

THE A-4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL VOL 25-3



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Besides, It's Fun to Fly
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*Annual Skyhawk Member Meeting
Tailhook Convention • Beaufort, SC
Spring 2020 TBD*

Fall 2019

<http://skyhawk.org>



THE PREZ SEZ

By Steve "Dwarf" Linder

Greetings Skyhawk Association Members

Thanks to our editorial staff lead by Bob "Raven" Hickerson for all their efforts in putting together this issue of the A4Ever. Dave "Hide" Dollarhide is Co-Editor, and Gene "Blade" Atwell is the Webmaster. It takes a lot of work, so let them know how much you appreciate their time. You can see the other Feature Contributors under the banner "Journal Staff" to the right.

New A4Ever Printer

When the Summer issue of the A4Ever was ready to go to the presses, we discovered that the printer we had used since 2004 had gone out of business. Bob Hickerson jumped into action and contacted Stephanie Davis, who does the layout for our magazine, to find a new company for printing. After researching many alternatives, the board approved Acculink of Greenville, North Carolina. The Summer issue, although late because of the research, was printed and mailed at a significant cost savings to the Association. BZ to Stephanie and Bob for their diligence and dedication to continuing the quality of our fine publication, as you can see in the Summer issue and this issue of the A4Ever.

Skyhawk Association Board Meeting at Tailhook 6 September 2019

1. We have had several personnel losses this summer. A moment of silence was requested in memory of friends, family and shipmates no longer with us.
2. Secretary Cooney reported that, as of 1 September, we had 788 dues-paying members. Membership has remained relatively flat as we continue to sign up new members at about the same rate as we lose members. Currently we have 32 offshore members with the latest coming from France. Director Frommelt reported that he continues to work with the Associa-

tion Secretary regarding contacting former members of the Association to get them to rejoin.

3. Treasurer Williams reported that we are slightly ahead of financial projections for the calendar year. We should come in very close to budget expectations.
4. Director Atwell addressed the phishing problem, especially against Association email groups.
5. Director Frommelt gave his report on A-4s still flying: Military; 10 single-seaters + 3 two-seaters; Contract; 22 + 3, Private; 3 + 3, Totals; 35 single-seaters + 9 two-seaters, Grand Total: 44 Flying Skyhawks
6. Director Turpen reported that the award-winning plastic model at this year's IPMS show was a Marine F-8



7. Director Blosser, though unable to attend, submitted his report of the Nominating Committee for a 3-year extension of the terms of the following directors, commencing in 2019: Bill Egen, Ted Langworthy, Bill Ravgiala, Joe Turpen, and Denny Sapp. Each of these nominees agreed to have their name placed in nomination for election to the board of directors. The Board accepted the recommendations of the Nominating Committee, and the nominees were approved by the membership at the Annual Whizzer White Luncheon held at Noon on 6 September 2019.
8. At the Skyhawk Association post-luncheon board of directors meeting,



Steve "Dwarf" Linder

the proposed Officers for the coming year were unanimously approved. They are: President Steve Linder, VP (Navy) Terry Wolf, VP (Marine) Bill Ravgiala, Treasurer Mark Williams and Secretary Terry Cooney.

9. The company producing a Marine A-4 Challenge Coin has been added to the website store.
10. Interesting discussions are underway with author Jason McHale who is writing a book on the TRANS-LANT of A-4s to Israel in 1973.

Items needed by the Naval Historical Foundation (<https://www.history.navy.mil/>)

1. Photographs of aircraft
2. Pilot Handbooks
3. NATOPS manuals for the A-4
4. After-action Reports documenting A-4 squadrons
5. SACs (Standard Aircraft Characteristics) for A-4s
6. Biographical data (official bios) of A-4 pilots
7. Cruise Books
8. Post Deployment/End of Cruise Reports involving squadrons with A-4s
9. Official documentation on A-4s (must include the Bureau Number of the aircraft)
10. Information on armament carried by the A-4
11. "Special Mission" or fight information
12. Insignia related documents (insignia from A-4 Squadrons)
13. Maintenance Manuals for the A-4
14. Aircraft Marking related documents

cont. page 5...



IN MEMORY OF
M. DAVIS "WHIZZER" WHITE, D.D.S.
(1939-2007)
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BOMBS AWAY!

• Fall 2019 •

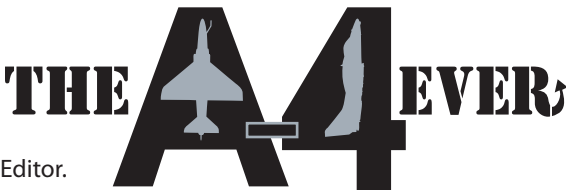
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Dave "Hide" Dollarhide – Co-Editor.
Gene "Blade" Atwell – Webmaster.
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Published by the Skyhawk Association © 2019

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 Acculink, Greenville, NC.

On the Cover: Major Bob Hickerson of VMAT-102 launches a pair of 5" Zuni rockets at the Chocolate Mountains weapons range near MCAS Yuma, AZ.
USN photograph by Bruce R. Trombecky.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@skyhawk.org

■ To the Editor:
Jason McHale
[.com]

My name is Jason McHale and I received your email addresses from Alan Chesterman, who I've also CC'd on this message.

I'm a historian conducting research into American actions during the Yom Kippur War for a series of articles and larger book project. I'm collaborating with a former A-4/A-6 pilot who was serving aboard the USS Franklin D Roosevelt during the conflict. One avenue we are pursuing is the transfer of A-4 Skyhawks from the United States to Israel in October 1973. I've been speaking with Alan the last few weeks about his flight across and wanted to reach out to the four of you in hopes of locating more of the pilots who took part.

I would greatly appreciate your organization's assistance in reaching out to your members asking for anyone with information, or who participated in the flights or knows someone who did, to reach out to me.

If you have questions, please feel free to ask. I'd be happy to speak with you and address any you may have.

Thank you for your time and your service to our country.

Sincerely,
Jason McHale

■ To the Editor,
Raymond Winn
Subject: Supersonic Scooter

My name is Ray "Cowboy" Winn and live up in Montana now and employed as a captain on a Falcon 50EX based in Missoula, Montana. I was in VA-212 and was on two combat cruises with the Hancock in 1971 and 1972 (along with Denny Sapp in VA-55). As the squadron LSO I was tasked with going to Cubi in the middle of a line period to bounce a new pilot for VA-164 who needed some landings before coming to the boat. At the same time I

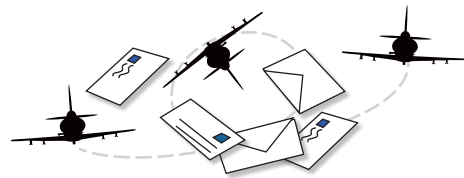
flew some maintenance test flights for the shore detachment.

For a time I had asked several people if they knew if and how the A-4 would do at mach. With the limitations with fuel tanks or MERS and TERS I had not felt I could experiment on all of my flights before. This one day in Cubi, however, I had this A-4F with slick wings and in inclination for experimentation! As in many instances in my life maybe I should have read a bit more about aerodynamics but with my BA in Political Science I guess as with any politician I did not want facts to get in the way of my investigation.

As soon as I had finished all of the test flight functions except the control disconnect I inched the Skyhawk as high as I could (it was to almost 50,000 feet) and rolled over and pointed the nose at the most distinguishable point on the base....the O club. In hindsight, not a good choice. I had a very steep dive and as I accelerated to Mach the first strange event was what I later found out to be called "mach tuck" and then as the O club got as big as I thought I should let it get I experienced the next event I guess they call "control reversal."

In any event, I was in Mach for some period of time and except for the sloppy elevator control and a bit of buffeting I seemed to have luckily survived even with my lack of knowledge. I felt a sense of accomplishment that did last until I had asked the plane captain why all of the black cars were at the line shack. He told me some Air Force jock had broken some windows at the O club!!

