

THE A-4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL VOL 28-3



Contents:

Hell on the Fantail
Great Escapes: VMA-331
Skyhawks on Display
Puresome Unplugged

HOOK 23, A-4 Reunion
August 24-26
Nugget Casino, Sparks, NV

Fall 2022

<https://skyhawk.org>



THE PREZ SEZ

By George "Woodpecker" Blosser

As I write the Prez Sez for the Fall Edition of the *A-4ever Skyhawk Journal*, we are just returning home after our board meeting in Reno at Tailhook 22. My time as your President of the association has come to an end. *Gene "Blade" Atwell* relieved me as President during the annual member meeting at Hook22. The last two years have passed quickly and I leave you in the capable hands of "Blade." It has been my pleasure to serve as your President and I leave this position with grateful appreciation to all of the members and the Board for your unending support.



George "Woodpecker" Blosser

before launch on that January day. We take great pride in sharing his writing with the Skyhawk Association.

Tailhook 2023 Date

To keep everyone up-to-date regarding upcoming Tailhook Events, the following dates have been announced for Hook23. August 24-26, 2023. This date has been locked in with the Navy and Nugget Hotel. Registration for Hook and hotel reservations will be announced at a future date.

Skyhawk Website

Webmaster Gene "Blade" Atwell has recently completed an update on the website, and as of this date, the website has been converted to the Drupal Operating System. Website maintenance continues to be his primary concern. If you have an interest in helping out with maintaining the website, please get in touch with Gene at geneatwell@gmail.com. Training and all the help you need to assist Gene will be provided.

A4Ever Magazine Editor

Following the retirement of long-time Journal Editor Bob Hickerson, Dave Dollarhide has continued the high standards that Bob established as editor-in-chief of the Journal. Dave is always looking for additional material to share with the association. Experiences from the fleet are subjects most enjoyed by those who read the magazine. Please feel free to share anything from your time in the fleet, even if it is just a few notes. Dave will do the editing. sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.net

A-4s Forever,
"Woodpecker" sends 



Skyhawk BOD members and guests Tailhook Reunion September, 2022

BOD Report

- With profound sadness, we report that Director and longtime Skyhawk Member *Bill "Jigger" Egen* passed away on September 8. His family reports he died peacefully in his sleep, apparently from complications following surgery. Jigger was a great Marine Aviator and a friend to anyone who ever met him. He will be sorely missed.
- Secretary *Terry Cooney* reported that the association has 718 members, and we finished 2021, losing 21 members. We encourage everyone to mention joining the association when you talk to potential members. Skyhawk members are the best resource for finding candidates, and we encourage each of you to help when possible.
- The following Directors were elected to an additional three-year term during the annual meeting. *Ted Langworthy, William Ravgiala, Joe Turpen, and Charlie Stender*. Director *Bill Egen* was nominated for this extension, but his name was removed following the news of his passing. A search is currently underway for

a replacement director. Following the annual meeting, the new Board elected the following directors for a three-year term. *President Gene Atwell, VP Navy Dennis Carroll, VP Marine William Ravgiala, Secretary Terry Cooney, and Treasurer Mark Williams*.

Enterprise Fire Article

The US Navy Aircraft Carrier Fleet has experienced three significant fires on the Oriskany, Forrestal, and Enterprise Aircraft Carriers. The Skyhawk Journal has previously published articles on the Oriskany and Forrestal fires, but the Enterprise fire has not been covered. In this issue, you will find a detailed accounting of the Enterprise fire written by LCDR Ernie Mares. Ernie was a shipmate of mine during the Air Wing Fifteen Cruise onboard the Coral Sea in 1965. Sadly, Ernie passed away on June 2, 2022, and through the kindness of his family, we received permission to publish Ernie's article describing the events of the Enterprise Fire on January 14, 1969. Ernie witnessed the disaster firsthand as the fire started under his F-4 aircraft



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

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION, INC.

Officers and Directors

George Blosser
President and Director
[george.blosser1@gmail.com]

Bill Ravgiala
VP (Marine) and Director
[gunnyrav@gmx.com]

Terry Cooney
Secretary and Director
[skyhawkasn@gmail.com]

Mark Williams
Treasurer and Director
[rogerwilco14@gmail.com]

Gene Atwell
Webmaster and Director
[geneatwell@gmail.com]

Dennis Carroll
Director
[dennisjc333@gmail.com]

Steve Linder
Director
[steve.linder@1969.usna.com]

Charlie Stender
Director
[charlie.stender@verizon.net]

Dave Dollarhide
Director
[davedollarhide@msn.com]

Pete Cole
Director
[pete_cole@verizon.net]

Steve "Somf" Sanford
Director
[srsan4d@gmail.com]

Todd Frommelt
Director
[toddfrommelt6913@att.net]

Ed Jobin
Director
[edjobin47@gmail.com]

Ted Langworthy
Director
[FLYBEAR@peoplepc.com]

Joe Turpen
Director
[forrestal@fewpb.net]

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

BOMBS AWAY!

• Fall 2023 •

REGULAR FEATURES:

The Prez Sez: <i>George "Woodpecker" Blosser</i>	2
Take No Prisoners: <i>Letters to the Editor</i>	4-6
Read? <i>You think we read?</i> <i>Book Review</i>	7
New Members	7
Flyin' with Hot Mike	16
Trivia Anyone?	16
Size Does Matter: <i>Modelers Corner</i>	17
TAPS	18-19
From the Attic	20
TINS	21

IRREGULAR FEATURES:

Hell on the Fantail By Earnie Mares	8-10
Great Escapes: VMA-331 By Gary Verver	11
Skyhawks on Display: Renovation of A-4c 148503 By Bill Wilson & Todd "Hun" Frommelt	12-13
From Gary Verver's Latest Photos By Gary Verver	14
A-4's Still Flying By Todd "Hun" Frommelt	14
Puresome Unplugged: <i>YP's Excellent Adventures</i> By Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul	22-23

JOURNAL STAFF

Bob "Raven" Hickerson – Editor Emeritus.

Dave "Hide" Dollarhide – Editor.

Gene "Blade" Atwell – Webmaster.

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

Published by the Skyhawk Association © 2022

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.net. Stephanie Davis, graphics, msleefi@gmail.com. Paper issues printed by Acculink, Greenville, NC.

On the Cover: VT-23 Professionals TA-4J Skyhawks BuNo 156901, XO 3H-301, BuNo 156902, 3H-302, BuNo 156903, 3H-303, and BuNo 156904, 3H-304, in formation over NAS Kingsville, TX, circa 1970-1972. Dick Nielsen

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.net

■ **From: Barrett Tillman**
Subject: Hook 21 Living Legends photo, issue 27-3 - Diz Laird Air to Air Kills Pacific and Europe



Diz Laird passed away recently at age 101.

