

THE A-4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL VOL 28-2



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HOOK 22, A-4 Reunion
September 8-10
Nugget Casino, Sparks, NV

Summer 2022

<http://skyhawk.org>



THE PREZ SEZ

By George "Woodpecker" Blosser

As I write the Prez Sez for the Summer Edition of *The A-4ever Skyhawk Journal*, we are making plans for Tailhook 22 in Reno on September 8-10. This year's format is similar to previous years and the Attack Ready Room will be in the same location as last year. The Skyhawk Booth location has changed for this year and it will be in the long corridor adjacent to the main convention auditorium. Hotel reservations and Hook Registration can be made on the Tailhook website. (www.tailhook.net)

Future BOD Meetings

We will continue to have our Fall BOD Meetings at Tailhook, and the Spring BOD Meeting will be held at various locations around the States. To let everyone know about the sites of future Spring BOD meeting locations, an email will be sent to all members before the meeting. Hopefully, this will allow as many members as possible to attend.

A-4B Static Display NAS South Weymouth

The caretakers of an A-4B recently contacted us for help in repainting the static display at the entrance to the former Naval Air Station. Director Pete Cole contacted the local ANA Squadron (Association of Naval Aviation), managing this aircraft. We have funds available from previous donations for such projects, and the BOD voted to assist with a \$2,000 donation. The A-4B is located in the Shea Memorial Park in South Weymouth, Massachusetts, which is the entrance to the former NAS *South Weymouth*.



A-4B Shea Memorial Park, South Weymouth, MA

Hook 22 Luncheon

The Skyhawk Association Luncheon will be held on Friday, September 9. This year, our guest speaker will be Captain Lonny "Eagle" McClung USN (ret). Captain McClung's Navy career began in 1962, and after 31 years, he retired in 1993. Eagle has always been a big supporter of Naval Aviation, particularly the A-4 Skyhawk. He continues to fly the A-4 in his retirement, and the following video highlights some of his accomplishments, <https://youtu.be/p83I2Y2P4iU>. Reservations for the luncheon can be made with Skyhawk Treasurer Mark Williams 10432 Button Willow Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89134 with a check payable to Skyhawk Association for \$35. See HOOK 22 ad this issue.

Skyhawk Website

Webmaster Gene "Blade" Atwell has recently completed an update on the website and it is working well. Given that Gene is now back flying for a living, he can always use a volunteer for routine website maintenance. If you have an interest in helping out with maintaining the website, please contact Gene directly at geneatwell@gmail.com. Training and all the help you will need to assist Gene will be provided.



George "Woodpecker" Blosser

Memorial Day Celebration

The National D-Day Memorial located in Bedford Virginia, held a Memorial Day celebration to honor those military members that died in service to our country. Skyhawk member and former POW Dave Carey was the keynote speaker for the event. Dave was shot down on August 31, 1967, and spent five and a half years in the infamous "Hanoi Hilton." At the time of his shootdown he was flying an A-4E in VA-163 from the USS Oriskany (CVA-34). After release Dave continued his Navy career retiring from active service in 1986. He then pursued a career as a motivational speaker.



Skyhawk President, George Blosser and Captain Dave Carey USN (ret) National D-Day Memorial, Bedford Virginia 30 May 2022

If your contact information has changed, don't forget to forward that information to Secretary Terry Cooney (skyhawkasn@gmail.com) to update our records.

A-4s Forever,
"Woodpecker" sends 



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

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Summer 2022 •

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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. Stephanie Davis, graphics, skyhawk@nflight.com. Paper issues printed by Acculink, Greenville, NC.

On the Cover: TA-4J sunset photo taken by Rich Smith, during his time as an adversary pilot with the VA-45 Blackbirds at NAS Key West, 1980.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.net



■ **From: Marty Carpenter**
Subject: Death Flight Article

I saw the two stories on DEATH FLIGHT in the Spring 2022 *The A-4 Ever Journal* and realized that there was a third story that needed to be told – the tanker’s perspective. I was the co-pilot on Zesty One-One (*Air Force KC-135 - Ed*) and also a former Marine A-4 pilot. I am submitting “DEATH FLIGHT Part III, The Tanker” for publication to round out that amazing story of survival. Hopefully you will want to publish it.

Also, please let whomever organizes the Marine A-4 reunions know that I would like to participate. I had just joined the Skyhawk Association three years ago before COVID hit so I have not participated in Tailhook or any Marine reunions. I will be attending Hook 22 in September.

■ **From: Hobart “Hoby” Harmon**

I got an email from Marty as I was getting off an airplane. He identifies himself and it stopped me in my tracks. I didn’t know he was a Marine, let alone that he was an A-4 driver. I thought he was just another “blue suit” (Sorry, that’s probably pejorative - LOL). We’d never spoken or communicated. I heard about his daughter’s passing that night when one of the other tanker crew called us from Osan where they’d landed. We talked on the phone for about 45 minutes. Said his reading about my proximity to his port horizontal stabilizer was “disconcerting.” Great exchange that was informative.

(Editor’s note: See “Death Flight, Part III” this issue.)

■ **From: Derek Lee, Adelaide, Australia**

Great site guys, really impressed with the info you have gathered. Was wondering if anyone can assist with the BU number of the A-4M of VMA-214

that was “misappropriated” by Howard A. Foote Jr., USMC on 4 July 1986. (*Howard, a Plane Captain, took the jet on a joy ride - Ed*)

From: Dave Dollarhide
To: Derek Lee

Thanks for dropping us a note. We, of course, know the story, but the BUNO may be a bit difficult. One of our guys, Gary Verver, is working on it, so let’s give him some time and see what he comes up with.

From: Derek Lee
To: Dave Dollarhide

For a little more context, I am a scale modeler, and I also make decals for scale models. I’m looking to make decals and (later) a model of a “Black Sheep” Skyhawk. When I read the story about Foote, I knew I had a worthy “subject.”