I was ready for whatever might befall me and when I opened the door to the building I was amazed at how many "heavies" were in that little room. On my first step in a LCDR stopped me and asked if I had just been flying. I said yes sir and he promptly asked what I had been flying and when I told him he told me to "get out of here" we are busy. So I



promptly filled out the yellow sheet and headed for the BOQ. I was still mulling over in my mind what I should do about this event when I was in my Q room and was approached by the adjoining room occupant, a marine who was on R&R from Vietnam, who asked if I had been there this afternoon. I told him I had been flying and he told me of how he had been in some awful rocket attacks and that afternoon as he was sleeping a noise that sounded like another rocketing brought him out of his bed to under it!!! He later found that it had been some airplane that caused it and told me he would like to kill the pilot that did that. At this point I felt a confession might prove to be disastrous to both of us...and especially me.

I flew back to the ship a couple days after that and told my CO and he showed me all of the message traffic that transpired from that incident. The Navy found there had been only one of their aircraft that could have done that and he was already in Danang when it occurred so the Navy knew it had to have been one of the Air Force jocks from Clark AFB. Well the AF said no way but there was a lot of back and forth. We came to a decision it would be best to "let sleeping dogs lie" and except for a few people I have told it has not been talked about.

I will leave all names out of this except mine and hope this does not cause any distress to anyone. I loved that airplane and enjoy the stories we all have of our time in VA-212 Rampant Raiders and the squadrons of CVW-21 will always be fondly remembered.

Raymond Winn
PO Bx 275
Big Arm, MT\

SKYHAWK LUNCHEON SPEAKER

LtCol Jim "Waldo" Walsh USMC (Ret)

As stated in the Prez Sez, the guest speaker for the Skyhawk Association Annual Meeting and Luncheon (9/7/19) was LtCol "Waldo" Walsh, USMC (Ret), the Marine Skyhawk pilot who had the dubious honor of being the last US Marine to be taken prisoner during the Vietnam War. At the time of his capture, Captain Walsh was a pilot in Marine Attack Squadron 211, operating A-4Es from Bien Hoa Air Base.

On 26 September 1972, Waldo and his wingman launched from Bien Hoa on a close air support mission in defense of An Loc. The target was enemy forces that had occupied Quan Loi airfield near the city, and it was well-known to be defended by many AAA sites. The two A-4s rendezvoused with a FAC to start their attacks. Captain Walsh's aircraft was hit by ground fire as he began to pull out of a 30-degree dive on the target. With the A-4's tail on fire and the controls not responding, Capt Walsh ejected a few miles from An Loc landing in a rubber plantation. A rescue helicop-



ter was launched immediately but was hit by ground fire, forcing a withdrawal. Waldo landed in the middle of an enemy campsite and was captured immediately.

Capt Walsh's aircraft, A-4E 151099, was the last A-4 shot down during the Vietnam War, as well as the last Marine A-4 shot down. Taken prisoner near Saigon, he was forced to walk to a prison camp in Hanoi for his internment; predictably, he had some harrowing experiences along the way, including an unsuccessful escape attempt.

Adapted from Chris Hobson



See Chris Hobson's,
**Vietnam Air Losses: USAF,
Navy, and Marine Corps
Fixed-Wing Aircraft Losses
in SE Asia 1961-1973**
Available on Amazon.

THE PREZ SEZ

continued. from page 2..

Annual Skyhawk Luncheon at Tailhook 6 Sept. 2019

The annual Skyhawk luncheon was held at Noon after the board meeting. The speaker was LtCol Jim "Waldo" Walsh, USMC (Ret), the last POW captured in Vietnam. He gave a most engaging summary of his six grueling months in captivity. If you missed the luncheon, his speech will be loaded on the Skyhawk website.

Next Skyhawk Association Board Meeting

The next meeting of the Skyhawk Association board will be held in Beaufort, South Carolina, on a date to be determined in Spring 2020. Remember: Board meetings are open to any member of the Skyhawk Association. I will report on the outcome of this meeting in a future issue.

Dwarf sends

Note: A Lt Kemper was piloting an A-4E out of Bien Hoa on 9 November 1972 when he had an engine failure on take-off and was forced to eject – That was the last A-4 loss to any cause during Vietnam. (Bill "Jigger" Egen, Skyhawk Association).

NEW MEMBERS

Don Alford • Rochester, NY
Eric Burns • Aubrey, TX
Chip Drury • Alexandria, VA
Kathy Foley • Santa Ana, CA
Larry Hutson • Carmel, IN

David Kennedy • Thousand Oaks, CA
Frank W. Kovacs • Southbury, CT
Robert K. Lange • San Diego, CA
Henri Lebreton • Pierrefeu-Du-Var, France
Thomas Lytle • Moncks Corner, SC

Charles Nangle • Granbury, TX
Dick Nielsen • Las Vegas, NV
Timmy Smith • La Jolla, CA
Rodney White • Salinas, CA

Join or renew, and give
someone a one-year gift
membership for \$20 more.

Contact Terry Cooney at
skyhawkasn@gmail.com or at
2421 Clubside Dr., Beavercreek, OH 45431



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

Read?

you think
we read?

DOUGLAS A-4C/L SKYHAWK IN NAVY SERVICE

Steve Ginter.
Simi Valley, CA. 2019. 193 pages. Ill. \$39.95.
Reviewed by CDR Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret)

Right down our alley, Numbers 109 and 110 in the successful, open-ended Naval Fighter series, and the sixth and seventh covering the various models of the Douglas/McDonnell Douglas Skyhawk, these long-awaited volumes cover the A-4 Charlie that so many of our members flew in Vietnam.

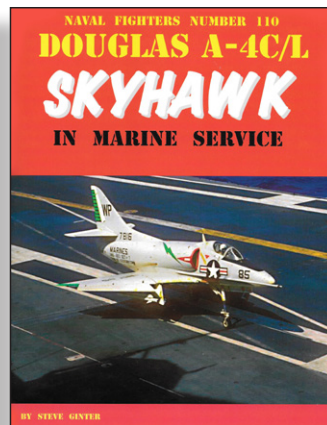
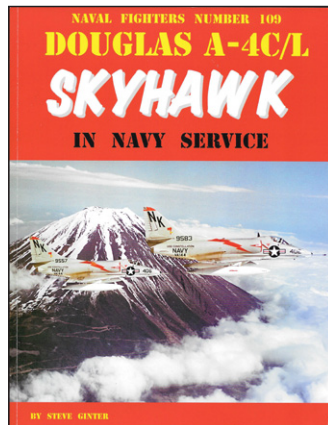
Following the long-established format of basic design and discussion of the Skyhawk, there are many photos of the A-4's individual areas such as armament stations, cockpit details, landing gear, and other points of interest. A lengthy section of squadron biographies that contain photos of their markings, squadron patches, as well as synopses of each squadron's service. These squadron capsules include fleet and reserve squadrons that flew the A-4L, an upgrade of the A-4C that flew so many Vietnam sorties. Besides the black-and-white photos, a nice collection of photos follows, as well as the

DOUGLAS A-4C/L SKYHAWK IN MARINE SERVICE

Steve Ginter.
Simi Valley, CA. 2019. 49 pages. Ill. \$18.95.
Reviewed by CDR Peter B. Mersky, USNR (Ret)

traditional discussion of scale model kits of the A-4C/L.

As our specific group knows, the A-4C bore the brunt the first years of Rolling Thunder, flying daily Alpha Strikes against targets in South Vietnam and North Vietnam, and shouldering a



major portion of losses of aircraft and their pilots, who quickly filled the enemy prisons. While certainly a few squadrons flew the A-4B and the A-4E, it was the

Charlies and their pilots that took the war to the North Vietnamese and faced the growing assemblies of antiaircraft guns and SAMS, not to mention the early appearances of MiGs over Hanoi and Haiphong and other enemy cities.

The Charlies flew from every Navy flight deck, large and small, and for a time were clad in some of the most colorful markings of the period. A few of them even sported the experimental olive drab green in the mid-war period. The JOs who would become captains, admirals, colonels, generals, skippers CAGs, and MAG COs honed their teeth on these dangerous missions.