Ref. page 5. Though oft credited as such, Diz was not the only NavAv with German and Japanese kills. There were about 4 others--would have to check My Book. But, Diz is definitely the only USN ace with both types of scalps on his ready room hanger. For any readers out there, who do not own my encyclopedic *U.S. Navy Fighter Squadrons of WW II* (and they know who they are!), here's the list from p. 132.

- LTJG Charles V. August
VF-41/4 -- 2 Vichy + 2.5 Japanese
- LTJG Edward W. Olszewski
VOF/VOC-1 -- 2 German +1 Japanese
- LTJG Charles A. Shields
VF-41/4 -- 2 Vichy +1 Japanese
- LTJG Harold Vita
VF-9 -- 1 Vichy + 5 Japanese

August and Shields were Diz's squadronmates when he joined VF-4.

■ **From: Donald Wright**
Subject: J-65/J-52 oils systems TRIVIA from issue 27-3

The J-65 did not have a closed system and vented oil over the side. A run up check on the runway by your wingman (was normal) for overboard venting. The J-52 was a closed system and retained all oil.
(A great last name to be talking about the Wright J-65. Ed)

■ **From: Mark "Doc" Brown**
Subject: Back Issues

I received my first A-4Ever Journal issue and saw that limited back issues are available. I'd be interested in purchasing 5-6 back issues and wondered how that worked?
From: Dave Dollarhide
 You're a new member! Welcome! Thanks for your upcoming order. Our process has just changed as outlined below and your request is the first. Since Mark Williams is copied, the two of you can decide to use US Mail or not. The Summer issue has been sent to the printer and the new procedure below is included on the back page.

Back issues ordering process is as follows:

Domestic US only, mail a request to Mark Williams at 10432 Button Willow Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89134.

Include your name, email, mailing address, number of issues by volume and number (28-1, 25-2, etc.)

The minimum order is 3 and the maximum of any particular issue is 10. Include a check made out to *The Skyhawk Association*.

\$3 Per Issue (postage included)

Remember that you can always go to the Journal Archives in the website *Ready Room* and read past issues on your computer. (Don't bother with printing them, as the text size makes them difficult to read.) There are a few missing from earlier years, but the vast majority are there.

■ **From: Berny Foerster**
Subject: VC-8 Website Updates

Just looking at the A-4 site and noticed Commanding Officers for VC-8 missing for a period of time. Here is an update for you:

- CDR Randy Sweeney 1992-Aug 1994
- CDR Bernd Foerster Sep 1994-Jan 1996

Awards won during that time:

- 1994 Battle E,
- 1994 Safety S,
- 1994 Golden Anchor,
- 1994 Energy Conservation Award

■ **From: Gilberto Zanolla Jr. "Z Man"**
Subject: Ship's Store – Brazil Request

"I am Captain ZANOLLA from the Brazilian Navy, A-4 Pilot from VF-1 Squadron. I would like to buy some stuff from Skyhawk Association and also subscribe membership. I would like to know if you guys could send to Brazil? I have some pilots interested to by coins, patches and decals.

From: Todd "Hun" Frommelt

From the message string I see, it looks like you're a great candidate to join our Association! And we'd love to have another international member! The best way to do that is to process a membership application, attached here for (snail) mail-in, or join us online thru any of several "Join Us" buttons on our web site at www.skyhawk.org and become a member. You can start buying stuff anytime from the web site, though, on the Association menu tab, Ships Store, without even having to be a member, although we want you to join, of course! I'd guess that most of us don't use WhatsApp, but are pretty good with regular email. Let me know if you stumble into any troubles trying to join or make purchases. We are all volunteers, however and do not work full time on the Association business, so some delays are likely.

I also track A-4's still flying all over the world (about 45 these days) and would love to put you down as a possible contact for keeping my 5th Brigade numbers accurate. Let me know if that works. My current contact is LtGen Alex Amoros. It will be great to have you as a member "Z Man"!

From: Gilberto Zanolla Jr. "Z Man"

Great to talk with you! Yes, I can be your contact here and keep you guys updated about the Brazilian A-4.

Right now, I'm in charge of the Brazilian AF-1 Modernization Program. I'm Based at Embraer, where the program is taking place. Later I will check the online application.

From: Todd "Hun" Frommelt

Z Man! Great to be in touch! That would be great if you could keep me abreast of the Embraer contract progress. Hope it all comes thru as desired! I flew the A-4 in the US Marines for most of my 21 years of service so guys who keep them flying are near and dear to my heart! Be well and keep me advised on your luck getting thru the registration process. I know our Secretary is off for a bit starting Friday, so there may be some delays, but, again, you don't need to be a member to go on the site's, Ship's Store, to purchase any of the goods for sale.

■ **From: Jesse M. Ruiz Moreno, Curator, Naval Museum in Spain**
Subject: Captain James R Parce USN

I am pleased to address you on the occasion of requesting your collaboration, that is: I am looking for details on the late Captain James R. Parce USN who was a pilot officer with VA-46 Classmen (*Clansmen Ed*). Jim was my friend in the late 1970s in Venezuela where he was Defense Attaché to that government. He entered as an acting pilot in 1946 and, veteran in Korea and Vietnam too, retired from service in 1978 and died in 1996,



being buried at Barrancas National Cemetery in Pensacola, Florida USA. I want to know what charges he had and at what time, any photo please. Thank you very much for your collaboration and I hope to hear from you soon with a positive response.

From: Dave Dollarhide



We have no information concerning CAPT Jim Parce in our Skyhawk Association records, but there is an extensive page for VA-46 at our web-site at skyhawk.org. However, our member, CAPT Dave Page, found this information below from the National Naval Aviation Museum Foundation in Pensacola.

<http://navalaviationfoundation.org/ways-to-give/national-flight-log/national-flight-log-entry/?id=854>

Unfortunately, there is no listing of the squadrons/units he was attached to during his career, just your mention of the VA-46 Clansmen and the note in the Flight Log entry that he was the Commanding Officer of VT-4 (T-2A aircraft training students in gunnery

and carrier qualifications). Also from the Flight Log entry, Jim did not fly the A-4 Skyhawk, but he did fly the Panther and Cougar, which VA-46 flew from 1955 till 1958, placing him with the Clansmen during that time.

■ **From: Dennis Carroll**
To: Tim Heatherman
Subject: Looking for a photo

Just checking to see if you got a response to your request? My apologies for being late in this.

From: Tim Heatherman



I did not hear from anyone. I went a different route. I took the faded colored pictures and found a local photographer who converted them to B & W. Thanks for checking with me.

From: Dave Dollarhide
To: Tim Heatherman

I thought I'd sent this to you, but obviously not. It's the lowres pic from the 2007 issue that I edited to make it as good as possible, but it's still a bit fuzzy...attached. I don't recall seeing the other photo, till now.

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: Roy Edwards**

Subject: NAS Glynco History -- More

I was reading the letters to the editor in the Summer 2022 The A-4Ever and read where you were seeking history information on Glynco. To give you some background, I was an A-4 pilot designated in July 1963 and around April/May 1965 the Marine Corps decided that they needed some aviators as ground air to air controllers. They sent two of us from MCAS Beaufort to Air Controller School in Glynco. The other guy was an F 8 pilot.