Though probably not historically accurate, the squadron was portrayed as “larrakins” in the old TV series “The Black Sheep,” that I loved so much as a kid. Foote’s actions in the 80’s seemed to perpetuate the stories of the squadron’s antics in the Pacific theatre, had me pondering if Foote was actually part Aussie.

(*This exchange remains active – Ed*)

■ **From: LT Mitchell Chen**

I am a naval aviator who ran across a request from a fellow junior officer trying to find LCDR Estocin’s personal callsign for a memorial service. His squadron was able to find LCDR Estocin’s tactical callsign but not his personal callsign. The info I can find shows that he served in VA-192 and he was lost on 26 APR 1967. Thank you in advance!

From: Dave Dollarhide
To: Mitchell Chen

We’ve been discussing your request within the Association, with the following findings and thoughts.

So far, no one, including the VA-192 “SDO” can answer your question as to any personal callsign (nickname) for LCDR Estocin.

We are mostly from the Vietnam era and can speak to those normal practices for nicknames and callsigns. The only official callsigns were those assigned to each unit through a publication called JANAP 119 (attached), which assigned *voice calls* to all units/squadrons.

Of course, if flying in a casual environment, flight leaders would sometimes use a made-up name for their flight. As I recall, no one had a “personal callsign” that was also used as a nickname. However, many had nicknames given to them by their buddies, some not so flattering.

As I recall, the turning point on this “callsign” issue was the movie Top Gun. Suddenly, being called names like “Mav” or “Ice Man” was a must — at least in the fighter community, but that was after Estocin’s time.

Chances are he had no nickname at all, but if we come up with one, we’ll get back to you if the ceremony time line permits its use.

From: Mitchel Chen

Thank you very much for looking into this and providing some clarity. Always interesting to see how much tradition changes over time.

■ **From: Barrett Tillman**
Subject: Sidebar Conversation on Callsigns

The late-great George Hall, scribe and photog, probably nailed The Callsign Thing. He said if VF aviators were free to choose their own callsigns there would be as many Killers at Ramstein as McDougals in Edinburgh.

From: Bud Southworth

Up to my last 1972 cruise on CVA-43,

CAG-15 & sharing a RR with VF-51 F-4s and the photo recon F-8 guys. I never heard anybody with a call sign. As the airborne tanker monitoring Mustang radio chatter, I never heard any (*personal*) call signs. I did hear flight names like Tiger Flight (Tiger 1, Tiger 2, Tiger 3 etc.), or hippopotamus flight or something like that but never a call sign. Also, when I was in VF-126 in 1969. I don’t remember anyone having a call sign there. It appears to me that sometime after 1972 they might have started using call signs at Top Gun and Fleet Squadrons, but only when the movie guys showed up in the 1984 era did they pick up on a random Call Sign and then the Top Gun 1987 movie popularized it. It kind of reminds me of now going to a San Diego “Body Exchange” and seeing 150 Top Gun students and instructors wandering around the bar. Unfortunately, none of them were actually assigned to Top Gun.

From: Pete Cole

Like Bud, on my CVW-21 cruises on the Hancock ‘73 and ‘75, I don’t remember any “Call Signs.” We used squadron tactical call signs for comms: ie, VA-212 was “Eagle.” VA-164 was “Magic,” Hancock was “Rampage,” etc... There were personal nicknames used socially, but no “official” tactical call signs used. Same was true in HS-74 when I was in the reserves thru the 80’s. OK, helo guys...but we had some pretty good nicknames for use at the O’Club.

Likewise, earlier when I went through VF-126 and VF-128 F-8 Rag in late ‘69 before my first tour with VC-4 Det Cecil ‘70-’72 and then the VA-127 Rag in ‘72. prior to VA-212 tour, just nicknames.

■ **From: Larry “Black” Adkinson**
To: Mark “Senator” Williams (Assn Treasurer)
Subject: Death Flight article

I see something in the Spring 2022 *A-4 Forever Skyhawk Association Journal*, Vol 28-1. It’s a lively story “The Death Flight” (A Short Story) by Rick “Peachy” Keene. He ID’s a pilot in the mix with call sign “Hobart” - Left Wing 7th from the formation end.

Can you please pulse “Peachy”

(*Peachy has passed-Ed*) and snag the identity of the pilot with “Hobart” call sign and relay to me? I am a grad of Hobart College and have been called “Hobart” by my pals in the 1964-65 version of VMA-211, although I am better known in later years as “Black.”

I know of only one other Hobart grad who was an A-4 Pilot. His name was Bob Beale. He was KIA in an A-4C in VN in 1967. Hobart is a small college 1000 men & 1000 women. We had an Air Force ROTC in the mid-1960s that got tossed off the campus in the late 1960s.

From: Hobart “Hoby” Harmon

“Hobart” is my (*first*) name, after my Grandfather, who was an Army “medic” as we call them today. He fought in France in WWI. I never really got stuck with a callsign so I started using my full name as an acknowledgment of my Grandfather and of the lessons he taught me.

TBS JAN 77, Wings SEP 79, 311 ‘80 -‘84 and 322 ‘84 -‘92 when the “Peace Dividend” hit and reserve squadrons disappeared what seemed like overnight.

Black... were you ever an instructor at TBS? Or in Cherry Pt (Sqd CO?) BTW (*I*) almost went to Hobart, Fall 1971, but ended up at UVM (University of Vermont).

Request info on the 1983 version of “Hobart” if you can get it.

■ **From: Redford A. Perrine Jr.**
To: Editor
Subject: NAS Glynco History (Spring Letters to Editor)

I am Redford Perrine former A-4 aviator, that was assigned to the Naval Air systems command at NAS Glynco in the spring of 1972. I came from VAQ-33 NAS Norfolk. When I got to Glynco there were 20 A-4Cs, that were used as bogey aircraft for the RIO training program. We would fly a pattern and the T-39’s with student RIO’s would intercept us for a shootdown. Our pattern was directed by ground control radar by RIO instructors at the radar facility at Glynco. The T-39’s had the F-4 radar package and three students and an instructor on board for the training mission. Once engaged the A-4

would maneuver to simulate a combat profile.