The second book, which deals expressly with Marine Charlie and Lima squadrons, is much smaller than the previous volume, no. 109, and thus costs less. Its coverage also keeps preliminary discussion of the basic A-4 to a minimum, and starts almost immediately with the tradition capsule squadron histories, but with the usual gallery of photos. However, there is no discussion of scale models as that subject has been covered in the previous volume. No. 110 is almost a mini-Ginter publication but certainly goes a long way in completing the ambitious project of depicting Ed Heinemann's masterpiece and its contribution to Navy and Marine Corps aviation. While

we may have become familiar with the Ginter style and format, spending time browsing through both books will bring back many memories.

Black Wednesday – HOOT

By Norm Spilleth

Between 1961 and 1963 VMA-212 lost four airplanes, two pilots, and one enlisted man to accidents all on Wednesdays. We started to refer to the phenomenon as "black Wednesday" because we were having some sort of incident every Wednesday it seemed. It culminated when I slipped off the trailing edge of my A-4 and broke my wrist. Of course on a Wednesday. I think I broke the spell along with my wrist. It was a small injury, but before that...

His last name was Houghten, so we called him "Hoot." I can't remember his first name. I do remember that he was a tall, skinny kid from Florida. Hoot was an ordinance man in VMA-212 at Kaneohe Bay in September 1962 when he was killed on our flight line.

That day stands out in my memory. Our planes were being loaded with thousand pound bombs for a target run on Kahoolawe. I remember the sun being extremely bright as I walked out to preflight my airplane. Old Hoot walked out with me and we talked about how much the sun actually gave us a headache. He went to the string

of bomb carts to help with the loading, and I went to my airplane at the other end of the line. I was on the ladder of my plane, checking the cockpit when I looked up and saw a crowd of people running towards the flight line. I looked over the cockpit to see what was up, and then I saw it. A thousand pound bomb was laying on the cement under one of our A-4Ds. It occurred to me that it was armed and the troops running from the hangar were going to throw it in the bay just back of the line. I scrambled down the ladder and ran over to help. As I approached the bomb, I could see a body on the other side of it. It was Hoot, but it didn't look like him anymore. His head was crushed. The only way I knew it was him was the name tag on his utilities. He was still alive and gasping for air. One of the other plane captains reached down his throat to clear it, but it was full of blood. Another plane captain and I ran to the corpsman's office in the hangar and "hai-ockoed" the corpsman out to the scene. He knelt down to check out Hoot and just shook his head. There was nothing he could do.

Hoot and the other ordinance men were loading the bombs on the wing racks with one bomb on the left, and one bomb on the right. Each bomb was on its own cart that would be positioned under the wing and then jacked up until the clevis hooks lined up with the rings on the bomb. Then the ordinance man (Hoot in this case), would position himself under the bomb and tighten down the hooks with a ratchet wrench. That's where Hoot was when a new guy electrician was in the cockpit checking the circuits. The new guy hit the arm switches and the pickle button on the stick just as Hoot was underneath the bomb. *(To complete the electrical continuity check with power on the aircraft, required before loading weapons, the landing gear handle would also need to be placed in the up position. Editor)* The electrical current set off the black powder charge that pushed the bomb away from the plane, crushing Hoot. After a half hour or so, an ambulance picked him up and took him to the HMM-161 hangar for a helicopter evacuation to Tripler Hospital. He was still gasping

for air. They said he died on the helicopter, but he was dead when the bomb fell on him.

Afterward, another plane captain and I were ordered to take buckets of water out to the ramp and wash away the blood and the brains.

His name isn't etched on a wall nor is there a ship named after him, but Hoot gave his life for his country doing his duty. Whether in actual combat or on duty during peace time, all who serve, like Hoot, risk their lives in the service of their country.

"All give some,
some give all."



EXAMPLE PHOTO: VMA-225 A-4Cs Chu Lai 2,000# MK-84 on bomb truck (USMC).

★ TAPS ★

Richard M. Cooke, 18 Sep 2019, Carlsbad, CA
J.K. Davis, 31 July 2019, San Clemente, CA
Mike Green, 24 Aug 2019, Tucson, AZ
Patrick Gulick, 30 Jun 2019, Corvallis, OR
Art Padios, 8 Nov 2011, Pensacola, FL



TAPS notices may be Emailed to:
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sa-journal-editor@skyhawk.org

Or mailed to:
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1222 Balcones Drive
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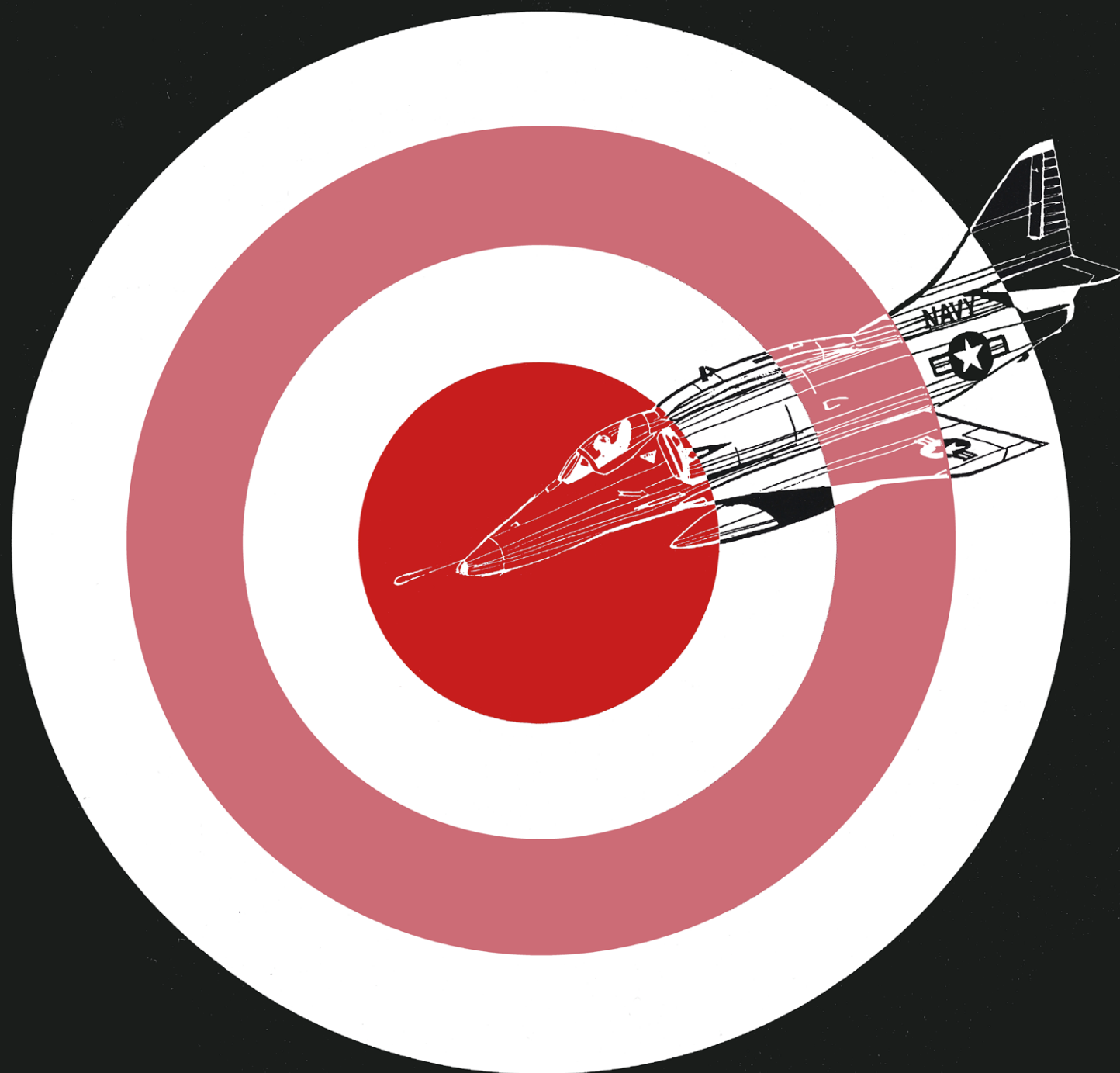
For lists of A-4 KIA and operational losses,
members can sign into <http://skyhawk.org>
and go to the "Ready Room."