We joined about 20 Ensigns and Marine 2nd Lt, grunts in a class at Air Controller School. Both of us were fairly senior 1st Lts. I don't know if this is an era of Glynco that interest you, but I would be glad to offer some of my experiences that had for about 3 months as a student. One of my biggest surprises was I received orders from Glynco to the 1st MAW in Da Nang RVN. Upon my checking in at Wing G-1 the G-1 Personnel Chief made a loud pronouncement, "Hey, we have a new FAC." I immediately told him I was a Ground air-air Controller not a FAC. His response was "You're a pilot and control airplanes don't you?"

From: Dave Dollarhide

Thanks for adding to the Glynco letter to editor updates, giving Vance Lewis another twist to Glynco's history...will forward your comments. Except for radar controllers, who control air to air engagements. I never heard the term "Ground Air to Air Controller." But, I guess you were working in a Radar room at Danang and living in a tent?

From: Roy "Howdy" Edwards

Thanks for responding to my email. I added the term Ground to the air-to-air controller because so many people were confusing Air-Air-Intercept controller with the NFOs. But you are correct we were trained at Glynco to vector the fighters to any threat airborne bogey, we would put the fighter into the position that he could affect an intercept. Have to remember this was in 1965 and we did not have the head on Sidewinder. It was a heat seeking missile. And you are correct I was in the 1st MAW TAOC in DaNang. We did not have radar in the TAOC, we did live in tents and all the other amenities afforded in 1965 era of RVN.

NAS Glynco at the time taught air to air intercept training and PAR/GCA radar operators. As one of the two aviators in the air-to-air class, we had to fly the T-34 for the GCA school, so after class he and I would have to fly practice GCA's for the enlisted controllers for about 2+0 hours. Needless to say, we accumulated a lot of GCA time. This is how we got our flight time for flight pay. Remember, back then if you were under DIFOT orders you had to get the required minimums to get your "Buck Fifty" each month. We were controlling the FJ-3 Fury as both the interceptor and bogey. Long story.



■ **From: Frank Oliver**

Subject: Trivia Question – J-65 - No electric power after start

I was an AMS3 and a T-33B/A-4L plane captain at NAF Detroit. I believe the reason the generator fails to provide power is that the internal/external power switch, on the bottom of the port wing, where the external power is plugged in, is in the external position. Putting the switch in the internal position will solve the problem. My roommate Steve Reinert AQ2, put this switch to use one day, after I had left NAF Detroit. The pilot of the A-4, refused to follow Steve's signals for taxing. After numerous tries, Steve gave up. He chocked the plane, put the switch to the external position, and installed the boarding ladder. He then went to maintenance control and told the chief that a very unhappy pilot would be coming in. He told the chief what he had done and the chief told him that he could have handled it better. When the pilot came in the chief told him, that when he is on the ground, the plane captain is in control of the aircraft. Unlike the pilot, the plane captain has greater visibility and is responsible in keeping the aircraft from getting damaged.

.....
■ **From: George Aldridge**

Subject: Reply to *Hide's Last Ride* movie from Skyhawk Association Website Video Page.

They inserted two squads of us to blow up a *hit load of bangalore torpedoes that had been dropped in a rice paddy. Don't ask me how. I don't know. It was pretty lonely out there but as we were walking up the valley in the distance, we could hear a fast mover coming. It was a Skyhawk and he flew right past us so low I could have hit him with a baseball. He stayed on station till we piled them up, set a pencil detonator and got extracted. Very good feeling having him circling around.

.....
■ **From: Ken "Bruiser" Brust**

Subject: Dead Men Flying by Mike "Mule" Mullane

I just finished reading "Dead Men Flying" by Mike "Mule" Mullane. Mule was a Navy A-4 jock flying from Yankee Station on two tours over North Vietnam. What an incredible story he tells! I flew the A-4 in the Marines for over 2 years (70-72) but never saw combat. I can only hope I could have carried the flag half as well as Mule did on his 200+ missions off the carrier. Get the book, read it and share it, but you will want to hang on to this treasure. Where do we find such warriors? Sharp hand salute to our sister service! They are most deserving! Semper Fi!

Read?

you think
we *read*?

Rampant Raider An A-4 Skyhawk Pilot in Vietnam

Author: Stephen R. Gray
2007 Naval Institute Press
Available in ebook or hardback at many places

Pissed off at the University of Oklahoma bureaucracy, future NAVCAD Steve Gray had a lightbulb moment: "To hell with this, I'll enlist in the Navy!" By the end of the very same paragraph, he said it only took a few weeks for him to "regret that decision."

Thus begins *Rampant Raider*.

The first half of the book comprises his enlisted and flight school trials and travails. His straightforward explanations of things held my attention throughout the entire book. These explanations helped even this "Jarhead" understand things otherwise murky to military and non-military readers alike.

The pace is quick and chronological. Pictures are included and this Marine didn't need his usual compliment of

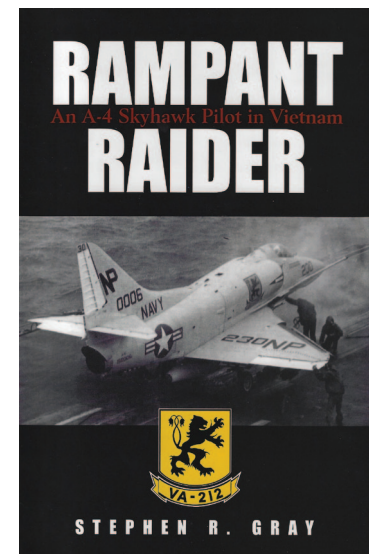
crayon drawings. Steve's recollections of flight school certainly brought back a lot of memories.

How many guys do you know who busted the sound barrier, all the hangar windows during an ongoing winging ceremony and eventually pinned on his wings? Steve did!

His style is easy going and extremely readable. He doesn't belabor his explanations, yet explains everything in understandable words.

The second half of the book begins with his new, now present bride, Alma, along with Lemoore, California, the A-4 RAG and ends with VA-212's combat cruise of 1967.

Steve's humor shows up often throughout the book. Leaving Thailand on a C-130 after a soon to be recalled batch of MK-109 fuses nearly blew him out of the sky, Steve had time to reflect. "I had been in the combat theater for two weeks, and all I had managed to do, as far as I could tell, was to bomb some clouds and blow myself out of the sky.



Combat was turning out to be nothing like I had expected."

Having been on the mission to drop the "Thanh 'Whore' Bridge" with Walleyes, Steve relates first hand an epic moment of Naval Aviation.

If you want to open up that long-closed "parachute bag" in your brain, you can't go wrong with Steve's memoir. It's well worth the trip!

And I'm hoping the second cruise is close to publication.

