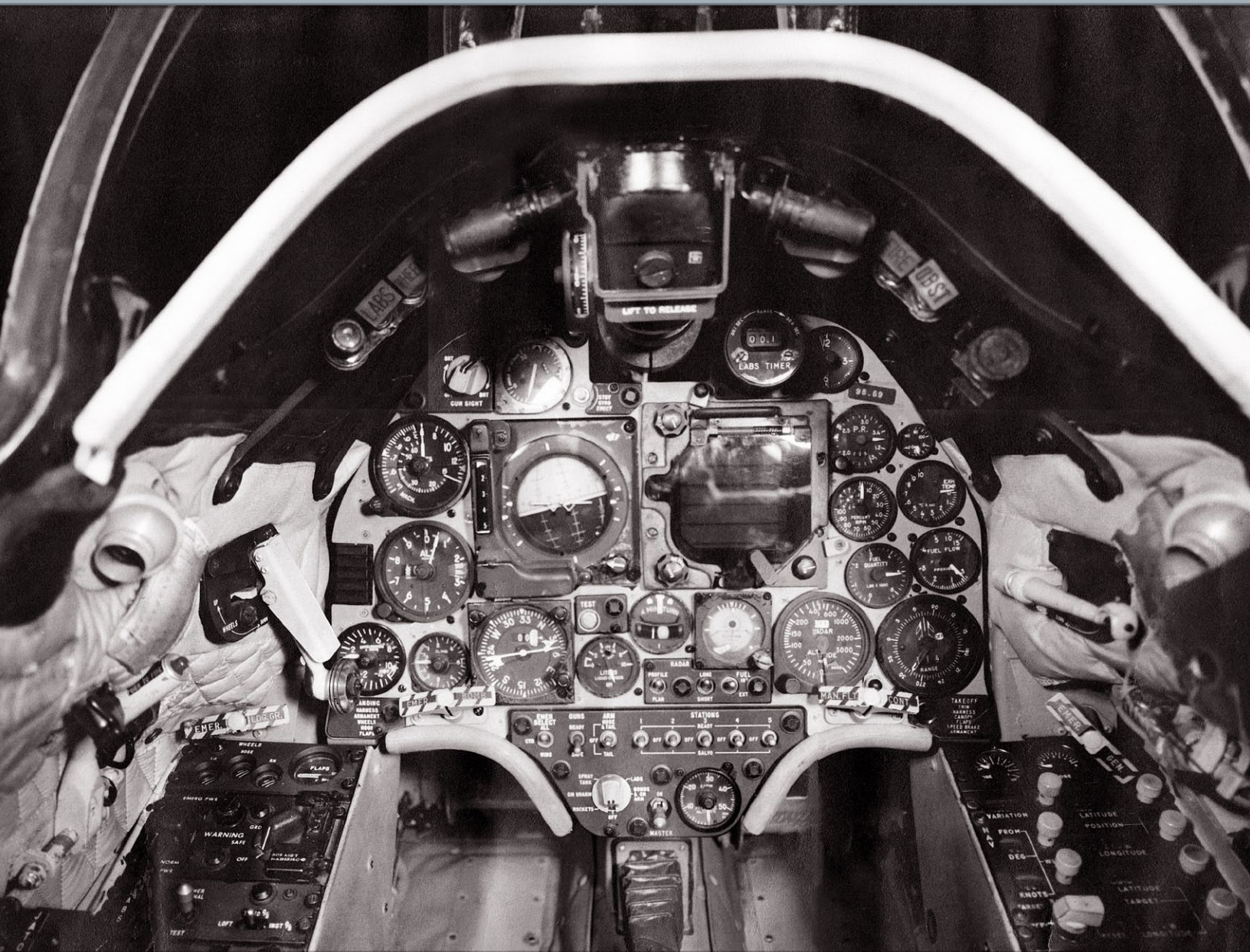


THE A-4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL VOL 25-1



Contents:

Prepare to Launch the QRA
VA-155 Belated Honors
Seeing Zip's Spad
Skyhawk Losses Follow-Up

*Annual Skyhawk Member Meeting
Tailhook Convention • Sparks, NV
September 6, 2019*

Spring 2019

<http://skyhawk.org>



THE PREZ SEZ

By Steve "Dwarf" Linder

Greetings Skyhawk Association Members

Welcome to Spring, maybe! I live in Las Vegas and enjoyed a rare snow storm (4") at the end of February, which was gone in days. We are now into the more moderate weather, which is typical of Las Vegas. I empathize with those of you in the Midwest and East who have had such a long and brutal winter. It reminds me of growing up in Pittsburgh, PA.

Once again, I would like to thank our editorial staff lead by Bob "Raven" Hickerson for their diligent efforts in putting this issue of the A4Ever together. It takes a lot of work, so let them know how much you appreciate their time.

New President Background

(Repeated, if you did not read the Winter digital issue)

My name is Steve Linder, your new 2018-2020 president of the Skyhawk Association. I am a Marine who attended the U.S. Naval Academy, then The Basic School in Quantico, VA. At this time (1970), the Navy could not train enough Marine aviators, so the Marine Corps contracted with the Air Force to provide basic Undergraduate Pilot Training (UPT) for some Marines. I was part of this group and was assigned to Reese AFB in Lubbock, Texas, for the 53-week program. I received Air Force wings in February 1971 and was then sent to VMT-103 at MCAS Yuma, AZ, for air-to-ground, air-to-air, and carrier quals, receiving my wings of gold in August 1971. From there I transferred to the A-4 training syllabus through VMAT-102 for my 7501 MOS.

My next assignment was VMA-214 at MCAS El Toro, CA, for special weapons training and aviation safety officer's school in Monterey, CA, while in the pipeline for WEST-PAC. We flew the venerable A-4E and A-4F and eventually received brand new A-4Ms directly from the Douglas factory in Long Beach. Wow, those new planes smelled like a new car instead of smelling like oil, grease and sweat! By April 1973, no orders to WESTPAC were forthcoming and the pipeline to Vietnam was closed, so I was transferred to H&MS-13 flying the TA-4F and awaiting the pleasure of the Marine Corps. Not wanting to be stuck in some future non-flying job, I requested, and was granted, a transfer to the Advanced Training Command flying students in the TA-4J in VT-24 at NAS Chase Field in Beeville, Texas, for a three-year tour.

After two of my three years in Beeville, I saw a message requesting applicants for the Harrier program, flying the single-seat AV-8A. So, I transitioned out of the Skyhawk in August 1975, went to MCAS Cherry Point for training (VMAT-203 and VMA-542), then overseas to Iwakuni (VMA-513). I later formed Det Bravo when the main body returned stateside in November 1976. After our tour, we did a TRANS-PAC to

bring our six birds home to Yuma, and I went on to be an instructor back in VMAT-203 at MCAS Cherry Point. I left active duty in March 1978, moved to Chicago and began a civilian career in banking.

I retired from my civilian career in 2012, having moved from Chicago to Des Moines, to Salinas, CA, to Las Vegas, where I have resided for the last 25 years. Along the way, I received a master's degree from Northwestern in Chicago, joined the Reserves at NAS Glenview and fought for Reserve billets in California. Eventually, I retired as the OIC of the Marine Corps Mobilization Station in Hayward, CA. Not a glamorous career, but, looking back, a successful one (Tricare for Life is worth all the hassle).

I married the love of my life, Janet, and we now have time to travel and enjoy our retirement. We live in Sun City Summerlin in Las Vegas, and I belong to the Model Builders Club, where I can pursue my lifelong hobby.

Skyhawk Featured in Fine Scale Modeler

A beautiful model of an A-4E (BuNo 151148 from VA-192 on board USS *Ticonderoga*) is featured on the cover and in an article in the March 2019 issue of Fine Scale Modeler (we are seeking permission to print this article in the Summer 2019 issue of The A-4Ever). So standby!

Skyhawk Video on YouTube

You may be interested to know that there are now 48 Skyhawk movies on the A-4 YouTube channel. Grab a drink and some snacks, sit back and reminisce

Reduced Registration Fee for Tailhook 2019

Our immediate Past President, Pete Cole, has secured a \$20 registration fee from the Executive Director of the Tailhook Association for Tailhook 2019, September 5-8.

Registration opens May 1. Go to www.tailhook.net and enter **Skyhawk Association Reunion Group on the form**. Effective immediately, you may book a room in Reno at www.tailhook.net.

Skyhawk Association Board Meeting

The Skyhawk Association board meeting was held on 29 March 2019, in Tucson, AZ at the DoubleTree suites by Hilton at the Tucson airport. I will report on the outcome of this meeting in the next issue.



Steve "Dwarf" Linder



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

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Spring 2019 •

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Dave Dollarhide – Co-Editor.

Gene "Blade" Atwell – Webmaster.

Feature Contributors: George Blosser, Bill "Jigger" Egen, Todd "Hun" Frommelt, Peter Mersky, Boom Powell, Joe Turpen, Gary Verver, Mark "Senator" Williams, Jack "Puresome" Woodul.

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Contributions

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

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

On the Cover: US Navy training photo of an A-4E cockpit taken in 1965 at NAS Lemoore. Original photo print provided by Bob "Boom" Powell.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@skyhawk.org

■ To the Editor:
From: Michael Donnellan
I was attached to a Marine Squadron flying the A-4 Skyhawk. I am looking for information regarding the avionics of the aircraft that was located in the nose. Did this unit emit Radio Frequency radiation? How would I find that out?