This was great fun and our hops were usually 1.5 to 2.0 hrs and we flew sometimes two sorties a day. I built up a lot of hours in the “C.” Our tail code was 4B. I was an ass’t NATOPS instructor in the A-4 and a field qualified LSO. We went to VT-21 before our move to Pensacola to transition to the TA-4 which we received at PNS. There I met Todd Frommelt who was friends with Ted Demosthenes our head NATOPS guy. Those were great days and I loved my life as a Naval Aviator and flying the A-4.

I am writing to you about the article in the spring issue 2022 of the A-4 ever about Glynco (page 5) the CO’s that I remember being there were Cmdr. Stan. Dunlap at Glynco, CDR Al Markey at PNS, CDR James Warner at PNS (1976) when I left the service. Thank you for a great publication. It brings back fond memories.

From: Redford A. Perrine Jr.
To: Vance Lewis (Originator of Glynco question)

Mr. Lewis. I am sending this item I wrote to the Skyhawk Association about an article on Glynco NAS (*See above – Ed*). I served there from 1972-1974 when the Air Station was decommissioned and we moved to NAS Pensacola as VT-86. I hope this of some help in your research.

■ **From: Al Carpenter**
To: John Lindgren
Subject: NAS Glynco History (Spring Letters to Editor)

I saw a note in a recent A-4 mag from a “gent” seeking info on Glynco history. Could you help him out? If so, I’ll find it and forward his contact info.

From: John Lindgren, via Al Carpenter

I’ll be glad to talk about Glynco. I have been working as a “story teller” in the World War II Museum and would have access to some good history. We have some very interesting displays. I was on the airport commission and we had a special publication about Glynn and the new airport terminal. *continued...*

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

continued..

From: Dave Dollarhide
To: John Lindgren/Vance Lewis/Al Carpenter

Al/John, I've copied Vance Lewis, the student looking for NAS Glynco history. His contact info is as follows: Vance Lewis, Interdisciplinary Studies major CCGA, Associate of Arts, Email: 920117187@student.ccg.edu, Phone: 770-545-5510

Vance, Here's a lead for your research, following my posting your initial question about NAS Glynco. John Lindgren served at the base and can give you his experiences.



.....
From: Allan Cartwright

I have used a photo of an A-4 on glide slope taken from the PLAT camera in the flight deck looking up the glide slope. I put it on a couple of monitors on the USS Hornet and it really looks good. The photos have deteriorated over the years and I would like to replace them. Unfortunately, I can't find the original. Can you guys find one that I can use?

From: Dave Dollarhide

I have this one you can use



.....
From: Dick Neilsen

Subj: In response to a question about the TA-4 photo above right

I think this was on the way to El Toro MCAS from Kingsville around 12/30/71. We were usually single A/C on cross-countries, but we were going to the O'Club for New Year's Eve and attend a New Year's Day party at the

home of my buddy, Ken Shackelford's, former CO to watch Alabama. I think the other A/C was going to Miramar.

On the way back after watching the first part of the game, we had dates at Williams AFB with some nurses. We were feeling no pain and should not have been flying. I did the flight plan while Ken preflighted. I was a "green card" and was able to sign my own Flight Plan, to the dismay of the Gunny manning the ops desk at El Toro, who didn't want to let us go. When we manned-up, Ken asked me what our route was and I told him to just head East until we saw Phoenix.

Those were the days.

.....
From: Tim Heatherman

My Father-in-law is Roy J Stocking. In your Summer of 2007 magazine, there is a picture of him on page 11 along with Jack Parchen, Dick Norris and Gerry Madison of VMA 211 Tomcats Vietnam. Who can I contact to get this picture? We have this picture however over time it is very faded. I hope to get it digitally. If you could help me in this endeavor I would appreciate it.

From: Bill "Jigger" Egen
To: Gary Verver

Gary- I discussed this with Roy Edwards who was in VMT-103 with Roy Stocking and I. He noted he has been discussing Stocking things with Tim and said he would pursue this. I also sent him a picture capture of the photo from our 2007 Vol 13 A4ever. Also, Tim has the wrong squadron- it is VMA-311, not 211.



(Lowres photo from the 2007 summer issue provided to Heatherman. Ed)

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

Read?

you think
we *read*?

OUR LIVES ON THE LINE

The Air War Over North Viet Nam
For A Navy Pilot And His Air Wing
A Memoir

Author: Kenneth "Mule" Adams

There have been many worthy books about the USS Oriskany, CVA-34, and her Air Wing, CAG-19, during the conflict in Southeast Asia. From the beginning Tonkin Gulf incident, the awful October 1966 fire aboard Oriskany that killed forty-four pilots, numerous seamen, and wounded one hundred fifty-six others; and the 1967 time period where CAG-19 became known as "Bloody 19."

Kenneth Adams' account covers his voyage thru Naval Aviation beginnings and two combat cruises as pilot with Attack Squadron 163, the "Saints," on the Oriskany and a third Combat cruise with the same squadron on USS Hancock, CVA-19, in 1968.

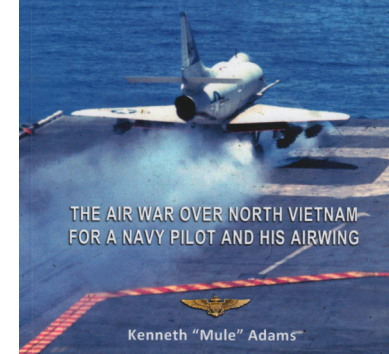
What makes "Mule's" book exceptional is that it is recreated from a faithful journal he kept, and it is illustrated by his own extraordinary combat photography and record of squadron people.

In July 1967, CAG-19 started flying three major strikes a day against highly defended "ALPHA" targets, with most pilots flying two of those strikes. The losses were extremely high. At one point, the Saints had six operational aircraft out of fourteen at the onset of the tour. The CAG (Air Wing Commander), started calling the Saint's Skipper "A senior detachment officer" instead of a Squadron Commander! At one point, Adams had to fly an Alpha Strike in an airplane with NO Radio!