Reviewed by Gene "Blade" Atwell



NEW MEMBERS

Craig Collins, Scarborough, ME

Len Duncan, Loon Lake, WA

Federick Gallup, Port Orange, FL

Robert Gandt, Port Orange, FL

Timothy Heatherman, Sharpsburg, GA

David Karonidis, Quaama, NSW, AU

Catherine Morin, New York, NY

Jerry Patterson, Yorktown, VA

Darrel Sheets, Reynoldsburg, OH

Kevin Smith, Mesquite, NV

James Southworth, Laguna Woods, CA

Thorin Southworth, Coto De Gaza, CA

Roy Stocking, Scottsdale, AZ

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.net

HELL ON THE Fantail



By Ernie Mares

1969 fire aboard USS Enterprise

Four years earlier when the Vietnam War first started, I flew A-4 Skyhawks with VA-155 operating from USS Coral Sea. The Coral Sea cruise dragged on for eleven months and most of it involved flying missions over the roughest part of North Vietnam. We were the first to be shot at by surface-to-air missiles and wrote the book on striking pre-assigned targets and night road reconnaissance. After flying over a hundred combat missions, I looked forward to the variety of missions assigned to the strike/fighters.

After a brief tour of shore duty at China Lake, I was tapped for another combat cruise—this time as ops officer of Fighter Squadron Ninety-Six flying the F-4J Phantom II—latest and hottest aircraft in the fleet. In my own naïve way, my adrenaline level was recharged and I could not foresee any personal danger because I survived a very tough cruise as an attack pilot; I was intimately familiar with contemporary weapons, and I could fly the Phantom air-to-air equal to or better than any adversary I trained against.

The following incident took place on Tuesday morning, January 14, 1969, aboard USS Enterprise, the Navy's pre-eminent nuclear-powered aircraft carrier steaming seventy miles south of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The ship was on the second day of an Operational Readiness

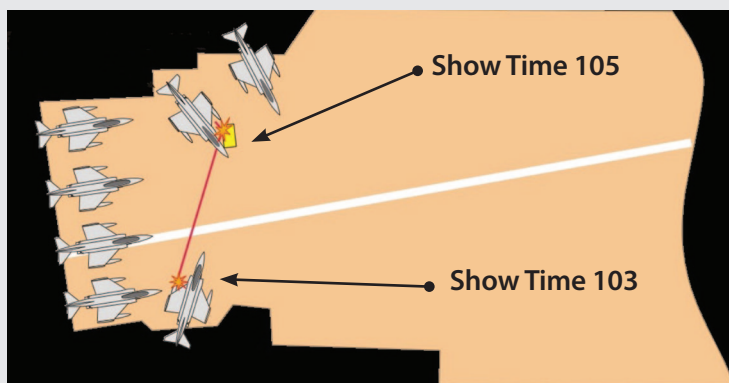
Inspection—final prerequisite to being qualified to conduct combat operations.

Our launch scheduled for 0830 that morning was an Alpha Strike using live ordnance. The F-4s and A-7s were armed with Mk-82s and LAU-10 Zuni pods. My aircraft, Showtime 103, was first to be started since I was the strike leader. The GTC-100 aircraft starter unit installed on a MD3A tractor was not operating at full efficiency and it took an abnormally long time (perhaps 4 or 5 minutes) to get both engines going. This same MD3A then went over to start my wingman, Showtime 105 which was spotted across the flight deck about fifty feet away. The start cart was parked in a position where the GTC's 2,000° F engine exhaust impinged on the Zuni warheads carried underneath 105's left wing. After being subjected to this hot exhaust for several minutes, one or more of the warheads exploded. The blast ricocheted off the start cart and struck the fuel tank suspended beneath my left wing.

When 105's rockets cooked off at 0819, I had just completed all of the cockpit checks

and was looking across the deck in the direction of the waist catapults. I had absolutely no idea of what happened. I just heard a loud pop, like a dropped light bulb, and a loud thump against the drop tank on my port wing. Instantly, my canopy was covered with a translucent frosting.

Intuitively, I realized that something was wrong, but since I was the strike leader and this live ordnance flight was a major event of the ORI. I hesitated for a few seconds to verify that there was a legitimate reason to abort the flight. Engine instruments showed everything to be operating and there were no abnormal warning lights. My RIO was not talking to me because, as I found out later, he was busy bugging out. Nonetheless, I made the decision to shut down until we figured out what happened—to hell with the ORI grade!



I deliberately brought each throttle back around the horn and switched off the radios and engine master. In my peripheral vision, I saw the white frosted canopy suddenly turn to chocolate brown and then into a liquid pumpkin orange—at that instant I realized that the canopy was melting because Showtime 103 was on fire!

My immediate reaction was the Martin-Baker ejection seat. I sat erect and reached for the face curtain with both hands. But just before pulling the curtain handles, I saw that some part of the starboard side of the canopy was still transparent and at that instant, there was no visible fire on the starboard side of my aircraft. I felt stupid for over-reacting and decided to climb out of the aircraft normally. I systematically undid the rocket jet fittings and released the leg restraints to detach myself from the ejection seat.

I actuated the pneumatic control to open the canopy and for the first time, realized that this was no drill. An intense wall of flames surrounded the aircraft and it looked like the only escape route would be over the side into the water.

As I stood up, my oxygen hose was still attached and I had to sit down again to undo the safety lock release. Standing up again, I climbed onto the starboard canopy rail and dropped forward to the flight deck ten feet below—landing on all fours.

I looked up and saw my nineteen-year-old plane captain, Airman Bill Skinner, standing in front of the plane with his hands covering his face. His fuel-soaked jersey was on fire and he was completely stunned. I pulled him by his arm and said, "C'mon Skinner, we're going swimming!"

As we moved toward the deck edge, it was obvious that he was bleeding and the thought of sharks changed my plans for jumping over the side. At the deck edge, I wrapped my arms around him in a bear hug to smother the flames. My Nomex flight suit and gloves were fire resistant and fortunately, the flames went out in just a few seconds. I took off my gloves and swatted the burning remnants of his brown flight deck jersey.

About five steps down the catwalk ladder was a door leading to the 03-level at approximately frame 245. A sailor wearing dungarees whose name I never knew opened the door and asked,



Fantail on Fire

"What's going on?" I told him to grab Skinner's legs and I reached around his chest to support him from behind. Together, we carried him down the ladder and into the small athwartships passageway on the 03-level.

Inside, we laid Skinner down and assessed the situation. This was not the time to be concerned about first aid, but he appeared to have internal injuries and I was reluctant to have him walk any further. Skinner kept protesting that other people on the flight deck were worse off than he was. I assured him that we would stick with him and there was no sense in worrying about it. About this time, three or four other sailors in dungarees appeared and I sent them to find a stretcher.

Shortly thereafter the passageway filled with thick, greasy black smoke. Burning JP-5 jet fuel was pouring over the deck edge coaming and through the open door leading to the catwalk. My newfound companion and I closed and secured the dogs on the watertight door. This cleared the smoke and seconds later the sailors returned with a wire mesh stokes litter. I don't know where they found it, but it was filled with a hundred feet or so of half-inch line. I used my survival knife to cut the knots that secured the line to the litter.