Reply from David "Twidget" Weber
Time-frame; location, unit number will help pin down the Skyhawk version; some had RADAR in the nose others did not. RADAR would emit RF; but pilots would not activate the RADAR until airborne. Under certain circumstances other avionic packages would emit RF but again they would not be activated until air-born. Ground testing of those units involved covering emitting antenna with a capture cover to prevent said emissions from interfering with base or ship electronics. UHF radio's emit RF when transmitting voice communications, but are very low powered, especially compared to RADAR and ECM transmitters. The air is full of RF; we live with it every day.

.....
■ To the Editor:
From Joel Madsen (A-4K in New Zealand)
My name is Joel and I do flying out at my local aero club, and as a matter of fact, in the club hangar lies a very special secret that's kept under the cover!



NZ6216 (BUNO 155061-Ed) is sitting in a hangar waiting for a new part of the

Omaka Aviation Heritage centre to be built which will be centered around the Vietnam War! This new extension will prove great for the museum in immortalising the Skyhawks in a bright light, however, the downside is that this takes time and it has been several years with no construction in sight and this has caused the Skyhawk to sit and gather dust and bird poo. It's a sad sight to see whenever I go out there. But one day I decided to gather a few people including the museum owner (He really loves it!) to give it a bit of a clean up and give it a face lift! Please find attached some before and after photos of the Skyhawk after our little cleaning evening from a few months back. I hope this little email finds whoever receives it well and just letting you know on the status of this great piece of history! If you would like any more information on this particular Skyhawk or any of the project Kahu New Zealand Skyhawks just email me! Id me more than happy to respond back with some as much as I know!

Reply from Dave Dollarhide
We appreciate your helping us keep track of A-4s and providing the photos of 6216. Were you involved with A-4s in the RNZAF, or do you know any A-4 pilots and mechanics who were?

Reply from Joel Madsen
I actually have never flown one (I wish I could) **I'm actually only 18.** (Bold print by Editor) I developed a passion for them when I was young as a close family friend who was the one of the head maintenance engineers (who now works for Draken) at my local base and he used to let me and dad into the hangers and in the Skyhawks quite often. I will get you the necessary information on this Skyhawk when I head into the club next time. I will try keep you updated as best as I can about this specific Skyhawk

.....



■ To the Editor:
From Gus Fitch
Greetings: My name is Gus Fitch and I am, by training and inclination an F-4 driver. I am a former CO of VMFA-232 1982-1984 and a former CO of MAG-41 in Dallas, Texas. Although NATOPS qualified in the TA-4, I never had the MOS nor was I assigned to an A-4 squadron. But... I have flown hundreds of engagements, as an adversary pilot in the TA-4 against sections of F-4s and just about every other a/c the Corps flies. Another MAG-15 staff officer and I flew from Iwakuni to the operating areas north of Kadena. We refueled with two F-4's and had three engagements with the F-4 section. We went to the far CAP while the Phantoms refueled again and executed three more engagements. We returned to the tanker and joined a new section of fighters and repeated the previous scenario. We did this six times and ran out of paper on the knee boards documenting the engagements. We burned up three KC-130s worth of gas. Bingo'd into Kadena and had the longest debrief in my career. Almost had a female pilot out of a target towing squadron gun me when the RIO and I both lost sight of the Skyhawk. Never go home after something like that happening. So, do I qualify to at least keep track of what is happening to guys I knew who were A-4 drivers and shipmates at MAG -11 and MAG-12 at Chu Lai, Vietnam.

From Bill Egen
Good to hear from a fast mover. We have stringent criteria for joining and since you can read and spell (fighter pilot heritage considered), you make the grade. We would love to have you in the mix. I grew up with guys like Lancer Sullivan (my neighbor), JP Monroe, Lee Madera, Gary Vangysel, Gary Elston, and one other gent who I worked for at HQMC DC/S Air for 2 years- LtGen Bill Fitch. TINS is our blood so stories at reunions abound. To join this lash up just go to

(The Skyhawk Assn website – Ed) and click on the "Join Us" in verbiage on the home page. Be patient, the burrow will have to RDZ with a hawk somewhere in the chain and then you can say "I is one". Thanks for your interest and good story to start with.

.....
■ To the Editor:
From Stephen Chapis re A-4L BUNO 148581
Good day everyone, I hope this message finds you well. I am the Associate Editor for Warbird Digest magazine and was just handed a story about one of Sky Resources' A-4L and have just three weeks to get the story written, which will not allow me the time to get ahold of the Aircraft Record Card so I can write up the history of the aircraft in the story. Does anyone at the Association have copies of Skyhawk records cards and if so would they be willing to share it with me?

Reply from Dave Dollarhide
On the member side of our site, in the "Ready Room," the histories are listed. 148581 data is below. It was restored and owned by A4L LLC, leased to Draken for a while. (A complete history of 148581 was provided to Stephen, who said he's joining the Skyhawk Assn. - Ed)

.....
■ To the Editor:
From Jack Nist
In the summer of 1972, I was the pilot of the A-3 in this R G Smith painting called "Wet Wing" (attached). As a pilot in VAQ-135, Det 5 aboard the Hancock, standing off the coast of N. Vietnam providing SAM radar jamming and tanking, we heard the distress call of an A-4 with his center fuel tank shot up and streaming fuel. His engine was good and the plane flyable, but he was facing running out of fuel and having to punch out over the North. His line of streaming fuel was visible from a great distance, and we had a full bag; so, despite requirements to remain outside the SAM envelope, my RIO and I entered the North, joined on him and his wing-men, and streamed our refueling drogue. Your pilot immediately plugged in, and we began transferring fuel. (To the best of my recollection, this

was done without any radio transmissions until we reported "feet wet" with your guy plugged in and flying off my gas). Again, as I remember it, I flew a high glide path and pulled away to disengage the drogue; then set up to refuel him again if he bolted -- but he trapped safely aboard (and I think I heard the plane flew 5 days later).

We were often flying our A-3's out of DaNang versus off the deck, so I don't remember who the A-4 pilot was, though a bottle of scotch did find its way to me. I would really like to know who this guy was and how his life continued. Any help in discovering this man's name and getting in contact with him would be greatly appreciated. jnist@cineiga.com



Reply from SA Staff (Typical effort to solve questions to the Association-Ed)

To Staff and Jack Nist
From Bob Hickerson
I hope Denny or Terry remembers this because I don't! I can't imagine how I could not know the story because I was there all summer.

Reply from Pete Cole
Just received this from Denny, "Yes. I thought that was based on a wet wing from 68. Send to Ray Winn if that happened to 212. I don't think it happened to 55. Although Fenzl had a hole in the wing. Size of a basketball. Summer '72 I think. Could have been him. That's the painting hanging in Hancock wardroom. Denny" I happened to be talking to Ray Winn about it on the phone when I received the message. He (a VA-22 LSO) does not remember. Does anyone have Skipper Fenzl's email to check if this is him? ...and the painting is probably from a '68 incident?

Reply from Terry Wolf
As I recall, the O-in-C of the A-3 Det on the Hancock asked RG to paint it and lobbied him hard to put his bird's markings in the painting. Since RG did that, he also chose an A-4 from the Hancock which happened to be VA-55. There was more than one instance of an A-3 dragging an A-4 out of Vietnam, but according to my research it was never identical to that picture. I'm sure Jack is correct in saying he did it as described, but I don't think it was a VA-55 bird. I'll forward this on to Denny Carroll and see if he remembers anything from VA-164.

Reply from Dennis Carroll
OK in 1972 VA 164 there were two aircraft who required tankers to plug them due to damage and loss of fuel that I am aware. Hal Lawson and Rob Barber. Hal & Rob can you provide the Skyhawk Association help in sorting out this question?

From Denny Sapp
The more I thought about it, I believe the A-3 pilot actually refueled Fenzl out of NVN. I have an 8x10 black and white photo of the hole in the wing. So...the A3 pilot from '72 was right. Just that RG's painting was done from the '68 event.

Reply from David Weber
There is hope, several pilots from the era are beating the bushes. Once the dust settles someone will be appointed as lead on the matter and contact you.

Reply from ADM Stan Arthur
The A-4F in the Picture has the markings (the trim tail slash) of VA-55 on the 68-69 and 69-70 cruises, but the event did not happen on either of those cruises. I believe Denny's recollection is correct and validates Jack Nist's story. George Fenzl has been on the net recently and he should be able to verify the event. I believe the artist was using a Photo of a VA-55 circa 68-70 to portray the event.
Reply from Jack Nist

Thank you for all your work. I think any answer to my question will have to come from pilots in the squadron who had been aboard at the time and heard about it or saw the recovery *continued...*

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

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

LETTERS continued. .

aboard. I don't know if the painter knew the side number of the A-4, but the one on the A-3 was one of our side numbers. Your forwarding it to the group is my best chance, so thanks again!

■ To the Editor:
From Bob McCowan

I am not a member of your Association but one your members sent me his copy of The A4ever from Spring of 2018. While browsing through, on page 19, I saw a picture of 142227 which seemed



very familiar to me. Scanning my old military logbook, I found many references to hours logged in this aircraft while in the Orient with VMA-224 in 1958. I was surprised that the article mentioned that this aircraft had also been used by VMF-211. We had pretty much worn these birds out and they also ended up being assigned to VMF-134 (a reserve squadron) at Los Alamitos NAS in 1963. It would be nice to know where and what years these birds were assigned to VMF-211. I have attached an official USMC photo taken over Mt. Fuji in 1958. I am the number 4 man.