The Saint's original call sign given to Adams was "Animal." That often came out as "An..Dy..Mule" in combat. That changed after an Alpha Strike against Hanoi, when a Crusader pilot tried to warn Adams about a Surface to Air Missile (SAM) that was tracking him, and he couldn't get "An..Dy..Mule" out fast enough. The missile explosion somehow wasn't fatal, but after the mission, Adams' call sign was changed to "Mule."

Air Wing Nineteen's losses are horrifying. Adams chronicles the number of hits on his own airplane, as well as losses of his friends and in other squadrons that he witnessed. At one

OUR LIVES ON THE LINE



point, Adams states that "Being good wasn't enough. You also had to be lucky."

Adams is candid about coping with that kind of stress, both aboard ship and on liberty. Those of us that lived through treatment of combat veterans back in the United States by civilians will understand Mule's fistfights with them.

Kenneth Adams was good, and he was lucky. He survived and has self-published a worthy book. Highly Recommended!

Reviewed by
CDR Jack D. Woodul, USNR-RET



NEW MEMBERS

Mark D. Brown, San Jose, CA
David Burrows, Melbourne, FL
Alexandre Eckmann, Miami, FL
Angela Goffman, Tonto Basin, AZ

Casey Heckman, Goldsboro, NC
Howard Hudson, Navarre, FL
Lewis Wehner, Honolulu, HI

Join or renew, and give
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Contact Terry Cooney at
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2421 Clubside Dr., Beavercreek, OH 45431





DEATH FLIGHT (Part III) "The Tanker"

By Marty Carpenter



(Death Flight 1 and 2 were published in the previous issue.
See Letters to Editor to explain the origin of Part III. – Ed)

We assembled the crew on the morning of May 16th to brief the last leg of the TRANSPAC of Marine A-4s to Kadena. Our RON would be Osan, Korea. Our KC-135 Tanker had a crew of nine. Three pilots, two navigators, two boom operators, and two crew chiefs. We also had two engineers from the Naval Air Systems Command on board using our HF radio to collect real world data for use in an HF radio acquisition program the Navy was pursuing.

The weather briefing from base operations indicated that a frontal system was in the vicinity of Kadena but would be gone by the time we arrived overhead. We did a quick brief with the Marines (this was our fourth leg of the TRANSPAC and everything had gone smoothly) and then launched first as the Pathfinder/Tanker. The Marines quickly rendezvoused with us, and the next three hours were uneventful. About 200 miles out from Kadena, we were informed that the front had NOT left the area and the weather was marginal at the airfield at best. We could definitely see the buildups in front of us and there was no clear path through and no easy way around.

We contacted the Marine flight lead and informed him of the situation and recommended that they join up on us before we entered the "clag." We tried a couple of times to offer to top everyone off before going IMC, but flight lead said they were good on fuel. In combat, the grunt on the ground never has too much ammunition; in the air, a pilot never has too much fuel when over a large body of water, but the offer was made. The A-4s joined up on us with six aircraft on the port wing and five on the starboard wing. I was in the co-pilot seat and watched as we entered the clouds about 60 miles out and realized that I could barely see the

second aircraft on our starboard wing let alone three, four or five. I told the aircraft commander and crew that any turns we made would have to be VERY smooth and slow. Having flown the A-4 in IMC conditions on someone's wing, I told them that vertigo can become a real issue – and that was without ever having been dash three, four, or five at the end of the whip!

No sooner had we gone into the clouds, than the navigator said:

"Pilot, radar shows that we have multiple cells between us and Kadena. There is no straight, smooth path to get to the airfield. I will give you the smallest course corrections I can without making the turbulence worse."

We informed the Marines that we would be forced to make turns and that we would try to be as smooth as possible. We contacted Approach Control and told them of our situation and that we would like to hand off two ship formations to them for positive control to landing. For whatever reason, NAHA control was reluctant to take the handoff. Now things were getting dicey. The turbulence and rain were getting worse and the pilots at the end of the whip were using every bit of their skill to stay with us. Suddenly we heard one pilot say he had lost visual of us, and then another was on his own, and then a third aircraft as well. Now, we had to get SERIOUS with approach control, and we told them we had multiple aircraft in an extremist situation, on their own and approaching emergency fuel. Finally, we had their attention!

To their credit, once Approach Control realized the seriousness of the situation, they did an excellent job of locating the three A-4s and took control. Somehow the other A-4s stayed with us and closed up on us. Because Approach was busy with the three single A-4s, as well as

other aircraft, we couldn't drop anyone else off and we just kept trying to avoid thunderstorms. Then we started getting emergency fuel calls from the chicks we had remaining. We now realized we were going to have to do something we had never done before – refuel in IMC conditions!

For Navy and Marine Corps aircraft, we attach a drogue to the boom. The boom operator then extends it for the aircraft to plug into the basket. For Air Force refuelings, the boom operators "fly" the boom into a receptacle with a stable platform. With drogue refuelings, the boom operator has very little control after the drogue is extended. The boom operators felt totally helpless watching the A-4s come up and get gas. They could do nothing but watch and make recommendations if necessary. They were amazed that the pilots were able to insert the probe into the drogue in the rain, turbulence and clag with all the bouncing around.

Amazingly enough, everyone safely came through, got gas, and returned to our wings until Approach Control started bringing them down for landing. As the last A-4 was handed off to Approach Control, our crew breathed a sigh of relief. I was still in shock as to what had just happened but was extremely impressed with the flying skills of the Marines. I don't know if I would have fared as well had I been in one of those cockpits. I was proud of BOTH of my services that day! It appeared we would all live to fight another day.

Once Approach Control told us everyone was safely on deck, we set our course for Osan AB, Korea. A few hours after landing at Osan, I found out my oldest daughter had been struck by a car. A few hours later, I was notified that she had died.