It was just about this time that 500 lb. bombs from my burning aircraft began a series of explosions directly over our heads (0823 and 40 seconds). Each time a bomb exploded, we were lifted about three feet in the air and slammed back down onto the steel deck. Shrapnel ricocheted around the steel bulkheads and as the metal fragments spent their

energy—other weapons exploded repeating the cycle perhaps three or four seconds apart.

Obviously, the relative safety of our passageway compartment was compromised and it was time to move on. The sailors each grabbed a corner of the stretcher and moved forward in the main passageway on the starboard side of the 03-level. As my little group moved forward, I found other sailors in the arresting gear spaces hunkered down beneath the massive arresting gear engines. I told them to forget general quarters and evacuate the area. This made good sense to them and they joined our little party. This was a fortunate decision because a few minutes later these spaces became a fiery hell fueled by exploding ordnance and thousands of gallons of JP-5 from the aircraft on the flight deck directly above.

Continuing forward, our progress was blocked by sailors wanting to move aft to help fight the fire. This was a futile endeavor because there was no way that they could get to the flight deck. Besides they had nothing to pour water with. As they stood aside to let the stretcher pass, we were able to reverse the traffic flow. Soon, we had a parade of troops moving forward with the sailors carrying Skinner leading the way.

As we passed beneath the island located approximately amidships there was a ladder leading down to sickbay. From there on I continued the long 300-yard walk forward to Ready Room One just aft of the forecastle. For the first time, I sensed that all danger from the fire was behind me.

continued...



GREAT ESCAPES

Gary Verver's Losses List

VMA-331 A-4E 150098 – 1st Lt W. R. Picton

Deep Doo Doo!

(The Austin American, Sunday, 14 May, 1967)

1st Lt W. R. Picton, a Marine Corps pilot is being held for observation at Bergstrom AFB hospital after his A-4E Skyhawk crashed into a city sewage purification pond two miles north of Bergstrom Saturday about 7:15 p.m. 1st Lt. W.R. Picton, 22, of Livingston, CA, was forced to eject from his aircraft during a landing approach and he also came down in a city sewage purification pond. Judd Rhodes, of Rt. 1, and his son, Don Rhodes, were fishing (in a separate lake - Ed) nearby when the pilot came down. They pulled their boat over a dike and rowed out to get Picton, who had inflated his flotation gear and was about 500 yards out in the pond. They then towed Picton to shore.

Picton was flying one of two planes on a navigational training mission originating from a Marine Corps base at Beaufort, SC. The second craft was being piloted by Capt. Eric Farrell, 26, of New London, CN. Both were flying A-4E's, carrier-based jet attack aircraft. The pilots were scheduled to spend the night at Bergstrom, according to Bergstrom public information officers. The aircraft reportedly had made one pass by Bergstrom and was on a landing approach when it came down. A naval investigation team is being sent to Austin to investigate the cause of the accident.



"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

My GQ (General Quarters - Ed) station was ready room one just aft of the forecandle. When I arrived there, I reported to my squadron Commanding Officer who was seated in his chair with his attention glued to the closed-circuit television. He was wearing his torso harness with MK-3C flotation unit over his khaki uniform, clutching an OBA pack and waiting for the word to abandon ship. Earlier, my RIO told him that I was still in the aircraft and he assumed that I was dead. His shocked expression when he saw me confirmed this!

Bill Skinner was lucky. He hospitalized stateside with third degree burns over 40% and shrapnel wounds over his entire body.

He healed rapidly and proudly rejoined our squadron when we made our last port call at Cubi Point at the end of the cruise.

Seeing this young kid again was a thrill that's hard to describe. I knew that if the situation had been reversed, he would have done anything to pull me from the burning aircraft. I'm not sure if he stayed in the Navy, but I know it was very important to him to rejoin the squadron, even if it was only to make the long trip back across the Pacific Ocean.

Not so lucky were twenty-eight of our shipmates including my wingman and his RIO—they perished in the fire or later died in hospitals. Like Bill Skinner, 343 others suffered major injuries. Fifteen aircraft, mostly F-4 Phantoms, were totally destroyed.



Bill Skinner and Earnie Mares

Our thanks for permission to publish and condolences to Ernie's widow, Gerri Mares. Ernie passed away on June 2.
— Editor

Skyhawks on Display

Sacramento Aerospace Museum of California

Renovation of A-4C 148503

A-4 Renovation Complete!

By Todd "Hun" Frommelt

It's been a long pandemic-related haul for the restoration efforts of the Sacramento Aerospace Museum of California, but at a ceremony held on 13 July, we have a winner! A nicely refreshed A-4C, 148503, was unveiled at a dedication ceremony at the museum and we were fortunate to have several Association representatives and their guests there for the occasion! Members Bill Wilson and TR White (ret USMC) attended the ceremony at the museum on the old McClellan AFB just NE of Sacramento. The museum has it painted in a great Blue Angel paint scheme, while the aircraft's history is all Navy and Marine attack squadrons from mid-1961 to its retirement in early 1974. Congratulations and sincere thanks to the museum's restoration crew, headed by Mr. Bob Hiltachk! Bill Wilson added icing to the cake by offering up his own A-4 tailhook to complete the picture! Thanks Bill and Bob!



Sacramento Aerospace Museum of California.



"TR" White and Bill Wilson with #148503, 13 July, 2022.



#148503 renovation complete.

Tale of the Missing Hook!



By Bill Wilson USMC (ret)

I had a Douglas A-4 Skyhawk tailhook hanging on the wall in my garage. My wife didn't want it anywhere in our new home (said it was ugly), so I decided to hang it on my garage wall to "sight in on" and guide my car into a tight parking spot. I loved my "Hook" and used it every day.

I retired from the Marine Corps in 1980 while I was serving with the Marine Reserves in VMA-133 at NAS Alameda, California. I flew the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk for most of my career and was very fortunate to always have flying assignments throughout my active-duty and reserve years.

In 1999 the Navy decided that it was time to retire the A-4, as it was getting old and *McDonnell Douglas* was no longer building them. The Navy had a training squadron at NAS Pensacola that was flying the two seat TA-4, but it was soon to be replaced by the newer and smaller, T-45 Goshawk, which was less expensive to operate. A formal retirement ceremony was held at the *National Naval Aviation Museum* at NAS Pensacola for the last Skyhawk squadron.

A group of us A-4 "drivers" from the Bay Area decided that we had to attend this ceremony. There was a wonderful presentation speech about the A-4 and its history. At the end of the presentation, the large hangar doors were opened for everyone to have an outside view.

Right in the center of the opening, down "on the deck," was four TA-4's in tight formation headed our way. When they appeared, it looked like they were going to fly right through the hangar door where we were sitting! Even though we were inside it was none the less very spectacular!