I do have one request. The article includes a line "Looking good in Torrance, AC!" As I currently live in So. California I would like to go visit the bird if I knew where to find it.

Reply from Dave Dollarhide

142227 is at the Western Museum of Flight at the Torrance airport, 3315 Airport Drive. When you go there, I'm sure they'd love to hear that you flew the airplane with VMA-211. My contact with the museum was Joe Murphy at murf50@outlook.com. In the attached photo, you can see the squadron number on the fuselage.

■ To the Editor:
From Jeffrey Saupp

I am the Historian for USS *Constellation* (CVA/CV 64). During my research for *Constellation's* casualty list, I came across this Deck Log entry: 10AUG66

[0635] "A-4E Bureau No. 151065 of VA-155, pilot LCDR J S Henrique [sic], USN, 586503, crashed into the sea off the port bow, at Latitude 18° 31.1' N, Longitude 107° 22.4' E and sunk in 35 fathoms of water." "Detached USS *Greene* for rescue operations"

"Changed course Left to avoid A/C in water"

[0642] "Received report pilot picked up by helo"

[0709] "Received report from Dr. R W Smith, Flight Surgeon that LCDR Henriquez was dead upon arrival this ship."

LCDR Henriquez ejected as the engine failed on launch but was killed when his parachute failed to open.

LCDR Joseph Stephen Henriquez, posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, was the U.S. Navy's first black squadron commanding officer.

This info was back-checked against DOD's DCAS and is correct though DCAS has multiple errors that state he was Caucasian and that his duty station was 7th Fleet instead of VA-155 aboard *Constellation*.

Thank You and I will send information on other A-4 mishaps as I come across them.

Deceased Navy Pilot, Henriquez, Gets High Award

Vice President Humphrey presented the Distinguished Flying Cross to the widow of one of the Navy's greatest fliers, the late Lt. Comdr. **Joseph Stephen Henriquez**, in Washington. The Harlem product, who was on his way to becoming the Navy's first Negro squadron commander, was killed last summer during a plane takeoff from the USS carrier *Constellation* in the South China Sea while en route on his 23rd mission over North Vietnam. When Navy brass mailed the DFC to the family, Vice President Humphrey learned of the protocol slip and asked that he be allowed to present the award in a ceremony in his Capitol Hill office.



Humphrey, Mrs. **Henriquez**, holding baby, and her stepfather Carl Coleman (r) watch as fatherless children examine award.

Reply from Gary Verver

Thanks Jeffery, appreciate the info and your offer to keep us informed as you come across other mishaps. FYI, I've attached an article from JET magazine re LCDR. Henriquez.

Read?

you think
we read?

WIND AT OUR BACKS

Rear Admiral James B. Morin and John H. Bradley
Limited copies available, \$40 check to "Reutel Press"

Mail to: John Bradley,
13610 Tosca Lane
Houston, TX 77079

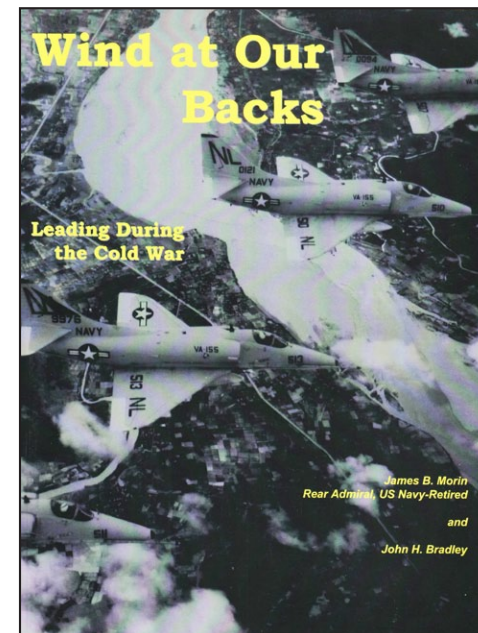
Reviewed by Captain Dave Dollarhide USNR(Ret)

This privately published account of the life and career of Rear Admiral James B. Morin, as told with John Bradley, is a hidden jewel! Unique in its content and format, you will find much more than Morin's experiences, as world events and other supporting information unfold right along with the story on each page through the use of sidebars and full-page presentations pertinent to that moment in time.

At the heart of Morin's story is his time as Commanding Officer of Attack Squadron One Fifty Five, leading his A-4 Skyhawk pilots, officers and crew through combat cruises to Viet-

nam. One such deployment aboard the USS *Coral Sea* lasted an extraordinary eleven months. You will be riveted by combat tales where heroes were made and friends were lost. You'll enjoy the moments of humor and the lifelong bonding of men that inevitably accompanies military hardships and war. Through it all, Morin proved himself an exceptional leader and teacher, who set the example and was adored by his people. His pilots would follow him anywhere and never failed to brag about their beloved "Skipper." Even after many years, a number of them were involved in assisting RADM Morin and John Bradley in this work. The numbers have fallen with time, but fifty-three years later "Silver Fox" pilots continue to gather routinely with their Skipper for reunions.

You'll not only enjoy reading this book, but you will place it in a special spot on your bookshelf for future reference. It contains an incredible amount



of history and with limited copies available, you'll cherish yours. I received my copy five or six years ago from friend and Skyhawk Association member Bill Kish, who is one of those "Morin trained Scooter pilots." You won't find this one on Amazon! If you want one of these rare copies, "snail mail" a check to John Bradley. I highly recommend it. It's a work of art!

SCHEDULING

Reunions & Requests



PLAN AHEAD

- VA-15 Valions, Holiday Inn Resort, Pensacola, FL, May 10-13, 2019. Contact Will McManus, wmcmamus@essilorusa.com. 774-495-1821. Details at www.valions.com.
- 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (Vietnam Service) reunion, Washington, DC, June 13-16, 2019. Contact Al Frater, teanal@optonline.net, 201-906-1197.
- Skyhawk Association 2019 Annual Meeting and Luncheon, 12:00 noon, September 6, 2019, Nugget Casino and Resort, Sparks, NV. See www.skyhawk.org for more information.
- Tailhook Association Symposium 2019, September 5-8, 2019, Nugget Casino and Resort, Sparks, NV. See www.tailhook.net for more information.

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



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

PREPARE TO LAUNCH THE QRA

by Commander James S. L. "Jim" Kidd, Jr., USN (Ret.)

This article was first published by the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation (www.navalaviationfoundation.org) Spring 2017. Used with permission.

I had an extraordinary experience many years ago that I've rarely spoken of, or written about, although I've often felt the story should be told. My memory of what happened remains vivid, nearly a half century later. Because elements of the event were sensitive or classified at the time, I remained silent about it, not wanting to inadvertently reveal something I shouldn't. But with the passage of time, much of what was sensitive or classified then is no longer, and much is now in the public domain.

Before I describe my experience, I must explain some background and circumstances leading up to what happened. The year was 1969. I was a Naval Aviator, lieutenant junior grade, in my first fleet squadron, Attack Squadron (VA) 81, young but growing in experience. We'd deployed in the spring of that year to the Mediterranean in the aircraft carrier USS *John F. Kennedy* (CVA-67). It was *Kennedy's* maiden deployment. I was flying the A-4C *Skyhawk*, a single-engine, single seat, delta-wing, light attack jet aircraft. It was what I wanted to do and I was very pleased to be doing it. My squadron was one of nine fixed wing squadrons and a helicopter squadron aboard the ship. Three of those outfits were A-4 squadrons. The A-4 *Skyhawk*, at the time, was the Navy's workhorse in a conventional arms air war over North Vietnam. It is the same airplane Senator (and former presidential candidate) John S. McCain III was flying when shot down. Many of *Kennedy's* pilots had been there in combat. I was not one of those.

In late April, about a day and a half before *Kennedy* arrived in the Mediterranean on that maiden deployment, a pair of Soviet Tu-95 *Bear* bombers overflew us. Giant airplanes. And after we transited the Strait of Gibraltar, a Soviet Navy *Kotlin*-class destroyer joined in company. A day later, a Soviet Navy *Kresta*-class guided missile cruiser joined us. Four days after that, a Soviet Tu-16 *Badger* overflew *Kennedy*, followed by two more *Badgers* the next day.

continued...

An A-4 *Skyhawk* of Attack Squadron (VA) 81 prepares to launch from USS *John F. Kennedy* (CVA-67), 1969. USN photo

VA-81 Skyhawks lined up aboard Kennedy during operations in the Caribbean, 1968, prior to her Mediterranean deployment. Lawson collection



This was the beginning of nearly continuous Soviet surveillance of *Kennedy*, America's newest aircraft carrier. The surveillance was sustained for the duration of our nine-month deployment.

The United States was committed then and now to the support of NATO. We were locked in a Cold War and an expensive arms race with the Soviet Union. One part of our support to NATO involved maintaining a continuous presence of two U.S. attack aircraft carriers within the Mediterranean. Our carriers had the capability of projecting power with both conventional and nuclear weapons. The A-4 *Skyhawk* was the airplane that would deliver such weapons from *Kennedy* if ordered to do so.