Strike on Target-123

Reprinted with permission

Bud Baer – Author and Editor *Approach* magazine

Nika Glover – Editor of *Approach*, *Mech* and *Ride* magazines



“The size of the cloud and fire made it look like napalm. I didn’t think they were supposed to drop live ordnance. . .”

THE brief was about to start. His A-4M *Skyhawk* was to bomb Target-123 two minutes after an A-6 strike. Target-123 was a “railroad marshalling yard” consisting of a dozen jet engine containers lined up to simulate tank cars.

They briefed the mission and talked about the target, weather, sun position, possible “unfriendlies” in the area and “threats” from Smokey SAMs.

The scenario included a 10-degree pop-up attack with the last of 12 Mk 76 practice bombs to go off the rack at 500 feet AGL. This plan took into account that the *Skyhawk* normally loses about 200 feet of altitude during recovery from the attack.

After the brief the pilot mentioned he was concerned about his A-4 canopy, which was dirty and badly pitted. He had watched his plane captain try to clean the windscreen and canopy, but he could not remove the deep scratches, gouges and a strange film that seemed to cover about 80 percent of the canopy.

He made a time-check on his digital wristwatch with other aircrews in the strike. He planned to set his aircraft clock from his wristwatch.

It would take him only 35 minutes to reach Target 123, low level all the way. En route, he thought about the

challenge of flying these air strikes. He had worked hard on weapons delivery and tactics, particularly on pop-up attacks. He knew that to be effective in this maneuver you had to know the aircraft, what it could do, its closure rates and speeds, and what it felt like with the varied ordnance it carries.

He was halfway to Target-123 and things looked good. The simulated marshalling yard was on a rise

. . . Dirt and dust flew high, followed by a massive fireball with billowing smoke moving across the ground. The aircraft made a long slash along the ground . . .

almost 1,000 feet MSL. His attack on the target depended on whether or not the A-6 ahead would hit it first. If the *Intruder* destroyed it, he would move on to a secondary target to drop his Mk 76s.

The *Skyhawk* pilot neared Target-123, turning on his initial point at about 450 knots. Suddenly he saw an

A-6 making its run at the target. He was puzzled. He thought the *Intruder* was running late, so he decided to move away momentarily to observe its success on the target. He saw its bombs hit slightly off target. From then on, his memory drew a blank.

View From Above.

An OA-4M loitering over the target at about 10,000 MSL was the evaluation aircraft. Its crew’s responsibility was to monitor and record flights inbound to the target, times-on-target, hits and other pertinent data.

The pilot saw the *Skyhawk* roll wings level on his run heading about 045 degrees. His immediate thoughts were: “An A-4. Why’s he here? He’s early. He’s too low. He’ll never make it! Damn, he hit the ground. What do I say now? Knock it off, knock it off, knock it off!”

“All of this took about one half a heartbeat,” the OA-4M pilot said in his subsequent statement on the mishap. “It’s impossible to tell you how fast all this went through my head. There was no chance to say, ‘pull-out.’ I saw the airplane about 1,000 meters short of where it hit. As soon as I saw him, I knew he was going to hit the ground, but there was no way to call him. I called the ‘knock it off’ on strike frequency as soon as

continued...



Target-123, a simulated railroad marshalling yard consisting of aircraft engine cannisters to represent railroad tank cars. The *Skyhawk* cut a long swath along the ground. The circle shows where the pilot landed.

I was able to talk – about one-half second after impact. It hit just short of the train. Dirt and dust flew high, followed by a massive fireball with billowing smoke moving across the ground. The aircraft made a long slash along the ground.”

The OA-4M crew contacted a CH-46 in the vicinity. They told the helo crew there was a crash on Target-123 and to go to the impact site to begin securing it. The O-4M pilot took it for granted that the *Skyhawk* pilot could not have survived the crash because “we saw no chute, heard no beeper and felt it was all over for the pilot.”

View From the Helo

The CH-46, used for tactical support, had transported Smokey SAM and communications-jamming personnel to the target area. Still on the ground, the helo crew didn’t see the A-4, but they were startled to see a large fireball and a black smoke cloud near the target.

“The size of the cloud and fire made it look like napalm,” the helo pilot noted in his statement on the mishap. “I didn’t think they were supposed to drop live ordnance. It was then that we started to talk about the possibility of a crash. We ran down the hill to the CH-46, turned

up the auxiliary power and listened to the radios. We soon got the word.

“We took off instantly for the crash site, passed over it and sought a place to land. We were following the flight path of the mishap aircraft.

“Suddenly, we saw a man near a tall burning bush. He was standing and waving at us. A survivor? How could this be possible? Yet, there he was - the A-4 pilot – standing, waving and running as we approached.”

The helo banked, came around and landed. The crew chief got out to help the survivor, but he didn’t need much help. He ran to the helicopter, smiled and gave a “thumbs up” that

... Still on the ground, the helo crew didn’t see the A-4, but they were startled to see a large fire ball and a black smoke cloud near the target ...

he was OK. He climbed in, sat down just aft of the port door and strapped in. He had dried blood on his face and his helmet was on.

“I instructed my crew chief to have him lie down on the three-man seat, check for bleeding and watch for signs he might go into shock,” the helo pilot said. “Still giving us the ‘thumbs up’ sign, he appeared to be in fair shape. We got him to the hospital as soon as possible.”



The *Skyhawk*'s engine; below, the broken tail section.



How He Survived

How did he miraculously live through this mishap? Because the flight angle into the ground was very shallow, the G force on impact was minimized. This permitted him to survive as the aircraft was breaking up.

Although he didn’t initiate ejection sequence, the canopy departed the aircraft, and he and his ejection seat were catapulted into the air from the burning *Skyhawk*. Somehow the automatic sequence initiator in the parachute pack was activated, perhaps by the pilot’s violent body movement or by flying debris. His drogue chute and parachute deployed into the wind stream while he was still attached to the seat.

The chute’s “snatch force” slowed him down before he touched the ground. From all indications he was eased down from his short seatborne ride almost perpendicular to the ground on the chute’s downswing. The way the shroud lines were draped over nearby bushes and the lack of seat skid marks seemed to strengthen this contention.

Why did he black out and lose his memory of this critical period? The doctors called it “retrograde post traumatic (organic) amnesia secondary to head trauma.” The next day his memory was back to normal, except for the blackout period. His injuries included a concussion, scalp cut, sprained ankle, scattered burns and back injuries. He spent the next five days in the hospital, mostly for observation. Within three months he was back on flying status.

continued...



Investigators look closely at the position of the ejection seat. It is attached to the parachute, which is draped over some bushes. Below, another view of the ejection seat and the parachute. The pilot in the seat was thrown from the A-4 on impact with the chute deploying and easing the pilot to a safe landing. Right, the landing position of the ejection seat. The pilot was able to unstrap himself and walk away.

Why It Happened

A number of reasons were given for the possible cause of this mishap. One theory advanced by the mishap pilot was that the simulated railroad tank cars were aircraft engine containers only about one-fifth the size of actual tank cars. Each engine container measured 12 feet long compared to the standard railroad tank car of 60 feet. A pilot relying only on visual cues to bomb a target might be lured into a release at a low, unsafe altitude. On the other hand, release parameters should be based on dive angle, airspeed and altitude rather than visual determination of target size, safety analysts noted.

The eight-day clock in the A-4 and other types was a source of consternation to the *Skyhawk* pilot. It may have contributed to the timing error.