I decided then that I had to have an A-4 tailhook! So, the next day, I went to the local military aircraft dismantler that I heard had them for sale. I purchased

my hook, but realized that it was not going to be easy to get it home, unless I shipped it. I went to a FedEx office and they said I needed to put it in a box. They gave me cardboard and clear box tape to make a box, which I did right there and they accepted it. FedEx was offering a discount for airline employees so I was glad to hear that it wasn't going to be too expensive.

After returning to California, I anxiously waited for my tailhook to arrive. FedEx had said it would take several days and that because of its size and weight, it was required to travel by ground. After a week I started checking on the whereabouts of the hook, but after many phone calls, it appeared that they were not sure of its location. They had LOST my Tail Hook! Also, because it was being shipped "stand-by," with an employee discount and not insured, I was sure they were not going to spend much time looking for it. After a while I considered it lost forever.

Have you seen the movie "Cast Away" with Tom Hanks? A FedEx plane crashed and Tom was marooned on an island. The part I liked is where his best friend became Wilson, a Wilson basketball, that he always talked to. However, the last thing I remember from the movie was, "FedEx ALWAYS delivers its packages, no matter how long it takes!"

Sure enough, several months or so later, my doorbell rang and a well-dressed man handed me a business card that read FedEx and said he had something for me in his van. Sure-enough it was my tailhook, but no box. He asked me what it was, although I'm sure he already knew and I told him the story of the shipping and boxing. When I was through, he explained that when the tailhook arrived at the Memphis hub for sorting, it had apparently come out of its box and proceeded to get jammed in the sorting belts and machinery. After shutting down the morning package sorting rush, the hook wound up under

one of the machines. It laid there for some time as no one knew what it was, or if it belonged there. After some delay and research, they were able to find that it was shipped from Pensacola, which led them to my address.

Before the FedEx man left, I apologized for all the trouble I had caused and told him how pleased I was to finally receive my tailhook! He said, "Please do us a favor and not ship anything else like that on FedEx, as we can't take another sorting system shutdown!"

Recently, a friend from the A-4 Skyhawk Association asked me to attend the dedication of the restoration of the Douglas A-4C at the Sacramento Aerospace Museum in California. It is the only Navy aircraft they have to display and the restoration crew has spent several years restoring it to represent a Navy Blue Angel A-4. Coincidentally, in checking my log book, I learned that I had flown this particular aircraft, 148503, on February 1, 1973.

After the ceremony, the museum Assistant Director, Tom Jones, mentioned that they did not have a tailhook for the Skyhawk. Well, now they do! I donated my hook to them.



Bill Wilson giving hook to Tom Jones.

It was a crazy route, but the **Hook is Home!**



From Gary Verver's Latest Photos

Can you identify the missing names in this gathering with VADM Moorner?

VADM Moorner, Commander Seventh Fleet, poses with the CAG-9 COs in the VA-93 Ready Room aboard the Ranger, 14 December 1962.

The squadrons aboard Ranger were:

- VF-91 Red Lightnings - CO (Thought to be 3rd from right, name unknown)
- VF-96 Fighting Falcons ?
- VA-93 Blue Blazers – CO CDR Robert F “Dutch” Schoultz (Wearing aviation greens)
- VA-94 Mighty Shrikes – CO CDR Donald Loranger (2nd from right)
- VA-95 Green Lizards – CO CDR H.G. Silliman ?
- VAH-6 Fleurs ?
- VAW-11 Early Elevens ?
- VFP-63 Eyes of the Fleet ?
- HU-1 Fleet Angels (The Lt. on the far right, maybe?)

Contact Gary Verver if you can fill in any of the blanks at gpverx2@gmail.com.

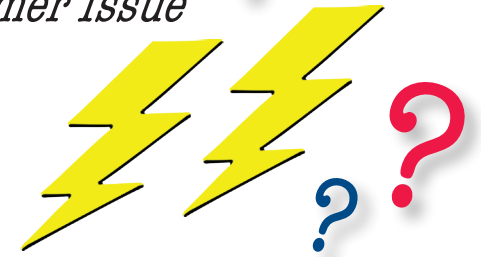
TRIVIA ANYONE? The Question: ?

from Dave Dollarhide

from the Summer Issue

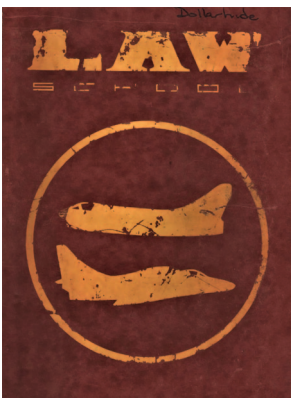
A-4A/B/C/L ELECTRIC POWER:

If the generator fails to provide power upon engine start, what's the most likely problem and how is it resolved?



The Answer: J-65 engines use a permanent magnet generator to provide electrical power to the airplane and every now and then during startup, the polarity is incorrect, preventing the generator from producing power. If this occurs, “flashing the field” must be accomplished to correct the polarity after engine start. If an external starter compressor store (flyable engine start pod) is being used, its DC power source can be connected to permit the airplane's generator field flash switch to be used. The momentary switch is located in the right wheel well, next to the hydraulic system pressure gage and will do the trick, providing the 115V, 400 cycle, three phase power. If no DC power is available from the start pod, most squadrons would keep a small 6V battery handy, with two wires connected for this purpose. With the two bare wire ends, a mechanic can touch them to the terminals on the back of the “flash switch” to accomplish the same thing.

Personal Experience: In 1970, The “Skipper” of my squadron at NAS JAX let me take an A-4L to attend Skip Lushner's Light Attack Weapons (LAW) School at NAS Lemoore. It was a three-week course, in which part of the time was spent in the classroom in the morning and in the afternoon, we would fly to the bombing range to practice what we'd been taught. On the first startup, I had no electrical power and had to shut down to explain to the ground crew what needed to be done. These were J-52 days and most sailors on the ramp at VA-125 had never seen a J-65 powered A-4 and what they brought out was a “troubleshooter” pickup and used its 12volt battery with jumper cables. There were lots of sparks, but it worked and we used the “truck trick” for the rest of the three weeks. Each day, a growing crowd would form when I started the engine to watch the “jump start,” sparks fly and the normal five-foot flame pattern from the tailpipe – plus the weird, but normal “honking” sound during the start. It was a bit like having my own sideshow. When I finally manned up to return to NAS Cecil three weeks later, the generator worked normally and I was on my way. I'm thinking all those high powered “flashes” re-magnetized the permanent generator magnets. What do I know, but it worked through the needed gas stop on the trip back home. ✈️



Skyhawks Still Flying

Fall 2022 Skyhawks Still Flying Update – “Contract Services” Hun reporting

We're into our 11th year of tracking our Skyhawk flyers and we've got the 2022 update prepared. As we have in the past, we've split the still flyers into 3 main groups: militaries, contractors and private owners and will put one section in each print issue for reporting in the Journal. The full report is available online at: <https://skyhawk.org> (Home Page/Menu Bar/The A4/A4 Skyhawks Still Flying)

Out of some 2,960 A-4 aircraft produced by Douglas Aircraft, there are **about 46** Skyhawks **still performing** with speed and agility all over the world! It's been a fine flying machine indeed! **This report will feature contract operators still flying the Skyhawk** – with some 22 single seat and 5 TA-4's in such service. There is a mix of models but everything from C's to N's are working with varieties of engines, avionics and other capabilities. Most of these aircraft “aren't your Daddy's airplane” anymore.