GREAT ESCAPES

By Gary Verver

VA-83 A-4B 145007 – LTJG Ellis T. Riker

The Escape

(Kingsport News, Friday, July 17, 1959)

A Navy jet pilot, his helmet and suit blazing after an emergency landing, was carried to safety Wednesday by a civilian firefighter at NAS Oceana. The A4D Skyhawk (145007-Ed) developed engine trouble shortly after takeoff and its pilot, LTJG Ellis T. Riker III, made an emergency landing. The plane overran the runway, struck a piece of construction equipment and burst into flames. Riker, one leg broken, climbed out of the plane and stumbled around the area which had been set afire when the plane's fuel tanks were ruptured.

Loren J. Lukey, clad in an asbestos firefighting suit, ran through the flames, picked Riker up and carried him to safety. Another member of the crash and salvage crew put out the flames on Riker's suit and helmet. Capt. E.C. Konrad, CO of the air station, will present Lukey a letter of commendation Friday for his quick and effective action. Lukey, 40, is a retired Navy Chief Petty Officer. Riker, 24, lives at Virginia Beach with his wife, Carol.



"Great Escapes" is a new regular feature for the Journal, that uses the many brief stories accumulated in Gary Verver's A-4 Losses List. He's been collecting this data for close to twenty years and we've decided to feature a few of those A-4 losses in which the pilot managed to survive. As a member, you can view his Excel files on the Skyhawk website. Once logged in, go to the Ready Room, then select "Gary's Losses List" and browse through. Editor

USS PUERTO INCIDENT

Naval Air Reserve “Tactical Air” Mobilization and Beyond (Focus on A-4 Skyhawk Squadrons)

By CAPT Dave “Hide” Dollarhide

Background

Following the end of *World War II* in 1945, the US Military began a rapid reduction in force. The US Navy stood down many Navy active squadrons. Excess war material was often jettisoned at sea, while ships and airplanes were placed in storage and many thousands of officers and enlisted personnel were released from active duty. *“83 percent of those on active duty in the fleet at the end of WW II were reservists. Yet, it was during the Korean War that the reserves, particularly those wearing wings of gold, had their finest hour and made lasting history.”* (Hill Goodspeed – *Minutemen of Naval Aviation: The Naval Air Reserve.*)



VF-741 F-4U Corsair Flight Line – NARTU JAX

The *Korean War* began in 1950 and with no clear winner, an armistice was signed in 1953 and many of the reserve squadrons returned to the U.S. and their same reserve bases. They were at the peak of their game, but how did it go after that?

Those squadrons continued as a part of the U.S. Reserve Force. If not already upgraded to jets, the F-4U fighter squadrons transitioned to Panthers, later to Cougars and some eventually became Attack Squadrons, while remaining with the same air-planes, until assigned the newer A-4 Skyhawk. For example, that was the case at NAS Jacksonville. VF-741 became VA-741, flying A-4A/Bs and later had a few Charlie models. At other locations, the VF squadrons were assigned F-8s.

continued...



VA-741 CO Grant Goodell by a NARTU JAX F-9F8 Cougar.
Grant had flown F-4U Corsairs in Korea, was shot down and ditched in the hostile Wonson Harbor to be saved by a helo.



VA-741 A-4A in NARTU JAX Navy/Marine paint

Back at their Reserve bases, the structure of these units changed, with them reporting to the local Naval Air Reserve Training Unit (NARTU). The squadron Commanding Officers were in charge of their *Selected Reserve* (SELRES) officer and enlisted personnel (Part time officers and enlisted), but nothing more. NARTU “owned” the airplanes, all ground equipment and their active-duty personnel basically performed all maintenance functions, except for being assisted one weekend per month by the squadron SELRES personnel. Two weeks per year, all of the part-time officers and enlisted would deploy for training to one of a variety of different locations, depending on which coast they were stationed. Aside from flying, the SELRES CO was only responsible for writing Fitness Reports and Evaluations on his people.

By the mid-sixties, the status quo on the Korean Peninsula was becoming increasingly unsettled, until 23 January, 1968, when the USS *Pueblo*, a light cargo ship, converted for intelligence gathering, was attacked and captured by North Korea in international waters. One crewman was killed and the remaining 82 were taken as hostages, imprisoned and tortured for over eleven months. It was big news across the globe and the US Defense Condition (DEFCON) moved to a high level in short order.

The impact to the US Naval Air Reserves was immediate, as A-4, F-8 squadrons and many other units were mobilized.

But, were they qualified and ready? They had been heroes 15 years earlier, but this time...



NAS New York based VA-831 A-4A

Personal Experience

Assigned to VA-46 in 1967, I had returned early to NAS Cecil following the Forrestal accident in the Gulf of Tonkin. We were flying A-4Bs, while waiting nine months for the squadron to transition to A-7s. I had seen the news of the Pueblo crisis, but hadn’t watched it closely, when one day I went over to the BOQ for lunch. The place was mobbed, but there was one seat left at a six-place table. I was invited to join them and sat down. They were conversing, using terms I didn’t quite understand, until I realized it was airline talk and it hit me. These were some of the reserve guys that were just called up, all Lieutenant Commanders, except for a Commander sitting across from me.

At one point, the Commander began a “rant” about having to go to the boat to carrier qualify, saying, “*The last time I was at a ship, I was flying a Training Command SNJ, so if they think I’m gonna go to the boat in a Crusader at night, they’ve got another thought coming!*” This was my first clue as to who these guys really were!

Later, I remember the NAS New York Skyhawk squadron, VA-831, was flying FCLP flights at OLF Whitehouse, when an engine failed and “Pete” Petersen was killed – more nasty insight maybe?

continued...