The pilot might have set it incorrectly. At the briefing the pilot checked the time on his digital wristwatch with the other aircrews and found it accurate. By his aircraft clock, he said he began the low-level mission on time and hit every point on time at a speed of 420 knots. Mishap witnesses in the area said his aircraft clock may have been fast by about two minutes. Since then, the pilot has flown by his watch rather than the clock. He feels that digital



clocks should be used on A-4s and all aircraft since they are much easier to read.

The primary cause of this mishap was “the deviation from the intended flight path resulting in disorientation, which was amplified by poor visibility because of the sun angle, haze and a glazed canopy.”

A discrepancy report on the A-4’s canopy was submitted by the mishap pilot 12 days before the mishap. He said the poor condition of the canopy made the A-4 “unsuitable for air combat sorties.” The aircraft had flown 13 missions since the report was filed, and the *Skyhawk* had been inspected and certified safe

for flight in accordance with existing directives.

Visibility was also impaired by the sun. When the A-6 had completed its bomb run, the A-4, which was early, had to modify its attack approach. The pilot chose a route into the sun, which caused poor visibility with the low sun angle, haze and shadows off the hills.

Soon after the mishap, an RF-4 tried to duplicate the run by flying the same profile as the mishap aircraft. It made four runs into the sun. The pilot said “the sun angle, haze and rapidly rising terrain” made it almost impossible to see the target. This severely limited visibility from

the sun and haze, coupled with the canopy condition, turned out to be major cause factors of this unusual mishap.

Mike Lyden’s comment on the TARGET 123 story:

“No rebuttals, no additions, just this . . . Ever since 28 May, 1983, not a day goes by that I do not thank God for my survival, for my subsequent return to flying, and for all my FMF brothers, of whom I am proud to be one of. I am indeed, a very fortunate man!”



BESIDES, IT'S FUN TO FLY

• Part I •

By Harry Gann

Introduction

The characteristics of the carrier-based, light-attack aircraft that merited the above comment were the result of separate occurrences that arose in the early part of the 1950s. Military exercises showed that many missions of the first-line prop-driven attack aircraft of that day required 8 to 12 hours in the air. Because of fatigue, some returning pilots were not capable of coping with marginal weather or other emergency conditions if encountered. Letters at the squadron level filtering up through channels indicated problems and suggested solutions. The consensus of the opinions recommended that faster, turbine powered aircraft be deployed for the mission.

Quite apart from the operational needs of the fleet, engineering management at the Douglas Aircraft Company was looking at a dual problem as old as powered aircraft: weight growth and complexity. The lives of many new aircraft are terminated because of this problem. Every company that has developed any number of aircraft has been caught in this trap.

A general research program was undertaken by Douglas to investigate all aspects of weight reduction and elimination of unnecessary complexities for future design programs. A 1952 Douglas report noted that one pound of weight added in the design of a typical small subsonic jet aircraft increased the gross weight of the

airplane ten lbs. With aircraft costs then at \$40 per lb., this addition meant that pound increased the cost of the aircraft \$400 if performance and strength were unchanged.

Prior to publication of this report, an unsolicited fighter proposal using lightweight design concepts and principles was submitted to the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer) in early 1952. In view of the operational requirement being generated as a result of fleet suggestions on attack aircraft, the fighter design was revamped to that of a lightweight attack bomber with the capability of running 400 miles to a target, deliver a 1,000-lb. bomb and return.

"I have great confidence in its ability to stay up there in combat; besides, it's fun to fly."

- Navy Vietnam aviator in reference to the McDonnell Douglas A-4 Skyhawk.

The means of financing the construction of a prototype aircraft became available when BuAer decided to cancel the Douglas XA2D *Skyshark* turboprop-powered attack aircraft. This promising design had bogged down because of seemingly insoluble problems arising from the engine design. The problem of gearbox and engine control systems could not be economically solved with the existing state-of-the-art. Funds in the amount of \$41 million from the A2D program were transferred to the new lightweight attack aircraft to be designated XA4D-1.

A contract was let 12 June 1952, and the specification written for a "lightweight, single engine, single place, high performance, carrier-based, day attack land plane, capable of performing dive-bombing interdiction and close support missions. The airplane shall be capable of delivery of conventional or special weapons, and it is intended to be capable of striking sea and land targets with or without fighter escort where control of the air has not been established. (Inherent simplicity of design, high producibility, ease of maintenance and low cost of production are prime objectives.)"

The specified empty weight was 8,136 lbs. By comparison, the FJ-4B *Fury*, a comparable airplane of the same era, with the same engine and internal fuel weighed 13,790 lbs. or 70 percent more than the A4D. The airplane is best described in the mockup inspection report: "Basically it is a delta-wing configuration with a normal tail, a conventional control system, carries a crew of one, powered by a single J65-W-2 axial flow jet engine. A large variety of weapons can be carried externally on three bomb racks, the centerline station being capable of carrying stores up to 3,575 lbs., and the wing racks being stressed for 1,000 lbs. each. Design gross weight with one Mk 12 weapon is 14,250 lbs., and the combat radius with this weapon and internal fuel only (900 gals.) is 400 miles. The maximum design catapult weight is 19,760 lbs. Maximum speed in the clean condition at sea level is 596 kts. (M-0.90) and the combat ceiling at combat weight is 50,000 ft."



XA4D-1 mockup shows early design configuration of the Skyhawk. (DAC photo.)

As a result of the first mockup board that met in October 1952, 19 aircraft were ordered. Rather than the usual procedure of ordering two experimental aircraft, it was decided to build all aircraft with production tooling and deliver them to test and evaluation units, as well as the fleet. By January 1953, fabrication of tooling was complete and the production of components began

to flow. A year later, during February 1954, the first aircraft, designated XA4D-1, BuNo 137812, was rolled out for engine run-up. Subsequently, the aircraft was trucked from Douglas EI Segundo plant to Edwards AFB. After extensive ground and taxi tests, it was flown 22 June 1954, by Douglas test pilot Bob Rahn, just two years after the go-ahead was given. *continued...*



A4D-1 of VA-72, the first Navy squadron to operate the Skyhawk, circa 1956. (Photo via Boom Powell.)



LT Gordon Gray poses in front of 137820 with Douglas ground crew following his record-breaking flight of 15 October, 1955. Photo is autographed for crew-chief Tom Mayberry (second from left). (Photo via Mayberry family.)

Pre-Operational Development

After the exhilaration of the initial flight, the serious flight test work began. All phases of aircraft design, performance and capabilities had to be proven to the satisfaction of the customer. The work-horse of the flight test program was the second aircraft, BuNo 137813.

It flew 319 hours in the test program demonstrating several aerodynamic characteristics and aircraft systems. At the completion of testing, the aircraft was assigned to

the Naval Parachute Facility at NAAS El Centro, where it was finally retired from service in 1969 and placed on display at the Naval Aviation Museum at Pensacola in the markings of VA-93.

During two years of exhaustive flight test, it was decided the best way to introduce the A4D's capability to the world was to officially break one of the international airspeed records. Chosen was the 500-km closed-course record of 649.46

mph held by a USAF North American F-86H Sabre. Navy test pilot LT Gordon Gray was selected to pilot A4D-1 BuNo 137820 for the record attempt. A 12-pylon course of 100 km circumference was set up on the California desert near Edwards and on 15 October 1955, Gray flew five laps at an altitude of 100 meters at a certified speed of 695.163 mph.

"It appeared that the tactic of putting all the eggs in the single 'A-bomb basket' may have been premature. Iron bombs and guns were still necessary in the environment created by perennial world-wide brush fires."

Thus, the *Skyhawk* became the first attack aircraft to hold this record.

In March 1956, six aircraft were flown to the Naval Air Test Center at Patuxent River, Md., for Bureau of Inspection and Survey Trials (BIS). The BIS team performed such tests as necessary to insure all contractual obligations were met. At the conclusion of this operation, the stage was set for the flight indoctrination program (FIP).