Pilots in the three light attack A-4 squadrons aboard *Kennedy* were required to plan nuclear strike targets at the beginning of her deployment. Our planning work was extensive, as it was intended that each target would be hit with a single weapon carried by a single aircraft flying a unique route to target and carefully timed so we did not blow one another up. We did our target planning in the ship's intelligence center while *Kennedy* crossed the Atlantic. Our planning work was mostly at the secret level, although portions of it were top secret. Each of us studied the charts,

the defensive order of battle, the nature of our targets and known intelligence for escape and evasion if we were shot down. We drew our routes-to-target on aviation charts; we cut and pasted the charts into booklets that could be quickly paged through during a low, tree-top level strike-flight. By the time *Kennedy* completed her trip across the Atlantic we had completed the work on our target packages. We then had what we would need if ever required to navigate to our targets and deliver one-megaton nuclear weapons, each 50 to 60 times larger than the atomic weapons dropped on Japan at the end of World War II.

On arrival and joining the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean, we loaded war-reserve nuclear weapons on the centerline bomb racks of four of our *Skyhawks*. We kept these strike airplanes on alert, tucked away in the ship's hangar bay, guarded by armed Marines. Pilots from our three A-4 attack squadrons rotated on a regular basis through alert strike-pilot duty. Four of us were on duty every day. We thereby maintained a continuous alert status. The airplanes were known as Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) aircraft. This is a NATO term. Other QRA aircraft were on alert in other areas of western Europe—mostly land based aircraft of U.S. and NATO air forces.

Every few days at sea when it was my turn, I would be left off the regular flight schedule to stand a 24-hour alert. Alert duties would begin at 0700 with a briefing in the ship's intelligence center. Here I would receive weather and intelligence information and I would review the target package containing the charts that I'd use if ordered to execute the strike. After these morning briefings, I would go to my aircraft to do a pre-flight inspection of the airplane and the weapon. I'd be accompanied when I did this by a nuclear weapons technician. He would climb the boarding ladder with me and watch as I performed an electrical continuity check using a weapon control box mounted in the side console of the cockpit. The check was done to assure that the weapon on the centerline rack was properly loaded and electrically connected to the aircraft. I was never permitted to do this check alone, as we had a two-man rule requiring that no one do anything involving nuclear weapons unless accompanied by another individual having technical knowledge of the task.

Life aboard ship was always busy. On QRA duty days, the intelligence center was where QRA pilots were to report whenever the ship went to General Quarters (battle stations). At sea, *Kennedy* was usually flying her aircraft,

doing other kinds of training missions (non-QRA), missions that focused on power projection through presence in the area (showing the flag), inviting dignitaries aboard and maintaining preparedness for the delivery of conventional (non-nuclear) weapons if that were to become necessary. We generally flew both day and night. This was all a part of an effort to keep Soviet aggression contained.

Whenever *Kennedy* made a port visit, we enjoyed the opportunity to step ashore, but such forays were brief. Our QRA commitment continued throughout the port visits. *Kennedy* would anchor off the coast somewhere near the port where ship's boats could run to and from a fleet landing. Our mission in the Mediterranean was much different than that in the Western Pacific, where our fellow pilots were involved in a shooting war. The QRA commitment required us to keep at least half the carrier's crew always aboard, that way we had the people we would need to get the ship underway on short notice and launch the QRA aircraft if we were ever called on to do so. Consequently, time ashore for individuals, while the ship was in a port, was limited to every other day, and our visits ashore were generally limited to evenings. That meant we didn't get to

see as many of the sights that a tourist might see, but we understood the importance of maintaining the ship's readiness to respond, as it was through battle readiness that we fulfilled the fundamental role of American nuclear forces—deterrence of nuclear attack by an adversary.

Something unusual happened early one morning when I was a duty QRA pilot. The exact date is lost in time out of mind. I believe it was early July, maybe a week or so before the 20 July 1969 *Apollo 11* Moon landing. I'd had QRA duty since the previous morning, and it was toward the end of the 24-hour duty period, maybe around 0500 when I heard the first airplanes of the day being launched from the ship. I was in my bunk just under the flight deck where sounds of launching airplanes and catapults are easily heard. I dozed a bit after the launch was complete, but shortly was jarred awake by the ship's General Quarters alarm and the words, "All hands man your battle stations!" There was an additional announcement that we were initiating an emergency recall of airplanes just launched. That was not normal.

I leapt out of bed, pulled on my flight suit and donned flight boots. I headed for the ship's intelligence center

amid the orderly confusion of sailors hastening through passageways to their own battle stations. I heard the first aircraft trapping aboard and pulling out an arresting wire. Other aircraft followed. At the entry to the intelligence center, I pushed open the door. A cluster of people blocked my way. Over their heads, Lieutenant Mike Holt, my squadron's intelligence officer, saw me and screamed, "Jim, GET TO YOUR AIRCRAFT." I remember thinking, *there's something weird going on.*

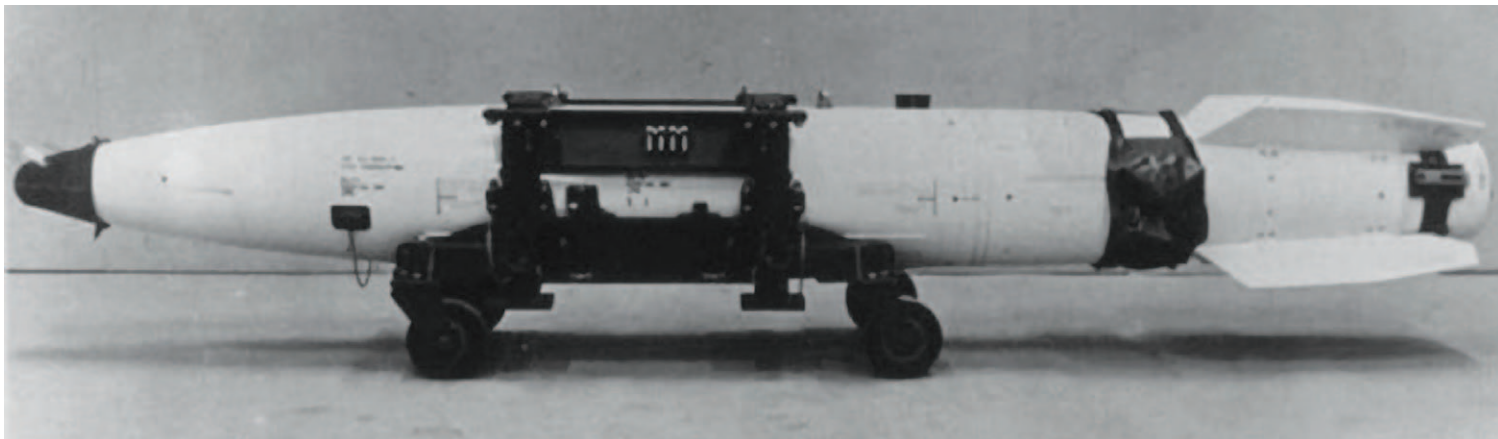
I turned and hustled aft to the squadron paraloft, where I zipped my anti-g suit over legs and abdomen before slipping into my torso harness with its attached survival gear. I grabbed helmet and kneeboard, then made my way to a set of ladders that led down three levels to the hangar deck.

Things were not normal around the four QRA aircraft. Marine guards were standing aside with weapons in hand and looks of disbelief on their faces. Handling crews were breaking down tie-down chains on the four *Skyhawks*. I stepped hastily around mine doing a visual inspection. A boarding ladder would normally be at the aircraft. There was none. A ground crewman—the plane captain—interlocked fingers and said, "Sir!" The look on his face, besides

continued...



The aviators of VA-81 aboard *Kennedy*, 1969. The author, then a lieutenant junior grade, is the first individual kneeling on the left. EBNAL



The B43 nuclear bomb, capable of yields up to one megaton, could be delivered by a number of Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force aircraft, including the lightweight Skyhawk. DOD photo

saying, “Put your foot in my hands,” spoke fear. His eyes were the size of quarters! Putting my boot in his hands I straightened up as he heaved, and I caught the cockpit rail. I scrambled aboard and slid into the cockpit, connected my g-suit and the torso fittings to attach myself to the ejection seat.

Meanwhile the other QRA birds were being dragged backward onto the elevator. Men doing this had abandoned normal procedures. A tie down chain connected from an aircraft tow tractor to the catapult holdback fitting under the aft end of each airplane was being used to pull the airplanes backward onto the elevator. I had never seen procedures like this aboard *Kennedy* before, nor had I seen such procedures aboard my previous ship, USS *Shangri-La* (CVA-38). Pilots rode brakes while following hand signals from ground crewmen to keep aircraft movement under control. Risky? Yes, but it worked!

Mine was the last aircraft on the elevator. I removed the ejection seat safety pins and wondered, *is this a drill? Or is it the real thing?* A starter probe was slapped into the airplane and connected to a huffer (start tractor). My squadron operations officer, Lieutenant Commander Bill Yetter, appeared and handed up the go-folder for my target just as an order was passed from the tower to start engines. The elevator rose to the flight deck. As the jet engine spun up, electric power came on. Systems came to life. The other three *Skyhawks* started in turn after mine. I completed the pre-flight checks. The one-megaton weapon on the belly of my airplane checked good. It was ready. I had just

done an electrical continuity check that I was never-before supposed to do alone. I’d broken the two-man rule, but given the situation there was no other option. I closed my canopy.

A taxi director signaled me to move ahead. He guided me to the ship’s number 2 catapult. I followed his signals and moved into position until I felt the aircraft stop when it engaged the hold back. I completed the takeoff checklist. The other three *Skyhawks* were lined up, ready to take the catapult after me.