Last year, I was talking to Skyhawk Association member Pete Dodge in email, an experienced Vietnam Skyhawk pilot, who was telling me about flying with VA-831, based in New York after his release from active duty and related the following:

"My time in VA-831 was brief. I got out of my squadron, VA-93 and the Navy as well on Nov 1, 1967. I was going to go back to Tufts University to finish my degree in Feb., 1968. In January I decided to join the Reserves so that I could be a cool jet jockey on campus while flying out of South Weymouth, MA. So, I signed up at NAS Floyd Bennett mid-January 1968. Within a week the Pueblo was captured and VA-831 and ole "Pedro" was called up!! I never had drilled with them and didn't know anyone. It was a pretty screwed up group though. 8 Commanders, the skipper had 6 carrier landings ...in 1952. Only 6 guys had ever landed on an angle-deck carrier. Only 5 or 6 guys had ever made a night carrier landing! Only 2 of us had combat experience. I was a junior LT and they made me Ops Officer. And it only got worse. I could write a book about VA-831 during my 10 months of the Pueblo Call-up."

We were lucky the Pueblo situation calmed down after a couple of weeks. Bill Iams and I were the only pilots with combat experience and we were flying 2-3 hops a day taking the guys out and showing tactics, jinking, etc and doing it all below the Kennedy Airport flight pattern. The squadron was earmarked to pack up and fly to the west coast. THAT would have been exciting. I would have figured to kill a few, but the fleet LSOs would likely have prevented most from getting anywhere near a boat. This group had mastered "pencil-whipping" the readiness and had just won the Noel Davis Trophy, emblematic of being the best A4 squadron in the Reserves. What a joke.

I will say, by the time we were 6 months into the call up things had stabilized. We did have some really good, gung-ho pilots eventually. But, if we had deployed?

Pedro

The call-up was canceled and it was apparent that the Naval Air Reserves had lost its way over the previous 15 years. With the eventual depletion of combat veterans, readiness had declined since the Korean War. Squadrons had become "flying clubs," with no budget for realistic shipboard training and little accountability in ensuring other productive training. The *Pueblo* callup had been a bust and the Naval Air Reserves were proven to be far from ready.

Beyond

What to do? The Navy attempted a hasty reorganization plan, in which squadrons were given unusual designations, but aside from that, nothing really changed in the way business was done. In '69, I left active duty and joined the A-4 reserves at NAS JAX in January, 1970. It was that same timeframe when the first reorganization plan was being seen as "business as usual," with few positive improvements. VA-741 had been changed to VA-2F1, (Which I never understood), but behind the scenes, another reorganization plan was already underway. With 15 or so other pilots, I had started flying with a group called, *NARS Excess*, which meant we would fly VA-741 A-4s (Actually owned by NARTU).

This was a transitional period and we could easily see what some of the historic problems were. On one Friday, my friend Jim Dowd and I walked over to the NARTU hangar to see how many A-4s would be available for the drill weekend. The Maintenance Officer with NARTU told us he didn't have any time to work on the "Damn A-4s," as he had to get the C-118 airlift bird ready. Still operating under the historic reserve rules, the Squadron CO didn't have any say over maintenance. As mentioned, the CO of VA-741 was in charge of only the Selected Reserves (SELRES) officers and enlisted, with no say over the active-duty people. He "owned" no equipment.

However, in June, 1970, VA-203 was established, as part of the new **Reserve Force Concept** and would report to the new *Carrier Air Wing Reserve Twenty* (CVWR-20) Air Wing Commander (CAG), who was from the Regular Navy, not the Reserves, a significant change. Our new Air Wing was structured like a regular Navy Air Wing, with three attack and two fighter squadrons, along with the normal support squadrons. CAG 30, located on the West Coast, was a mirror of our Air Wing.

Our new CO, Wally Vance, was by design, a part time reservist, given full responsibility and "ownership" of all personnel, airplanes and equipment. An active-duty Officer in Charge (OIC) reported to Wally and was in charge in his absence.

Refurbished A-4C aircraft became A-4Ls, "Limas," with significant upgrades, to include more powerful J-65-W-20 engines, ground spoilers, dual disk brakes, an avionics "hump," and a CP-841 bombing computer. 200 "Limas" were built, 100 for the Navy Reserves and 100 for the Marine Reserves.

Our Maintenance Department had 45 active-duty TAR (Training and Administration of Reserves) "wrench turners" and 150 part-time reservists to maintain our fifteen "new" airplanes. Including the squadron pilots, there was another group of pilots from an "Augment Unit" to also fly our jets, resulting in an annual flight hour program of 4,300 flight hours. This was about the same as an active-duty squadron.

"It'll never work" many said. How're you going to get 45 full-time mechanics, with the vast majority of the part-time reservists only working two days a month, to accomplish that?

Well, it worked and it worked really well, because NARTU was out of the picture. We became one cohesive team with all squadron functions reporting to one CO. Our experienced pilot group, many with Vietnam combat time, now had reliable maintenance, routinely "up" airplanes and the atmosphere was totally different. We were now inspired officer and enlisted friends, a team and it "rocked!"

The energy and readiness continued to improve throughout the years. We began routine carrier qualifications and extended shipboard deployments. We later transitioned to the A-7 corsair without a hiccup and over the years, excelled in weapons competitions, including air-to-air combat with other reserve and active-duty squadrons. After twelve years in VA-203, I had lived it and watched our readiness continue to improve. The Reserve Force Concept was a simple one, yet genius, as it played on the human nature to excel when given authority. There was no doubt that it had worked. We had been entrusted and it became our "baby." I had much to proudly talk about at my Change of Command farewell speech.

Unfortunately, some in the Regular Navy never got over the *Pueblo* callup failure and were unable to recognize the turnaround in reserve commands. This



later became very obvious to me after my time in VA-203, when a computer consultant friend and coworker, Steve Nettles, from the local Volunteer (no pay) Training Unit (VTU) and I proposed to the Cecil LATWING Commander, that we assist his staff with his new Zenith desktop computers. I knew they had just received them, with no software or instructions on how they might be used. *"We can work during off-hours, or with your staff as is best for you and we would work at no cost to you, as we would be a project from the VTU,"* I told him.

With me at his desk, he said, *"You know, I don't even like the reserves and think they serve no purpose."* I walked away thinking about short-sighted people and recalling how many times us Reserves had gotten the best of Regular Navy and Air Force units in competitions at Red Flag Luke AFB, offshore Warning Areas and other garden spots for weapons training.

continued...