DRAKEN INTERNATIONAL

Draken International is our largest Skyhawk contract operator. It's now working with 8 New Zealand A-4K's and 6 A-4N's from BAE Industries. Up until 2020, their A-4's worked at Nellis for both FWS and Red Flag. They have now moved Skyhawk operations to Kinston, NC and do mostly JTAC (joint CAS) training for the USAF and Marines. **7 A-4K's, 6 A-4N's and 1 TA-4K**

TOP ACES (previously a part of Discovery Air, Canada)

Top Aces bought 7 A-4Ns and 3 TA-4's (from ATSI, Mesa, AZ) for contract services and now has their Skyhawk fleet supporting the German Armed Forces at Wittmund, GE. Two TA-4's were sold over the past few years. **7 A-4N and 1 TA-4**

TETON AVIATION SERVICES

This air contract service has available about 10 privately owned aircraft ranging from MIG's to a Citation and owner Dr. Rich Sugden brought TA-4J 154306

A-4's Still Flying!

as of February 2022

14 Military
27 Contract
5 Private

Total: 46



Full report available on Association Website

into flying status back in early November 2014. It's a beautiful machine in Marine Corps OA-4 livery! **1 TA-4J**

SKY RESOURCES/A4L LLC

They have leased aircraft to both ATAC and Draken in the past and have 3 flyers in Denison, TX. Other airframes are spread through restoration facilities in Perryville, MO, Sherman, TX, and Bill Muszala's storage facility, ATW Aviation, Inc., in Marana, AZ. **3 A-4L**

AVMATS

This aerospace support services company is based in the St. Louis, MO area and has recently acquired the Doug Matthews/Classic Fighters TA-4, 156925 and one of the Top Aces/ATSI TA-4's from Mesa, AZ. By the time you read this, both should be back as flyers. **2 TA-4J's**

SIZE DOES MATTER

Modelers' Corner

By Joe Turpen

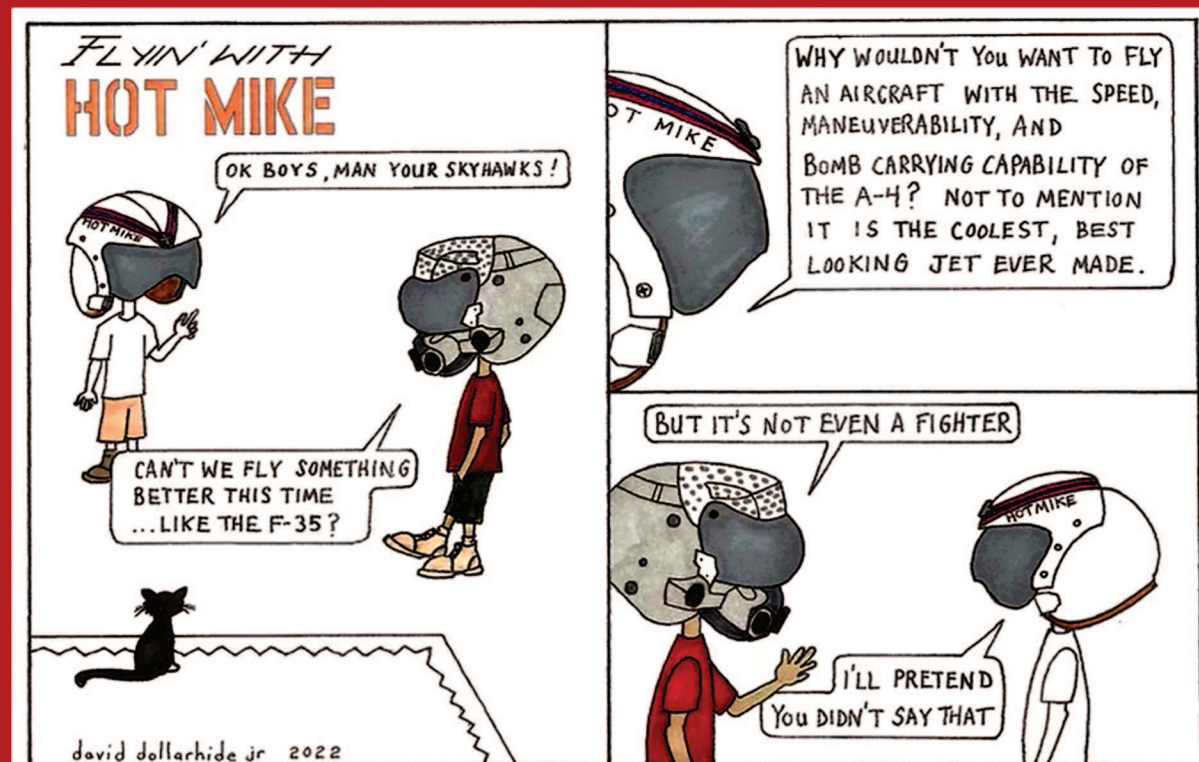
Modeler Ken Belisle

Ken Belisle is a lifelong plastic modeler and his Aggressor A-4F project from a number of years ago is typical of his fine work. He provides the following details.

“The original kit was re-released by Hasagawa in the 1990's as “A-4E/F Topgun” with the decals I used. The kit also included the TACS pod for the centerline station. I bought the seat, cockpit, and intake covers from an aftermarket company. These are small companies which produce more accurate or supplemental parts that are not included in the kit. The helmet came from the kit provided pilot. I hollowed it out with a Dremel tool and mounted it where I did after painting. The kit also included the bent refueling probe. I made the chocks. I'm not sure how accurate the paint scheme is. Back then it was hard to find exactly the right colors to match the FS Numbers.”



Ken is one of those rare modelers, who has also built a real airplane, a “homebuilt” called the “Panther.” As in modeling, his attention to detail is evident in this single seat aerobatic low wing. His Panther is equipped with a 160hp O-320, that can easily cruise at 180mph.