I wished I knew more about what was going on. My last briefing had been 24 hours earlier. I remember thinking, *I hope this is a drill. It’s unlike any drill I’ve known before. I could transmit on the radio and ask the Air Boss if it’s a drill. I better not break radio silence, though! That might cost lives if this is real and it sure doesn’t look like a drill. If they launch me, I’ll know. I am certain they would never pass control of this weapon into my hands alone by launching me if it’s not a drill. If they launch me, I’ll execute the mission. God help us all if that is the case.*

The seriousness of the situation began to weigh on my mind. *If this is nuclear war, the world will never be the same! Even if this is intended to be a limited strike, there is nothing I know of to prevent escalation. I doubt either side will hold back. There could be an exchange of thousands of nuclear warheads with millions, maybe billions of people killed outright, and many more dying later from radiation poisoning. An environmental disaster too. Beyond imagination!*

My thoughts continued to spiral. They went to my wife Laura Lea at home with our two kids, barely 17 and 5 months old. *They might be vaporized in a nuclear counterattack by the Soviet Union. I cannot bear that thought. If launched, I must not think about it. If launched, I cannot stop it. I can only go ahead with the strike. Do my duty. I will, unless death takes me! Afterward, I’ll return to the ship if my airplane is intact, if I have the fuel, and if the ship is even still afloat. If this turns into an all-out nuclear exchange, who knows whether human life will even survive here on planet Earth. If they launch me I will give everything I have to complete the mission, regardless!*

My eyes were riveted on the catapult officer standing to the right and forward of my airplane. *Would he give a signal to go to full power? Would he signal his crew to tension the catapult?* If he did, I would know it was going to be nuclear war. My last act aboard *Kennedy* with engine at full military power and cockpit instruments checked, would be a salute to the catapult officer. He would return my salute, bend low to touch the deck with a hand—the signal for his crew to shoot the catapult—and I would be off the bow. With that simple exchange of salutes, I would taste bitter knowledge that I’d likely never see the man again and that I’d likely be party to delivering an end to the world as we know it.

There would be no nuclear war today. The catapult officer touched the transmit button on his “Mickey Mouse” headset, and then gave a push back signal to the catapult crew. Sailors rushed from either side to push my airplane



The A-4 was designed from the outset as a nuclear capable aircraft. Here an early Skyhawk sits ready at the catapult carrying a Mark 7 bomb (the U.S.’s first tactical nuclear weapon). EBNAL

backward and disconnect me from the holdback. Once free of the catapult, I was passed to a taxi director, who in turn, guided me to a tie down spot on the side of the flight deck. I held the brakes while squadron ground personnel chained me down. Twelve tie down chains, tight and secure. Chocks at my wheels. On signal from the ground crew I shut the engine down and opened the canopy. Fresh air, ocean breeze, life! With a ladder put up to the side of the aircraft, I climbed out.

A sense of relief flooded over me. Others on the flight deck sensed relief too. I could see tentative smiles. The catapult officer later told me it was only when he got the order over his headset to take me off the catapult, that he too learned this was only a drill—a realistic one, for sure. So realistic that none of the crew on the flight or hangar decks seemed to know if it was a drill or the real thing. It took a while that day for me to settle down. It’s a day I’ll never forget!

Today pilots aboard our carriers no longer stand the QRA duty, although that mission is still in the mix for NATO air forces. Navy QRA duty in fact ended without fanfare even before the end of our deployment in 1969. Nuclear weapons remained aboard our carriers after the QRA responsibility ended, but over time, the U.S. and Soviets/Russians made various agreements to reduce nuclear stockpiles. In the early 1990s, after the Cold War ended, nuclear weapons stopped being routinely carried aboard carriers. *Kennedy’s* nuclear weapons were off-loaded for a last time in 1993. *Kennedy*, like me, is retired. She was decommissioned in 2007 and currently resides at the Philadelphia Navy Yard with an uncertain future.

Commander James S. L. “Jim” Kidd, Jr., USN (Ret.), joined Regular NROTC, University of Michigan in 1961. Short of graduating, he enlisted, completed boot camp and earned wings and commission as a NAVCAD. An LSO in VA-81, he flew the A-4C aboard USS *Shangri-La* (CVA-38) and USS *John F. Kennedy* (CVA-67). As a flight instructor in VT-22, he earned a BS in Physics at Texas A&I. Returning to Kennedy (Weapons Dept.), he flew the C-1A and became an OOD(U) in the Mediterranean during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Ashore in VC-2 he flew the TA-4J before return to sea in VA-86, flying the A-7E aboard USS *Nimitz* (CVN-68). Next, he was OIC Light Attack Weapons School, Cecil Field. Returning to Kennedy as Strike Operations, he became a CDO(U), and saw action off Lebanon in 1983. He earned an MBA at the University of North Florida, and served on staff, Navy Inspector General, and Navy Center for Cost Analysis. He retired from the Navy in 1989.



Belated Honors

By RADM Jim Morin (USN Ret)

In 1964, Attack Squadron 155, flying the A-4E *Skyhawk*, was part of Carrier Air Wing 15 and was based at NAS Lemoore, California. In June 1964, CDR Jack Harris, USN relieved CDR Tom Russel USN as commanding officer. The squadron was in work up for the next cruise aboard USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43). The ship sailed from NAS Alameda, CA, in early December 1964 for a normal WESTPAC cruise of 7½ months.

Engineering problems delayed departure from Hawaii, but in January 1965, because of the problems brewing in South Vietnam, *Coral Sea* was ordered to the Tonkin Gulf area. President Johnson and his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, were trying to create a reason to commence bombing operations of North Vietnam in order to convince the North Vietnamese that they should cease aiding and supplying the Viet Cong in the south. McNamara and other presidential advisers were sure that by bombing selected targets in the north that Ho Chi Minh would see that the cost was too great to his poor nation, and that he could direct the Viet Cong to end their insurrection in the south. McNamara felt that by slowly increasing pressure on the north, they would cry uncle. All it did was make them very angry and more resolute in their war of liberation of the south.

Following an attack on a U.S. military base in the south, President Johnson had his excuse to order an air strike into the north. On 7 February, *Coral Sea* and two other carriers were ordered to conduct a raid in the southern part of northern Viet Nam. *Coral Sea*'s target was a barracks area at Dong Hoi. In the target area, the ceiling was under 1,000 feet. Finding one's aim point was virtually impossible. The anti-aircraft fire was very heavy as all these aircraft milled around looking for the assigned targets. One of our squadron mates, LTJG Ed Dickson, was shot down and killed. The raid was very ineffective.

Four days later, another attack on U.S. forces in the south gave the National Command Authority reason to send in another strike in the north. We went in again and the air group lost another aircraft. Due to weather, again the raid was not effective. Winter weather over the north is usually low overcast. But Mr. McNamara had the bit in his mouth, and he wanted to turn up the heat. From releases of White House papers, McNamara knew then that the south Vietnamese government would not survive. Their leadership was weak, and the will of the people wasn't there. But he wanted to show our resolve and at a later date back out of the situation. He also knew that we would be bloodied, but he felt it was worth it.

"Rolling Thunder" started in March. Beginning with just a few strikes per week, we were soon flying every day. We had carrier-based aircraft over the north 24 hours a day. One carrier flew midnight to noon up to that time in history, particularly when the missiles started flying in the summer of '65. The

Coral Sea's cruise was coming to an end in June.

The Navy, however, was directed to go from a three-carrier operation to a four-carrier operation. The easiest way to do that was to turn *Coral Sea* around for an indefinite period. In June, CDR J.B. Morin, USN relieved CDR Jack Harris USN as CO. Shortly thereafter, *Coral Sea* was back on line.

McNamara had said the war would be over by Christmas 1965, but to us on *Coral Sea*, who had flown the most missions over the north at that time, the war was getting tougher. The SAMs started flying and it took a lot of courage and skill to attack a target in the northern part of North Viet Nam. Acts of bravery were commonplace. I was a member of the Ship/Air Wing Board and wrote up citations for the DFC for my guys on numerous occasions. CINCPACFLT's Awards Board was not geared up for recommendations. DFC recommendations were downgraded to Air Medals or disapproved. There were acts warranting a Silver Star or a Navy Cross that were submitted as a DFC because we had a hard enough time getting a DFC approved. Since we were supposed to be home that summer, replacement pilots weren't sent to us. We were short-handed and getting very tired. Soon, the A-4 RAG at Lemoore was sending us guys TAD to help out. I had no XO, so Wendy Rivers, my OPS officer, became my acting Exec. He was shot down on his 96th mission in September '65 to spend 7½ years as a guest in Hanoi. By this time, we had all exceeded 100 missions over North Vietnam. My guys were wearing 15 to 18 Air Medals, but not a DFC in sight.

Finally, in November we headed home. It was an 11½ cruise with just under 10 months of combat. We had a 5½ month turn around before we deployed again in USS *Constellation*. Returning from the '65 cruise, our CAG, Wes McDonald, flew into Hawaii to go before the Awards Board with a resubmission of many citations. A few DFCs were approved as a result, but it was not enough.

For 35 years I have felt I hadn't done my job as CO because my guys hadn't gotten the recognition they richly deserved. When we set up our Silver Fox reunion for May 2000 in Pensacola, I started working on correcting this injustice. I made contact with the CNO Awards Board personnel. They felt it was worth a try. I started collecting data from the guys but trying to keep things secret. I completed all the required paper work, wrote the sample citations with justification and submit-



★ TAPS ★

For lists of A-4 KIA and operational losses, members can sign into <http://skyhawk.org> and go to the "Ready Room."