CVWR-20 A-4Ls – USS Kennedy 1971

Fortunately, by then, his opinion was in the Active-Duty minority.
I had lived it and knew better. The days of “flying clubs” were long gone.



A POEM BY BLADE

Having read Don “Inky” Purdy’s *Where The High Winds Sing* multiple times, I began to think about my own “ghosts.” Beginning with my Mother’s early death while I was in college and following in quick succession with Pete Keenan, Bill Lauermann, John Hautala, Alley Alleman, Charlie Waters, Jim Merrill and Paul Spargo, Inky made me realize I needed to face my ghosts and stop running from them. I chose CAG Stockdale’s stoic realization that, as the philosopher Seneca said, “*It is better to conquer our grief than to deceive it. For if it has withdrawn, being merely beguiled by pleasures and preoccupations, it starts up again and from its very respite gains force to savage us. But the grief that has been conquered by reason is calmed forever.*”

SURVIVOR’S GUILT

Each launch we knew could be our last
The odds against us seldom asked
And once the missions went away
Our minds since then ourselves betray

Their wives received the chaplain’s call
Through watered eyes stood proud stood tall
Two wives of mine have left a void
Our minds since then ourselves destroyed

Our kids now grown have us around
Their kids know when each jet went down
Their photos on the mantles polished
Our minds since then ourselves demolished

The folded flag their parents hold
Reminds them of their child so bold
They wish instead that they’d not wed
Our minds since then ourselves more dread

We see them now they’ve never aged
On Magsaysay we drank we raged
We walked away there they remain
Our minds since then ourselves disdain

The burden of their death is real
Its pressure does the soul anneal
Please help us God why such a weight
Our minds since then ourselves desecrate

Had it been us who died instead
And they were brought back from the dead
Would things have truly changed that much
Their minds since then ourselves nonesuch

By Gene “Blade” Atwell

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TRIVIA ANYONE?

from Dave Dollarhide

The Question:

In the A-4A, B, C and L, if the aircraft generator fails to provide power upon engine start, what’s the most likely problem and how is it resolved?

Send answers to Dave Dollarhide: davedollarhide@msn.com.

FLYIN' WITH HOT MIKE

TEN YEAR OLD SKYHAWK SUPERFAN

WHY DO THEY CALL YOU "HOT MIKE"?

MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE YOU RAMBLE
ON INCESSANTLY ABOUT HOW GREAT
THE A-4 IS, WITHOUT REALIZING IT

BECAUSE I'M SHIT HOT

I DOUBT IT



Dollarhide Jr

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SIZE DOES MATTER

Modelers' Corner

By Joe Turpen

Book Review by Joe Turpen Skyhawk Association Modeler

Modeling The Scooter

By Daniel Zamarbide Suarez and Claudio Meunier

(Aces High Magazine A-4 Skyhawk AK2939 published and distributed by AK Interactive 110 pages Monographic Series, In The Spotlight 2)

Modelers are continuously looking for information on techniques they can use to improve their models and modeling skills. One company that provides a large quantity of this kind of information through various publications is AK Interactive which is located in Spain. One of their publications is *Aces High Magazine*, which covers subjects concerning aircraft modeling. In 2021, Aces High produced a Monograph Which is titled *Modeling the Scooter* and is the second of the *In the Spotlight* series.

The nice thing about this book is that it provides some unexpected surprises. The first is a section showing the history of Skyhawk kits, with several pages of photos showing a variety of past kits. As pointed out in this section, some of the kits are virtually impossible to find. This is followed by a section concerning aftermarket decal sheets. There is only one page covering decals with some illustrations, but there have been hundreds of these sheets produced over the years. To list and illustrate all of them would basically require a stand-alone book. Another page is devoted to computer simulators, games and even collectables that have been available for the Skyhawk.

Another plus is a page illustrating some of the other books that have been written about the Skyhawk. Subjects range from A-4 history, to those intended as a reference for modelers. This section of the book is a very pleasant surprise. Due to the number of kits, aftermarket items, books and collectables it would be almost impossible to list everything but this section provides an excellent overview.

The book specifically deals with the building of three Skyhawk models, the first being an **Argentinian A-4C**. This section discusses the history of A-4s in Argentina, beginning with the acquisition of the aircraft and then moves to the Falklands War, which takes up most of this section. The Falklands portion is interesting and provides first-hand accounts of some of the flying during the conflict. The book moves onto the construction of the model itself. As usual for books provided by this company there are very detailed photos. The photos basically cover the building the model in great detail and specifically cover the changes that need to be made to the kit used to convert it to an Argentinian Skyhawk. This particular kit requires several changes since they back date an A-4E to an A-4C.

Next is a section which covers the building of a **VA-144 A-4E**. Like the previous section it starts with a short discussion of the airplane then deals with that period in the squadron's history. The squadron received "E" awards (Excellence) during the Vietnam conflict, but it's also pointed out that the first Naval Aviator to become a POW, Everett Alvarez, was from VA-144. He was shot down while actually flying an A-4C. It then deals with some of the A-4E losses the squadron had while flying during that time frame. This is followed by a section dealing with the building of one of the squadrons

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



"Echos." Like the previous section there are very detailed pictures of the process.

A third, and final, section deals with an **Israeli A-4N Skyhawk**. This section is a little different and spends its time discussing the history of the Skyhawk in the Israeli Air Force, discussing the changes and improvements made to the aircraft. There are no pilot stories, which was understandable. Again, with the building of the model it goes into great detail including all the conversions required to make an A-4N.

All the sections dealing with the building of models also have a nice selection of pictures of the various aircraft so there is plenty of reference material.

For a modeler this is an extremely good book. AK is known for the quality of its modeling products and it continues that trait with its publications. I'm sure modelers will be adding this book to their reference material. For me, it was an added bonus that the book provided some historical information on the models, as well as other reading material about the Skyhawk.