The FIP trials were the final qualifying trials and served to orient and introduce the aircraft for operational duty with fleet squadrons. Attack Squadron 72, flying Grumman F9F-5 *Panthers* at NAS Quonset Point, R.I., was selected to conduct the trials. On the West Coast, VF(AW)-3, at NAS Moffett Field, a transitional training and FIP

unit operating as a precursor to today's replacement training squadrons, also was designated to evaluate

the operational characteristics of the *Skyhawk*. The FIP aircraft were delivered to both squadrons in September and tight daily schedules were flown, in some cases 18 hours a day. Maintenance schedules were set up to determine the day-to-day availability of the *Skyhawk*. The A4D proved to have the highest availability of any new design tested under the FIP program - the *Skyhawk* was ready for the fleet.



A-4C #148548, circa 1966. (Photo by Global Air Images via SA.)

Fleet Introduction of the A4D-1

The first factory-to-fleet delivery of the A4D was made in October 1956, to the *Skyhawks* of VA-72. Not only did the squadron introduce the A4D to the fleet, it also relinquished its *Skyhawk* nickname to the new bomber and changed to Blue Hawks to avoid confusion. The Bengals of Marine Corps Attack Squadron 224 transitioned to A4D-1s in 1956 to initiate the new aircraft into the Corps. After receiving its aircraft at MCAS El Toro, the squadron flew the *Skyhawk* in later versions for almost ten years before altering its mission to all-weather attack and switching to Grumman A-6A *Intruders*.

Soon, many other squadrons began receiving the A4D-1. VA-93, the Blue Blazers, became the first fleet tactical unit to operate A4Ds on the West Coast. The squadron deployed to WestPac in USS *Ticonderoga* (CVA-14) 16 September 1957, with CVG-9 for the A4D's initial full deployment.

Eventually, some 18 Navy and Marine attack squadrons operated A4D-1s (re-designated A-4A in October 1962) of which 165 were built. As the "Alfas" were phased out of the fleet operational units, they were assigned to Navy and Marine Reserve squadrons. By 1967, all A-4As were retired except for a few that were retained by test units for non-operational missions.

The A4D-2 (A-4B) and the Inside-Out Tail

Before initial deliveries of the A4D-1 were made to the fleet, an improved version had already been ordered into production. Developed to meet more demanding requirements with respect to range and navigational capability, the A4D-2 was first flown 26 March 1956, by Douglas test pilot Drury Wood. Twenty-eight percent of the structure was modified to incorporate desired improvements. The most notable external additions were the in-flight refueling probe added to the right side of the fuselage and stiffening of the rudder by building it inside out with the ribs showing and bonding it together rather than riveting. This arrangement, known as a tadpole rudder, reduced the tendency of the trailing edge of the rudder to vibrate like a tuning fork at high speeds, thus creating fatigue cracks.

Additional navigational equipment, coupled with provisions for carrying 300-gal. external tanks and the refueling probe, provided for longer range flights on special weapon and strike missions. The ordnance delivery system was improved by addition of Bullpup air-to-ground guided missile capability in addition to an improved bomb delivery system. Additional improvements were made to the flight control systems.

The landing gear was strengthened and a pressure fueling system was added. A4D-2 production totaled 542 aircraft. Fleet introduction of the new *Skyhawk* model began with VMA-211 in September 1957.

By the mid-1960s, the A-4Bs were serving with Reserve units and received a paper designation of TA-4B to remove them from the Navy's combat aircraft inventory.

Development of the A4D-2N (A-4C): The A4D-3 is Cancelled

The Douglas engineering staff worked constantly to improve the performance of the *Skyhawk*. New requirements were being generated by users and passed through channels to the Bureau of Weapons (BuWeps, formerly BuAer). A desirable specific addition to the capability of the *Skyhawk* was greater range through foul weather and shrouded terrain. Radar was needed to penetrate beyond mountainous areas and improved instrumentation as well as autopilot were needed for increased instrument flight capability.

The Navy had developed an all-attitude bombing and navigational system which appeared to be an improvement. Douglas submitted a proposal for the A4D-3 to meet these requirements. It was to be powered with a new engine being developed for the Grumman A2F-1 (A-6A), the Pratt & Whitney *continued...*



Appearing much like a scale model next to its "big brother" A3D Skywarrior, the XA4D-1 shows an advantage of designing smaller nuclear weapons. (DAC photo.)

J52. The specific fuel consumption of the J52 was less than the Curtiss-Wright J65 of the earlier *Skyhawks*, while maximum thrust generated was increased from 7,700 lbs. to 8,500 lbs. Orders for four aircraft were let on a development contract; however, engine and avionics development costs could not be fitted into the austerity of the Navy procurement budget and the A4D-3 was cancelled before production was initiated.

To fulfill the requirements for additional aircraft within the framework of budget restrictions, a compromise aircraft was developed. Designated A4D-2N (A-4C), the new *Skyhawk* retained the J65 engine but added a fairly sophisticated autopilot, a low altitude bombing all attitude indicating gyro system, a terrain clearance radar housed in an extended nose and an angle of attack indicating system. The aircraft was flown 21 August 1958, and became operational in February 1960, with VMA-225. By December 1962, the last of 638 A4D-2Ns were delivered to the fleet.

In 1961, two A4D-2Ns (BuNos 148490 and 148483) were modified for a U.S. Army evaluation along with the Northrop N-156 and an Italian-built Fiat G-91. To enhance performance on a sod field, the *Skyhawk* was equipped with a drag chute and a revised landing gear in which dual main wheels were incorporated. To save time and money for the test, a quick and dirty fairing for the landing gear was installed.

Despite a nine-and-a-half week testing session, no production contracts were let after these Army-sponsored tests.

Development of the A4D-5 (A-4E)

Again, even before the A4D-2N flew, new requirements were being generated by the fleet. It appeared that the tactic of putting all the eggs in the single "A-bomb basket" may have been premature. Iron bombs and guns were still necessary in the environment created by perennial world-wide brush fires. The basic A-4 design was flexible enough such that its capability as a conventional weapons

carrier could be greatly enhanced. Mutual discussion between Douglas and Navy personnel jelled into specifics and a formal proposal was submitted in February 1959. Authority to proceed was given 30 July, and the existing A4D-2N contract was altered to allow the delivery of the final two aircraft as A4D-5s.

The changes agreed upon consisted of the substitution of the Pratt & Whitney J52 for the Curtiss-Wright J65 as proposed in the cancelled A4D-3. In addition to its 800-lbs. additional thrust, the J52-P-6A was 770 lbs. lighter and used less fuel. More importantly, the J52 was a new design and its growth potential was much greater than the older J65 which was out of production. Installation of the J52 in the *Skyhawk* airframe required a redesign of the center fuselage and inlet ducting.

To increase the armament carrying capability, two additional external store hard points were added to the existing three stations on the delta wing *Skyhawk*. The airframe structure was beefed up



A-4B of VA-43 aboard USS Independence in 1961. (Photo via SA.)

to increase the catapult gross weight to 24,500 lbs. New equipment installed included Tacan, Doppler navigation, Mk 9 toss-bombing system, radar altimeter and the AJB-3A low altitude bombing system.

First flight of the A4D-5 was 12 July 1961. By this time, the order for modification of two A4D-2Ns had been augmented by a production contract. The A-4E (designation after October 1962)

entered service with VA-23 in January 1963. When the last aircraft left the factory, 500 A-4E *Skyhawks* had joined the units of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps.

When the Pratt & Whitney J52-P-8A with 9,300 lbs. of thrust became available, some A-4Es were equipped with this engine in place of the J52-P-6A. While no official letter designator was applied to this version, they were unofficially referred to as "Super Echos." Also

later installed on the fleet A-4Es was the upper avionics pod developed initially for the A-4F. This modification also did not carry a designation update.

Part II of this article will appear in the next print edition of *The A-4Ever*.

(Ed. note: This article was first published in *The Hook*, Winter 1990 and reprinted in *The A-4Ever Summer 2009*. Used with permission.)