Donald Deluca • Tucson, AZ
Glenn Fox • Lake Havasu City, AZ
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TAPS notices may be sent to Bob Hickerson, Journal Editor at sa-journal-editor@skyhawk.org or mail to Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624

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Duncan, Daniel • Amarillo, TX

Fitch, Augustus • Aiken, SC
Focht, George • Huntington Beach, CA
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Gilliland, James • Egan, MN
Grise, Gary • San Diego, CA
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ted them through our former CAG, Admiral Wes McDonald, USN (Ret), for his endorsement. In April, I was notified that 12 DFCs had been approved! The medals and citations were expressed to me, and I took them to Pensacola for the reunion.

We were invited to a Winging Ceremony at the Air Museum and had our own seating section. The two Admirals on the dais recognized the Silver Foxes and said nice words about this very brave squadron from Lemoore. When the winging Ceremony was concluded, I was introduced and said a few words about our actions in 1965 and our involvement in the Tonkin Gulf. I explained that our awards system at that time was unresponsive, that all my guys had more than 100 missions over the north and hadn't

been duly-recognized. I had asked ADM Abbot, the guest speaker, to pin on the medals. After 35 years, I told the gathering that a wrong had been rectified. My guys still had no clue. I then read the citation and called each man up one by one to receive his medal. It was very moving, and I had a hard time continuing to read the names. My guys were shocked.

At the conclusion of the awards, all these young students and instructors from the Winging Ceremony came up to shake the hands of some real heroes. Two of my guys from San Diego didn't make the reunion and missed out on a very special day. They received their medals in the mail.

A most memorable day for us all.

The Silver Fox recipients were:

George R Blosser
William J. Kish
James B. Mattly
Jay D. Starling (Gold Star)
Gerald J. Chaska (Gold Star)
Richard J. Floeani
Edwin G. Hiebert
Kenneth R. Holthaus
James Hughes
Albert R. Hyde (Gold Star)
Ernest J. Mares
Wendell B. Rivers (Gold Star)

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Seeing Zip's Spad

By Cdr. Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret)

On Friday, July 20th, I met members of Zip Rausa's family at the Military Aviation Museum on the outskirts of Virginia Beach near Pungo for a special viewing of the museum's Korean War-vintage AD-4 Skyraider buno 123827. Clad in 1950s dark sea blue with squadron markings of VA-195, the "Dam Busters," the AD was still an impressive aircraft that may have actually flown combat missions in Korea in the early 1950s, and the museum had graciously painted "LCDR R Rausa" below the cockpit. An earlier variant of the A-1H (post-1962 designation) that Zip had flown in Vietnam combat with VA-25 for the last combat tour of the single-seat Spad—as the AD had come to be called—it was still a massive plane that made me think that Zip, the recently retired editor of

Wings of Gold who had passed away in January, must have been a truly skillful aviator to handle such a powerful type over the misty jungles of Southeast Asia through the often low-hanging clouds that obscured terrain and targets below.

Zip's wife Neta, and his eldest son Zeno, a recently retired combat-experienced *Hornet* driver and squadron CO, Anna one of Zeno's three sisters, and his three children made the arduous drive from Washington, braving the late-week horrendous summer traffic, to see their husband's, father's and grandfather's name on "his" aircraft.

As Zeno explained to everyone, not only was Zip's name on this *Skyraider*, it was still flyable and often made trips around the country so people could see one of Naval Aviation's truly great aircraft, now emblazoned with an appropriate driver's name.

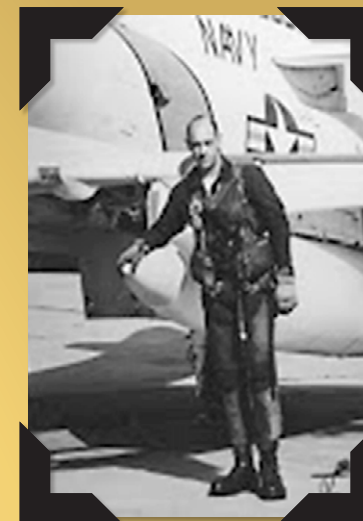
Flying Two of Ed Heinemann's Best!

By Cdr. Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret)

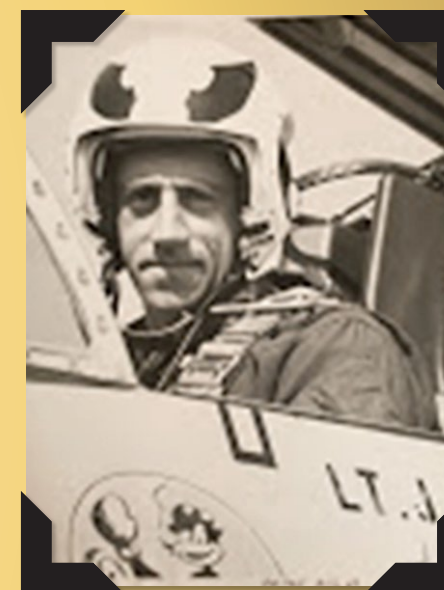
Zip Rausa was very fortunate in that he flew two of Ed Heinemann's many masterpieces, the A-1 (nee AD) Skyraider (aka Spad), and the A-4 (nee A4D) Skyhawk (with several of its own nicknames). He flew the Spad in combat during two tours with VA-25, "The Fist of the Fleet," aboard the USS *Coral Sea* (CVA-43), 1966-1968. (Zip had flown the Skyraider with VA-85 aboard the USS *Forrestal* (CVA-59) in the early 1960s. He wrote two books about his time with the A-1: his memoir *Gold Wings, Blue Sea, a Naval Aviator's Story* (Naval Institute Press, 1980), and *Skyraider, the Douglas A-1 Flying Dump Truck* (Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company, 1982). Zip was also fortunate to befriend Ed Heinemann (1908-1991) and was with the great designer's bedside (at Heinemann's request) when he passed away in November 1991.

As we have reported, Zip passed away on January 4, 2018, barely two weeks before his 83rd birthday. His family and friends celebrated Zip's life during an interment ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery this last January 15th. We are pleased to present a few photographs courtesy of Zip and the Rausa family that show him with his favorite aircraft.

(Ed. note: Ed and Zip co-authored Heinemann's biography, *Ed Heinemann, Combat Aircraft Designer*, (Naval Institute Press, 1980) and *Aircraft Design*, (Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1985). Both are long out of print but are probably available on various book search engines.)



Posing by a VA-45 TA-4F, August 1969. (Rausa family)



Zip in a VA-45 TA-4F, August 1969, where he served a post-Vietnam tour as an instrument instructor. (Rausa family)



Between missions, Zip sits in a VA-25 A-1H. Note the VF-151 F-4B in the background. USS *Coral Sea*, 1967-1968. (Rausa family)



Ready to go, with LTJG Bruce Marcus (l) and Zip leaning casually on a Zuni pod. Zip could be quite fearless when on missions of target opportunity. But that's another story. (Rausa family)



Part of the Rausa clan proudly stands before the *Skyraider*. From left to right: Neta Rausa, Anna Gregory (one of three sisters), Zeke (13), Madeleine (17), Zeno, and Jacqueline (15). (Photo by Joy Harris)

Skyhawks Still Flying

65 Years and still going strong.... Hun reporting

We're into our 8th year of tracking our Skyhawk flyers, and it's time for the first formal 2019 update. We've got some new pictures to show off too. Photos are courtesy of the units, companies or owners unless otherwise noted. Here goes....

Background: Out of some 2960 A-4 aircraft produced by Douglas Aircraft, just how many are still flying around the country and the world? As the principle record keeper and contact maintainer for the Skyhawk community, it seemed pretty logical that the Association be the one to keep the count of 'still flying.' So here we are, some 67 years after the initial government contract was awarded (June 1952), **65 years** after Bob Rahn made the first flight (June 1954), and, as you'll find below, there are about 44 Skyhawks **still performing** with speed and agility all over the world! It's been a fine flying machine indeed! We'll keep the report's organization the same—militaries still flying, then contract services, private collections, and a final section on legacy operators—those no longer employing our A-4.

Military Service: Despite its age, the Skyhawk is a highly capable airframe, as you all well know. It's very good at missions not requiring supersonic speeds and advanced radars and avionics, although some users have refitted their Skyhawks with formidable upgrades. Its main advantage from both government and contract flyer points of view is its cost (and capability). Two militaries around the world still fly the A-4 and a total of about 10 single seaters and 3 two seaters are currently flying in their service.