FROM THE ATTIC

Provided by Gary Verver



*The following test(s) were conducted at
Naval Ordnance Test Station, China Lake,
dates unknown*

Vertical Seeking Ejection Seat Test

“Naval Weapons Center (NWC) project manager,
W. J. Bill Stone, Ordnance Systems Department

BAIL OUT! An anthropomorphic dummy strapped to the vertical seeking aircrew escape system got a spectacular ride recently during the second of a series of three projected tests of the system. The seat (and dummy) were ejected parallel to the ground from an A-6 aircraft cockpit that was suspended at a 90 degree roll attitude (*Photos show 180 degrees of roll which may be the third test - Ed*) between two towers at the altitude of 100 feet above the ground level. The seat dropped 2.5 feet before turning to a vertical position and shooting upwards to an altitude of 482 feet, at which point the parachute was deployed. In the sequence of pictures, the dummy and seat were ejected from the cockpit and are starting their ascent in the first, and by picture three, are well on their way. Had this been a live pilot in an emergency situation, he would have been assured a safe parachute-assisted landing. The vertical-seeking aircrew escape system consists of a three-axis electromechanical rate gyro package, a microcomputer, and ancillary electronics, which activate a gimbaled under-seat rocket motor, that propels the seat clear of the aircraft and into an upright position sufficiently above the level of the aircraft, so that the parachute deploys for a safe landing. A third test is planned from an inverted cockpit also suspended 100 feet above ground level.”



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



TAPS notices may be sent to Dave Dollarhide, davedollarhide@msn.com

Paul Davies, Hartsville, South Carolina, 3/8/2022
Ernie Mares, CA, 6/2/2022
Bruce “Max” Maxwell, Akron, OH, 5/3/2022
RADM Riley Dewitt Mixson, San Diego, CA, 4/27/2022
Doug “Dogman” Oetting, Pensacola, FL, 3/15/2022
R. S. “Spots” Robertson, Kailua, HI, 3/5/2021
Julius (Jim) M. Rule, III, Austin, TX, 12/1/2021

Vigilante A Pilot's Story

Skyhawk Association member R.R. ‘Boom’ Powell has written a history of the North American Vigilante. The “Recce” RAG had TA-4s (and, briefly, some Echoes) to support training in the Vigilante and many “Vigi” pilots began in VA squadrons. Everyone who shared deck space with the large RA-5C will enjoy tales of action over Vietnam and other spots of reconnaissance interest. Several of the photographs in the book were taken by “Youthly” while deployed in Independence.

How big was the Vigi? The A-4 wing planform matches exactly a horizontal tailplane of the A-5. The book provides a good look at the mission and life of the largest and fastest airplane to operate from an aircraft carrier.

specialty press

Vigilante!

A PILOT'S STORY

1,200 Hours Flying the Ultimate US Navy Reconnaissance Aircraft

CDR Robert M. “Boom” Powell, USN (Ret.)

*Vigilante – A Pilot's Story can be found on Amazon
and other sites in paperback and ebook.*

A RUN FOR LIFE

It may not be the truth, but it's how I remember it.

By Bob "Boom" Powell

In 1968, an errant, battle-damaged Skyhawk returning to *Intrepid* (CVS(A)-11) wobbled, swerved and veered at the platform. The assistant and the phone talker both jumped into the safety net and were killed. LSO "CR" Jones dived left onto the flight deck and sustained a five-inch cut across his shoulder from the bomb sway brace on the crashing A-4.

Watching the PLAT, squadron-mates saw Jones lying on deck. First, one arm moved and shook. Then, the other wiggles, followed by both legs kicking before the camera moves to the crash itself. Not too long after, Jones walks into the ready room and is greeted with gasps of amazement. "We thought you were dead with your back broken when we saw your arms and legs twitching."

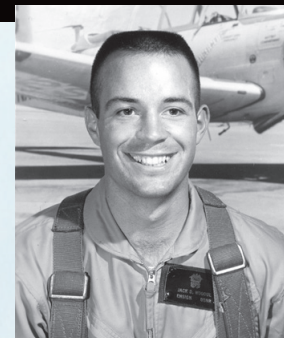
"Nah. I just wanted to check everything was working before trying to stand up."

LT Ken Hespe, who was an LSO, had landed just prior to the crash. He ran across the flight deck, grabbed a hand-held radio, and still in his flight gear, talked the remaining eight aircraft aboard. There was no mirror, it had been destroyed in the crash.



1967 LSOs - Back (L-R) Fred Horner, CR Jones, George Blosser, Bernie Fipp, Bruce Hollinger
Front (L-R) Bob Powell, Ben Heald, Walt Bumgarner

Puresome Unplugged



Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

A Memorial Day Tribute

by Jack Woodul -- from many years ago

To the Brethren,

In small moments, the War always came back to him. He never remembered his minor triumphs, but frabb-ups were always sneaking up out of his subconscious, tapping him on the shoulder, saying "Remember me?" The Ghosts of his flying career also occasionally emerged from their smoking holes in the ground and their fireballs in the sky to visit, though over the years, they had largely merged with the spirits that haunted the skies over Schweinfurt, stilled the air over Gettysburg and sounded distant trumpets over the lonely white markers on the hills above the Little Big Horn...

---The Shrill of the Bagpipe, the Roll of the Drum

Puresome did all the usual stuff...turned in his DD-175 to the Ops guys. Then, as he was leaving for the transient line, Puresome noticed the plaques. The sun was streaming through the windows and dust motes were dancing in the light. On the wall were posted the names of all the guys from Lemoore who had been bagged in the war. There were lots of names.

Time stopped in Puresome's universe as he read the names. ...some he knew, most he didn't. Puresome felt them, what they had done, and what he had not. He felt the honor in them and the sadness of a ratsass cause. "You don't forget us, you don't forget us," the wall whispered, "We gave and we're gone and nobody gives a shit, so don't forget us." Puresome started as two loudly talking sailors came around the corner. He walked on out of operations towards his plane.

On the flight home, and on other flights, and through the years, Puresome could hear the ghosts, and the bright fire in him burned, and he did not forget them.

God bless!



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