A-4E AH 466 of VA-164 aboard USS Oriskany in 1966. (Photo from Gary Gottschalk via Gary Verver.)

About the author: Harry Gann, a legend in the Skyhawk community

While serving with U.S. Army WWII Armored Forces in Europe, Harry Gann was wounded during the Battle of the Bulge. Following recuperation and discharge at the end of the war, he received a B.E. in Mechanical Engineering in 1950 from the University of Southern California.

After two years with North American Aviation and two more years with small aviation companies, Harry joined Douglas Aircraft Company's El Segundo division. He worked as a designer of mechanical control systems for the F4D *Skyray*, F5D *Skylancer*,

A3D *Skywarrior* and A4D *Skyhawk*.

In 1989, he was transferred to the communications group and became the Douglas Aircraft Company historian. Gann's lifelong hobby of aircraft photography was utilized in specialized air-to-air photography for flight demonstration organizations using McDonnell Douglas aircraft. This function was later expanded to include photography of Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps units. Considered the unofficial Blue Angel photographer, Harry was designated an Honorary Blue Angel in 1979, having already been named an Honorary Naval

and Marine Aviator during his long and distinguished career.

A legend in the *Skyhawk* community, after retirement in 1992 Harry continued to contribute to aviation history as a volunteer for the MCAS El Toro Historical Foundation (later the Flying Leatherneck Museum). He also served as historian of the *Skyhawk* Association.

Harry Gann passed away in October 2000, leaving a void which will never be filled. The Fall 2000 issue of the *Skyhawk* Journal was dedicated to his memory.

TINS!*

"That Guy II"

By Mark Williams

In the "TINS!" Section of our Spring 2019 issue, Dale "Stump" Kennedy asked, "Have you ever been 'That guy?'" He then pointed out he was the guy who had the stick come off in a bomb run. Well, I have it on good authority, namely me and Stump, that he was also "that guy" in an earlier event.

On 19 January 1969 Stump was flying a VMA-121 A-4C on a close air support mission out of Chu Lai Air Base in Vietnam. Beginning a strafing run Stump discovered that he had forgotten the master arm switch. The usual story would go, "He turned on the master arm and hit the trees," but in Stump's case, he turned on the master arm, fired out his guns, then hit the trees. He got the bird back to Chu Lai with all the leading edges of wings, stabilizer, and I don't know what all dented, plus missing three feet of intake on the left side.

That night I had duty in the MAG-12 "Barrel" and was coming home after midnight. As I was passing between the O'Club and the hooch area, I found two dark figures (guys in flight suits) crawling towards the hooch area. I tapped them on the shoulder and said, "Stump, Brow, what are you doing?" I can't recall whether it was Stump or Brow (Frank Norris) who answered, but the response was "We're celebrating the 'Second Coming of the Stump!'" "They figured that Stump should have been dead out there amongst the trees, but here he was, the guy who...."



VMA-121 Aircraft Accident Serial 4-69A (MODIFIED) A-4C BUNO 147669 of 19 January 1969, Pilot Kennedy Photograph of Port Intake and Inboard Wing.

SPECIAL HANDLING REQUIRED IN ACCORDANCE WITH OPNAVINST 3750.6 SERIES



VMA-121 Aircraft Accident Serial 4-69A (MODIFIED) A-4C BUNO 147669 Photograph of Port Horizontal Stabilizer.



Limb from airplane.

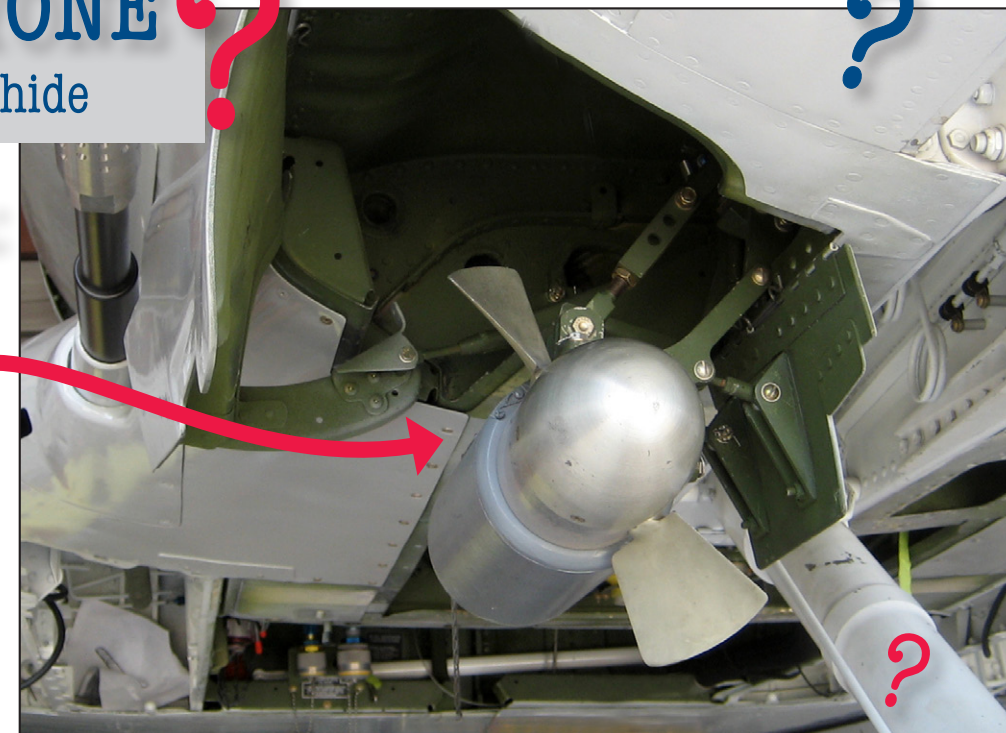
TRIVIA ANYONE?

from Dave Dollarhide

Next Question:

In a fully mission capable A-4, with the Ram Air Turbine (RAT) deployed, what are the two highest electrical loads that can be encountered?

Send your answers to: davedollarhide@msn.com



SIZE DOES MATTER

Modelers' Corner

By Joe Turpen

Here is the Hobby Boss 1/48th scale A-4F kit # 81765. This is the second of three Skyhawk kits Hobby Boss has produced. Kit #81764 was an A-4E and #81766 is an A-4M. This kit #81765 has markings for three different aircraft:

- 154872 NP-312 of VA-212 off USS HANCOCK CVA-19
- 152031 NF-400 of VA-96 off USS BON HOMME RICHARD CVA-31
- 154183 02 of VFA-127 at NAS Fallon in June 1989



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

The aircraft I decided to build was 154872 from VA-212. This particular aircraft was lost on 9 July 1972 while being flown by the squadron XO CDR Frank Clifford Green. The mission was a night armed reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam. CDR Green spotted the lights of a truck on the road near Dam Khanh 50 miles south of Hanoi. The visibility that night was 10 miles but there was also a light haze. Shortly after CDR Green commenced his attack his wingman saw the aircraft fly into the ground and explode. There was no indication that CDR Green had escaped. The assumption is that CDR Green flew into the ground due to target fixation or poor visibility. The crash site was excavated in 2008 and recovered human remains were identified as being those of CDR Green. The remains were buried in Miramar National Cemetery. (Chris Hobson Vietnam Air Losses)

Puresome Unplugged

~ YP's Excellent Adventures ~

By Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

The Great Whiz-O-Rama

Nobody at TAILHOOK much noticed that Puresome was wandering around the second deck of the Nugget Hotel with an ice pick buried up to the hilt in his forehead. The Little-Man-With-The-Ice Pick had left it there after Puresome had attended a gathering of The Usual Suspects the night before at a ritual Scotch-a-thon. A sampling of boiled, baked, fried, fricasseed, glace'd single malt scotch whiskey was served with the proviso that, after the cap or cork was removed and flung away, the bottle had to be emptied completely lest peat fumes cause the Polar Ice Caps to melt some more. None of the scotch juice consumed earned the "amusing, yet flaccid" label, a jolly time was had by all, and Puresome actually, eventually found his way back to his room.