Argentina: Argentina's Air Force and Navy at one time operated close to 100 A-4Bs -- but retired those older airframes in 1999 after getting up to speed on their 1994 purchase of 32 A-4Ms and

4 OA-4Ms from the US government. Their redesignated A-4ARs and OA-4ARs are still operating in their 5th Air Brigade, now at Villa Reynolds, although at much reduced numbers due mainly to budget, parts and maintenance difficulties. This past year, budget difficulties, and some remaining embargo issues, have them struggling still. Without complete reporting from them, I'll leave their numbers unchanged, but expect those to reflect very best-case numbers. Credit them currently with 6 single seat and 1 dual seat flyers with another 3 close enough to be flyers to call 'operational reserve.' **6 A-4AR/1 OA-4AR.**



Brazil: The Brazilian Navy became a Skyhawk operator when it acquired 20/3 A-4KU and TA-4KU aircraft from the Kuwaiti government in 1998. Redesignated AF-1s and AF-1As (2-seaters), these aircraft operated off the Brazilian Navy's modernized French aircraft carrier São Paulo which was recently decommissioned rather than being overhauled again. About 10 years ago, a select dozen A-4s were picked to receive a major upgrade program to be conducted by Embraer from 2009 to 2015 (now 2020). The upgrade program has been slow and extended, but the new aircraft are now appearing on the flight line as AF-1Bs and AF-1Cs (2 seaters) with about 5 modernized aircraft currently available for operations. One modernized aircraft and its pilot were lost in 2016 during security practice for the Olympics. Best estimate? Five updated AFs and possibly one more original AF are available for proficiency flying. When all is said and

done with Embraer, we hope to see 9-10 upgraded aircraft on the line. They expect 2 more upgraded aircraft to arrive in CY 2019. **3 AF-1B/2 AF-1C's and 1 AF-1.**



Contract Services: I don't remember having contract air services around while we served, but these days are different. With op tempo as high as it is, the airlines hiring, and current airframes being really expensive, it has become cost effective for the government and industry to contract out many air support requirements. Voila! Over the past dozen years, many outfits have appeared with airplanes and crews ready to tow targets, act as cruise and anti-ship missiles, run air refueling evaluations, even provide close air support to government and industry users. And, lately, the missions being contracted out even include 'Red Air!' Throw us into THAT briar patch any day! There are four contract services which utilize the Skyhawk to provide air support and some 22 single seat and 5 TA-4's are currently flying/available in



Dateline: Winter/Spring 2019 Update

their service. As is the case with many of the privately-owned Skyhawks, there is a mix of P-6, P-8 and P-408 engines, the Ns have Israeli tailpipe extensions and some fleets are flying with cold seats... But most of these aircraft "aren't your Daddy's airplane" anymore... ESPECIALLY avionics... check out some of the cockpits for starters...

Draken International: Draken International, headed by Mr. Jared Isaacson, got into the A-4 business in 2012 when it put the finishing touches on the purchase of 8 well-preserved New Zealand A-4Ks, 6 single-seaters and two TA-4Ks. (See the Association's *A-4 Ever Fall* 2014 issue). These are P-8 engined, glass cockpit and very upgraded Skyhawks. Then at the end of 2014, they bought 6 A-4Ns destined for the boneyard from BAE Industries who had just lost a support contract in Germany. Draken now has a **very** substantial air force in Lakeland, Florida, (with most A-4's deployed to Nellis Red Flag support) that includes these A-4s, and a mix of 15 assorted Aermacchi MB339s, L39s and a T-33, almost all flyers. A further 26 MIG21s are on site, crated awaiting need, and 21 L159s purchased and/or awaiting delivery! By the time you read this, about half of those L159s should be on site. Sadly, one of the TA-4Ks was lost (but not the pilot!) in an engine failure mishap while doing contract work at a Nellis Red Flag exercise during the summer of 2016. The bigger news is the acquisition and final deliveries soon of some 22 Mirage F-1s and 12 Cheetahs from the Spanish and South African Air Forces! The F-1's are on site as of this writing! **6 A-4K's and 6 A-4N's/1 TA-4K's**



Top Aces (previously a part of Discovery Air, Canada): Top Aces operates a wide-ranging fleet of aircraft for contract services and supports the Canadian, Australian and German Armed Forces. All their Skyhawks come from their acquisition of ATSI of Mesa, AZ, which included 7 Israeli A-4Ns and 3 TA-4Js. They also maintain a fleet of Donier Alpha Jets, Westwind 1124s and are also "quite well advanced" in talks for the acquisition of F-16 aircraft. They successfully outbid BAE for the German Air Force contract at Wittmund, Germany, where they have all 7 of the A-4Ns working. Only 1 TA-4 remains in Mesa, AZ, and we're trying to find the others. **7 A-4N's/1 TA-4J** (Photo courtesy of "Scramble" magazine)



Teton Aviation Services: This air contract service has available about 10 privately-owned aircraft ranging from MiGs to a Citation. Owner Dr. Rich Sugden brought TA-4J 154306 into flying status back in early November 2014. It's a beautiful machine! **1 TA-4J**



Sky Resources/A4L LLC: This outfit was previously known as A4L LLC but has acquired new promotional management in the form of Sky Resources. The original LLC acquired 9 of the Malay-

sian 'parts aircraft' in Arizona and has brought several of them into service under contract as orders come in. They have leased aircraft to both ATAC and Draken in the past and have 3 flyers in Denison, TX. One or two more could be flying fairly soon after being contracted, with those spread through restoration facilities in Perryville, MO, Sherman, TX, and Bill Maszala's storage facility, ATW Aviation, Inc., in Marana, AZ. **3 A-4L**



Private Collections: It's good to be well established financially. You too can own a Skyhawk! Currently 5+ flyers are in private hands, 3 TA-4Js, an A-4C (another one close!) and an A-4B. One of the flying TA-4Js is for sale! Mike "Maj" McDougall has that A-4C very close to flying and another one on order!

Collings Foundation: Dedicated to preserving "the heritage of the sky," this perhaps most well-known vintage aircraft foundation operates some 18 flying historical aircraft and maintains for display several more. Its TA-4J, N524CF, (below), is often seen at the most popular air shows around the country. With FAA certification to fly back seaters returning, you too can fly again...for about \$7500. **1 TA-4J**



continued...

SKYHAWKS STILL FLYING continued...



Warbird Heritage Foundation: Has a similar mission as the Collings Foundation (above). Owned by Paul Wood, it operates close to a dozen heritage warbirds in air shows and appearances around the country. It's A-4B, N49WH first flew with the Foundation in late 2009. Paul and his Skyhawk are certified to fly with Navy Legacy Flight warbird demonstration aircraft. **1 A-4B**



Pacific Aero Ventures, LLC: Until recently, this outfit and their TA-4 were owned by Don Keating and based in the Seattle area. As of the end of March 2019, the entire LLC and TA-4 N518TA, were sold and are now operated by Jerod Flohr, a Texan living in Northern California and a lover of flying Skyhawks. Jerod's TA-4 is a beauty of an aircraft, restored by "Maj" McDougal of Fighting Classics Restoration. It will be based in Oregon. **1 TA-4J**



Classic Fighters: This Skyhawker "new boy on the block" has a TA-4J owned and operated by Doug Matthews. His TA-4J, 156925, joined an air stable which includes a P-51, 2 F-86s, 3 Marchetti S211s, an F4U Corsair and a T-33. First flight was in Fall 2015. The TA-4 is now based at Titusville, FL. Sale rumors are still being heard here! **1 TA-4**



Fighting Classics Restoration: This is Mike "Maj" McDougall's restoration shop down at Marana Regional Airport, AZ. Maj put together the Pacific Aero Ventures TA-4J for Don Keating and is nearing completion of an A-4C (148597) for Mr. Fred Machado. Fred's a Florida gentleman, but is Argentinian and the new A-4C is already in Argentine camouflage colors. He recently acquired the Spangler/Carr A-4C (NX2262Z) bought just a while ago by the Valiant Air Command Warbird Museum in Florida. That one, too, is now in Argentine colors, but normal Navy grey. One has moved to Florida and the other will be kept at Fighting Classics in Marana for the time being. Both are in and out of flying status with checks and mods going on, but both are flyers. **2 A-4C**



Aero Mark, Inc: This group is led by Bob Hoff and Jerry Dust up in Idaho Falls. They're sitting on a well-preserved A-4L with two J-65 engines looking for a buyer or investor. Let me know if anyone wants some contact info!

Legacy Skyhawker Operators:

Militaries... Out of the 2960 A-4's built, the vast majority of them saw service, of course, with the US Navy and Marine Corps. First delivery went to the Navy in September of 1956 and two days later the Marine Corps started getting theirs. The USN operated some 110 different squadrons of Skyhawks, from active attack to training, with the A-4 coming off the line in 1975 and continued operation in the training command, the reserves and, finally, just the VC squadrons until May 2003 (VC-8). The USMC operated some 49 various squadrons (32 VMA's) of Skyhawks with them coming off the line finally in February 1990 (VMA-211), while operating them in the reserves until June 1994 (VMA-131).

The International pipeline started in late 1966 with Argentina getting delivery of reworked A-4B's. International deliveries of brand-new A-4's started in July 1967 with Australia receiving their first A-4G's in that month, followed in that December by Israel receiving their first A-4H's. Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Kuwait and New Zealand also flew Skyhawks. The Kuwaiti A-4M's are now being used by Brazil, New Zealand's A-4K's now work for Draken, and Singapore shut down their last A-4 (training) squadron in December of 2013. Canada and France gave the Skyhawk serious consideration but never initiated Skyhawk buys. And, in December 2015, our preeminent international Skyhawker military, Israel's IAF, finally retired its last Skyhawks.

Contract Services: ATAC, Newport News, VA, flew A-4N's and Lima's until 2013; BAE Systems flew A-4N's (now with Draken) under contract with the German government until just this past December 2014; ATSI of Mesa, AZ, was purchased by Discovery Air in December 2013, and it is now Top Aces. They now operate that A-4 fleet; TADS of Carson City, NV, flies contract support, but no longer has A-4's in its inventory.

Totals:	Single Seaters	Two Seaters
Military:	10	3
Contract:	22	3
Private:	3	3
Totals:	35	9

Grand Totals: 44 Flying Skyhawks, February 2019

A-4's Still Flying!
as of February 2019

13 Military
25 Contract
6 Private
Total: 44



WARTIME KODAKID LOST AT SEA

By Gary Verver

Brian Cooper arrived in Rochester, NY, in October 1940 when he was evacuated from war-torn England at the age of 5 with other children of employees at Kodak's Harrow, England, plant. These children were dubbed the "Kodakids," and they were returned to their parents in England in 1945 as WWII was ending.

At age 16, Brian returned to the US to complete high school in NY, and in 1954 he began to study Animal Husbandry in Alfred, Allegany, NY. In June 1955 Brian met Rita Graves, who gave birth to a son Chris in March 1956. Chris Tschanz, Lt Col USAF (Ret), was adopted in April of 1956 and discovered late in life through DNA testing that Brian was his father.

Chris introduced himself to me as a new member of the A-4 Skyhawk Association saying that his father, LTJG Brian Cooper died during his first cruise when his plane (A4D-2 BuNo 144909) hit the water astern of the USS *Bon Homme Richard* on 22 December 1959. He went on to say that although the basic details of this loss are already captured accurately in our losses information, a few additional details recently came to light when he received a moderately redacted version of the accident report from NHHHC and copies of the carrier and destroyer(s) deck logs from the National Archives. Chris added that although the plane sank in 3,000 fathoms (18,000 feet) of water, BuNo 144909 was reportedly at the Davis Monthan boneyard as 3A0153 from 22 January 1970 until 1975 when it was released to Lockheed's Aeronautical Services.

According to the deck logs obtained by Chris, VA-195's A4D BuNo 144909 crashed into the sea on 22 December 1959 1-2 miles astern of the *Bon Homme Richard* while enroute from Pearl Harbor to Guam. Crew of the USS *Lofberg* (DD-759) saw the aircraft fly into the water at 2222 hours and passed through the point of impact at 2226, observing what looked like an aileron and nothing else. Flight ops were discontinued, and the *Bon Homme Richard*, USS *Lofberg* and the USS *Buck* (DD-761)



LTJG Brian Cooper

commenced searching for the pilot and aircraft wreckage, assisted by USAF SAR aircraft. The search was not called off until 1300 hours the next day.

Despite the redactions (statements, analysis and all comments regarding the report) the Accident Report tells us that the flight consisted of three A-4s, including Brian Cooper in NM-511. Brian launched at 2048 into weather stated as ceiling 0, visibility 10, wind 15 knots from 040 and 2/10^{ths} cloud cover at 2,000 feet, sea state 7 feet, swells 080 6 seconds apart. The Division Leader was on instruments, and the other two pilots were visual in close formation.

The flight was recalled early for a 2148 CCA recovery (which was subsequently changed to 2110). The pilots were then granted a four-minute delay to burn down to landing weight (no fuel dump). As the Section Leader in NM-505 started to break off, 511 (Brian) said he'd penetrate on 505's wing because he had no TACAN bearing indication. Brian then requested separation on final for an individual approach. 505 was told by CCA to slow down and drop his gear at six miles, and 511 was told to do the same at 10 miles.

After starting their descent, they were told to switch to CCA Approach Control on channel 16 (a preset, specific radio frequency). The Section Leader in 505 couldn't raise anyone on 16; went

back to 20; was told to try 16 again; heard nothing on 16; went back to 20; told to go to 18; and finally made contact. However, Brian was not in radio contact as he had flown into the water with wings level, approximately 1,500 yards astern of the *Bon Homme Richard*. The aircraft sank immediately.

Contributing factors were pilot, supervisory personnel, weather, material failure and design.

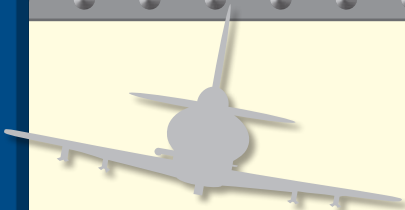
At the time of the accident Brian had logged 7.3 hours (1.5-night VFR) between December 1 and December 8, 1.2 hours on December 21 and .3 (.1 instruments) earlier on the 22nd.

Three days earlier the squadron's radio presets had been changed to comply with a revised communication plan and apparently had not been tested. 6 of 8 aircraft tested post-accident had incorrect presets. Furthermore, the TACAN in Brian's aircraft had been gripped on 12-2 as DME not holding within 10 miles.

From the accident report and deck logs, we know that Brian's TACAN wasn't working, he had lost radio contact, and he had switched from visual to instrument flight. He needed to contact CCA for an approach, but his radio was likely set to the wrong frequencies. Given the situation, Brian was obviously overloaded, probably preoccupied with the radio, and had most likely lost situational awareness. It's no wonder that he failed to monitor his altitude and continued his gradual descent until he hit the water. Given the reported 7 foot swells it would have been catastrophic.

As for BuNo 144909 being at the Davis Monthan boneyard in 1975, I'd say that 144909 either crashed and sank in 1959 or it went to Davis Monthan on 22 January 1970, but not both. The BuNo entry in Brian's logbook which is noted as crash, looks more like 144904 than it does 144909. BuNo 144904 (which was in VA-195 at the same time as 144909) went to Davis Monthan on 20 January 1970 according to the history card. It's quite possible that the history card and accident report are incorrect, and that Brian was flying 144904 the night of the crash.

TINS!*



“That Guy!”

By Dale “Stumpy” Kennedy

Have you ever been “That guy?” The “Did you hear about that guy?” Well, it was in mid-June of 1973, and this is my “That Guy” story. June 26, 1973, I was flying my A-4M Skyhawk, VMA-214 Black Sheep, out of MCAS El Toro, CA. We, my wingman and I, were carry Zuni rockets for live fire training at the “Whiskey” range on Camp Pendleton. I believe it was on my third run when the freaking control stick disengaged from its hub. So, I am in a 20-degree dive at 3500 feet of altitude, traveling at 450 KIAS (517 mph), and I have no control of my aircraft. So, I had

to eject. The wind forces after clearing the canopy in my seat were so violent my right elbow was catastrophically dislocated, left arm broken just below socket, shoulder blade broken, helmet and mask pulled off, and gloves and watch pulled off. I landed on some boulders, but hell I was alive! Ended up being retired on 30% disability.

So, for a number of years in Marine and Naval aviation I was “That guy.”

“Did you hear about that guy whose control stick came out while on a weapon’s run?” Turns out that after some maintenance a locking bolt was not put back in to secure the stick. ✈️



Stumpy in hospital bed.
Photo via Dale Kennedy.

SIZE DOES MATTER

Modelers' Corner

By Joe Turpen

Hobby Boss has released three new Skyhawk kits: an A-4E, A-4F and A-4M. They are the newest Skyhawks on the market and are in 1/48th scale. The first out was the A-4E Kit #81764 that had marking for Skyhawks from VC-1 and VA-155.

The VA-155 aircraft is in the experimental camouflage scheme used in Vietnam in 1966 when the squadron was aboard USS *Constellation* (CVA-64). ✈️



Pictures of the kit in the VC-1 markings.

Visit [<http://skyhawk.org/article-modeling/modelers-hangar-bay>]

TRIVIA ANYONE ?

from Dave Dollarhide

TRIVIA REVISITED MK-82S ON MER/TER ?

This previous Trivia question received more responses than any before or since. I thought it’d be fun to provide a summary of the comments.

The discussion of proper mounting procedure for MK-82 bombs on MER/TER bomb racks, when installed on the inboard wing stations had many twists and turns. Most supported the premise that a MK-82 bomb should not be loaded on the inboard station of the MER/TER, as it would interfere with the landing gear door, but the comments varied and were all interesting to read.

A couple of people reported that they routinely flew flights with three MK-82s on MERs. Two more readers let us know their squadron would mount a MK-81 on the inboard MER station, along with MK-82s on the other two stations. The gunsight setting was a few mils different, but it was considered worth it to take the extra bomb to the target.

Meanwhile, I began receiving and gathering photos of ordinance loads that might help. I found photos with three bombs loaded on MERS, but were they 82s or 81s? When fitted with conical fins, it’s a little difficult to tell, as the two look similar in size. Snakeye fins make identification pretty easy. Along the way we received some “gouge” from former ordnance types, letting us know that Snakeye fins for the MK-82 have a sizeable cutout, or notch in each fin, while the MK-81 Snakeye fins are smooth. It’s a big giveaway when you compare photos of both loads. I have a number of shots supporting the majority and have yet to see a photo with three 82s on an inboard wing rack...until now.

Robert Genat, who volunteers at the Midway Museum in San Diego, recently sent some photos of their A-4F that’s on display with three MK-82s on each TER. One photo shows that the gear door is actually touch-

ing the adjacent bomb. On the other wing the clearance is about ½ inch. These inert display bombs have no insulating material on the exterior, so that helps a bit with the clearance.

Under the pressures of combat, did certain units accept the fact that there would be physical contact and operate with three 82s anyway? That most certainly could have been the case, with the rationalization that the contact would be brief, just during taxi and takeoff. This would be similar to the decision made by those who loaded dissimilar bombs (MK-81s and MK-82s) on one MER/TER...get’er done.

Like they say, “My memory is my reality,” but there has to be more than just our ancient memories to add to this conversation, right? We actually have an article on the ordinance page of the Skyhawk Association website that states the MK-82 restriction but where would the official loading restriction be written? In a supplement to NATOPS? A loading manual? Like everything else in the military, it would be written somewhere, but we don’t really need to dig that deep! It’s more fun to just stir up those dormant brain cells for the memories it brings. After all, that’s what the Skyhawk Association is all about. Thanks to all, especially Robert Genat, for providing the final thought. ✈️





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