But at least one of the solitary ice cubes that decorated his many glasses must have been imported from Bolivia and seasoned with llama discards, because morning found Youthly unaccountably wounded and considering either some dog hair to get back up on the step or ending it all with a butter knife from one of the restaurants.

He had just decided on the butter knife solution when there arrived a Great Disturbance in the Force, something like the whirling mini-tornado that used to accompany the Tazmanian Devil in the old cartoons. When the dust settled some, it revealed the Great Whiz, founder and king of the Skyhawk Association, waving his arms and talking in Gatling Gun speed ethnic. When translated from the Cajun, Puresome realized that Whiz was axing

him something rather like "did he want to get a ride in a P-51?"

Given a reason to live and a reprieve from the butter knife, the only possible answer was "Hale, yes!"

The Great Whiz, now a dentist in Bossier City, Louisiana, somehow knew everybody in the known universe, and two pals of his had flown a T-28C and a P-51 from LaLaLandia to TAILHOOK. Of course, they had axed Whiz to come

along on a local fam hop, and he had fortunately spotted Youthly before any other candidates showed up. An afternoon rendezvous was arranged, and Puresome, lacking flight gloves that might be filled if needed, went about healing himself.

The Good Ol' Boys had a couple of beautiful airplanes. The T-28 Chuck was painted up in orange and white Naval Training Command colors, and the P-51, named "Risky Business," was highly polished aluminum. The T-28, with Whiz in the back seat, would lead the two-ship flight, with Puresome squeeze into a wee jump seat behind the pilot in the Mustang as number two. Feeling rather better and hugely excited, Puresome watched the



Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

T-28's big round engine clatter to life in a puff of exhaust smoke and settle down to a manly roar. Whiz had just signaled him a happy "thumbs up!" when a whole mess of sectional charts and other paper sucked out of the front cockpit of the T-28 and disappeared down the flight line. "We don't need no steenkin' maps!" he thought and concentrated to the throaty roar of the Mustang's Merlin engine. But, being long acquainted with Grong's deviltries, he might have figgered that the Goat God was up their frequency.

The section taxied out among gaily painted many-motored airliners, and they did a run-up to check all the mysterious things that round and in-line reciprocating engines needed checked. The noise, coming from in front, was tremendous, and, even though it resonated the fillings in his teeth, the sensations cause Puresome to grin a fierce grin.

The T-28 called for a takeoff for two, and the section taxied on the runway. Everything looked tickedy-boo, and the T-28 roared away. Ten seconds later, his pilot shoved the coals to the Mustang, and off they went. The tail came up right away, and gear and flaps followed shortly. Out in front of them, the T-28 had started a right turn-out, and the Mustang cut inside the turn for join-up. But, "Whut's that?" thought Puresome. "The T-28's taken a hit! He's streaming fuel from his left wing!" But, he hadn't seen any tracers or missile trails from neighborhood casinos, so, it had to be....THE LEFT WING FUEL CAP HADN'T BEEN SECURED. Puresome's pilot kindly radio'd the T-28 to inform

him of that fact, and its disgusted pilot acknowledged and axed the tower to let him land. Puresome should have known better than to think "Nonny nonny boo boo!" as Risky Business proceeded off to go have righteous fun, but he did.

Shortly thereafter, the Mustang's Merlin engine started going pocketa-pocketa-gleep. Indeed, Grong, the Goat God, had heard him exult and had zorched the engine. They hadn't even left the traffic pattern, and his pilot declared a rough-runner and axed for an emergency landing, greasing it on the runway they'd just left. They pulled off on a taxiway and the pilot ran the engine up and leaned the mixture, trying to clear clogged plugs. The best he got was pocketa-gleep. Since the situation was still pear-shaped, they

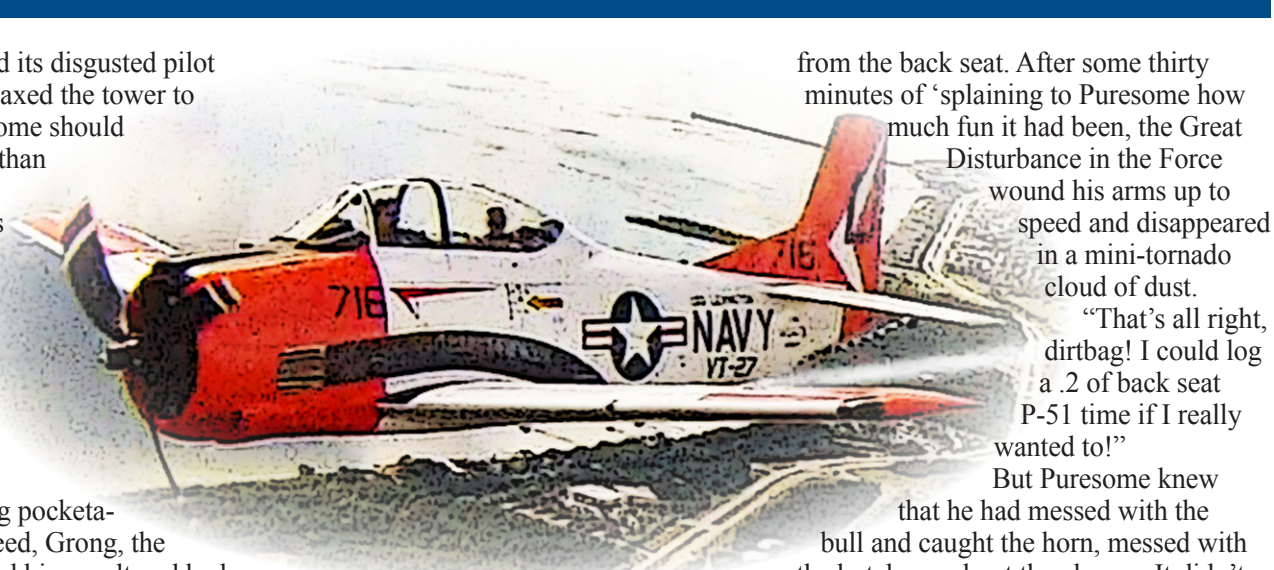
taxied back to the ramp and shut down. About that time, the Great Whiz and his pilot were taxiing out, having remedied the missing fuel cap problem. Whiz thumbed his nose, and off they flew.

When Whiz got back, it was evident that he had been thinking "Nonny nonny boo boo!" too, but they went off, and Whiz got to do loops and whifferdills

from the back seat. After some thirty minutes of 'splaining to Puresome how much fun it had been, the Great Disturbance in the Force wound his arms up to speed and disappeared in a mini-tornado cloud of dust.

"That's all right, dirtbag! I could log a .2 of back seat P-51 time if I really wanted to!"

But Puresome knew that he had messed with the bull and caught the horn, messed with the butcher and got the cleaver. It didn't matter that his strength was not as the strength of ten because of peat fumes. You don't ever say "Nonny nonny boo boo!" until you get back. Especially if Grong and a Great Disturbance in the Force might be buds.



THE STRAFER

(A Midsummer Night's Scooter Dream)

Diving down through monsoon rain
gunsight centered on the train
cannons firing, red tracers find
the locomotive and the cars behind

Clouds of smoke, clouds of steam
Hateful, hellish midnight dream
floating fireballs searching back
seek to stop the swift attack

Pulling up and zooming clear
jinking because the flak is near
But rolling over and coming round
to finish killing what he's found

Rending metal, burning cars
bursts of bullets like flying stars
flare and flash like little suns
against a train that no longer runs

Then the firing comes to an end
no more ordnance to expend
cursing now because it's done
with more to do before he's won

He beckons others who have the taste
to pick iron bones, and not to waste
the leavings of a strafers skill
airborne vultures to the kill

Beneath the flares on another night
he knows he'll find another fight
certain to win, perhaps to lose
his to do, fates to choose

By Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul



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