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

James "Andy" Anderson, 9 April 2022, Palmetto Bay, FL
Dick "Black Bart" Barton, 8 September 2022, Yorktown, VA
Don Brooks, 2004, Myrtle Beach, SC
Sam Dickey, 6 November 2021, Fountain Valley, CA
John Donahue, 13 September 2022, Jacksonville, FL
Bill "Jigger" Egen, 8 September 2022, Havelock, NC
Fred Euler, 2019, Santa Barbara, CA
Jean Gruhler, 15 October 2017, Annapolis, MD
Bob "Raven" Hickerson, 18 September 2022, Fredericksburg, TX
John Koch, 8 April 2013, Spokane, WA
Gary Larson, 22 December 2021, San Antonio, TX
Ron "Stitch" Olsen, 22 July 2022, Danbury, CT
Darrell Shelor, May 2022, Crystal Lake, IL
Perry Stafford, June 2022, Wichita, KS
Walt Strow, August 2021, Prescott, AZ
Ollie Watkins, 29 November 2021, Louisville, KY
Butch Waymire, June 2022, Big Bear, CA
Howard C. Wolf, March 2021, GA

Optical Landing System
"The Mirror"
on display at the National Naval Aviation Museum (NNAM)



Jigger's Left Us!

Bill Egen unexpectedly passed in his sleep on Sept. 8, leaving a huge hole in the hearts of many, especially his Skyhawk Association buds. As a dedicated team player, President, Vice President, Marine SDO Coordinator and Journal Proof Reader, he was a stalwart in making the "SA" a success for its members.

May Jigger rest in peace, while we remember his perpetually wise and humored words.



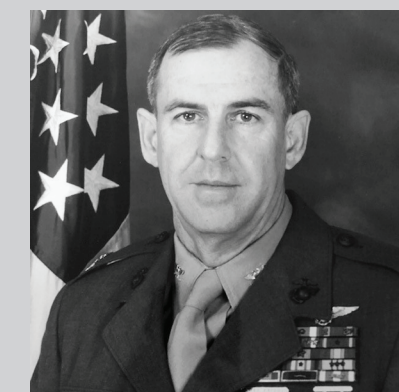
"Raven" Is Gone

Just ten days after losing "Jigger," Bob Hickerson passed away while in Hospice treatment and we are deeply saddened to the core.

"Whizzer" White was our beloved founder, while Raven was the most influential leader in creating a continuing calm and reasoned direction forward. For many years, he served as President of the *Skyhawk Association* and Editor of the "Newsletter," later refined by him to become a high-quality quarterly magazine, *The A-4Ever Skyhawk Journal*. Bob was a humble and talented leader by example, respected by all.

How long will our aging fraternal organization last? No one knows, but we can rest assured that Raven has set us on a course for the best possible outcome.

Humbled to walk in his steps, "Hide"

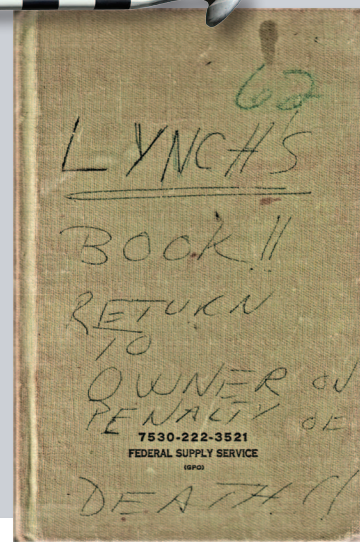


FROM THE ATTIC



Tim Lynch LSO Memories

Some things are worth hanging on to, especially for a former LSO to look back at many challenging and gratifying days on the platform. The aged pages of the graded passes also settle any faded memory debates between old flying buddies of “cut passes,” or “OK3s.” Back in the day, Tim was an LSO in VA-46 and VA-203.



Standing: Ltjg. Blosser (VA-34); Ltjg. Kahrs (VF-31); Ltjg. Kish (VA-46); Lt. Needham (VA-106); Lt. Lynch (VA-46); LCDR. Husted (RVAH-12); Lt. Stender (VA-34); Lt. Cole (Va-106).
Lower Row: Ltjg. Ferguson (VF-31); Bantum (V1-LSO Talker); LCDR Swartz (CVW-3); LCDR. Flatley (CVW-3); LT Tom Smith (VF-103); Maro (V1-LSO Talker)



CAG-3 LSOs
USS Saratoga 1966

CROISE JFR
8/10/71 D.M.

336 AD LOBAY DEPUTY ✓
335 ON BAK ③ SEELEY ✓
335 ON ④ O'CONNOR ✓
336 - HFAIR LOK ④ DEPUTY ✓
334 (on) HX (NDIC) ③ STUCK ✓
335 (on) HF ③ SEELEY ✓
336 AD OC (NEDIC) - DEPUTY ✓
335 ON ③ DOUG ✓
334 ON (HX) ③ STUCK ✓
336 (on) A4 DOLL ③ DEPUTY ✓
335 - C. HARR ③ ~~DOUG~~ ✓
338 ON ③ SEELEY ✓
334 (on) HAW ③ STUCK ✓
336 (on) DNUIC ④ DEPUTY ✓
336 (on) (TMRD) DNUIC ③ DEPUTY ✓
335 - LULIG LOBAY ④ DOUG ✓
336 AD C. H. TMP DEPUTY ✓
336 AD LOGIC BAR - " ✓
336 (on) (AUG 65) LULIG ② " ✓
335 - (B6) (C.R.) DN ③ SEELEY ✓
334 ON ③ STUCK ✓
335 ON NESA ③ SEELEY ✓
334 (on) NESA HIG ④ ② STUCK ✓
335 - (NESA) (SOOT) LOBAR ③ SEELEY ✓
336 (on) (LUG) CAR ROL ④ DEPUTY ✓
334 - NESA LVA BAW ③ STUCK ✓
336 (on) SLOAN LULIG ③ C.O. ✓

TINS!*

By Dave “Hide” Dollarhide



It was the summer of 1966 and I was in A-4 training with the VA-44 Hornets at NAS Cecil Field. Approaching the end of the syllabus, my classmates and I were preparing to fly one of our last flights, known as the "A-20-R," which was a test of our ability to fly a nuclear delivery training flight, in which we would proceed to Pinecastle Target and perform an "over the shoulder" maneuver carrying a 2,000# MK-104 practice bomb.

For those unfamiliar, the maneuver entailed crossing the “bullseye” at 500 knots and 100’ AGL, then making a 4 to 6 “G pull-up,” until the airplane was passing through 120 degrees nose up, when the bomb would automatically be released. The Skyhawk would continue on its back, until pointing 45 degrees nose down, when we would roll to level the wings and leave the target in the opposite direction to escape the simulated bomb blast. The “water, sand fill” bomb would be released around 7,000 feet and it would continue up to 14,000 feet before returning to “mother earth,” hopefully somewhere in the vicinity of the target.

I was waiting to be scheduled for my A-20-R, while my good friend, Jim Dowd, with his instructor, "Woolly" Woolard, in the chase airplane, took off from NAS Cecil to fly Jim's "nuc" mission. To make these flights more realistic, students were required to approach the target from a direction in which there was no lead-in-markings on the ground to

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

A-20-R FLIGHT SAVED BY A BUZZARD

to continue and let the target spotters know he would return on the normal run-in-line from the opposite direction.

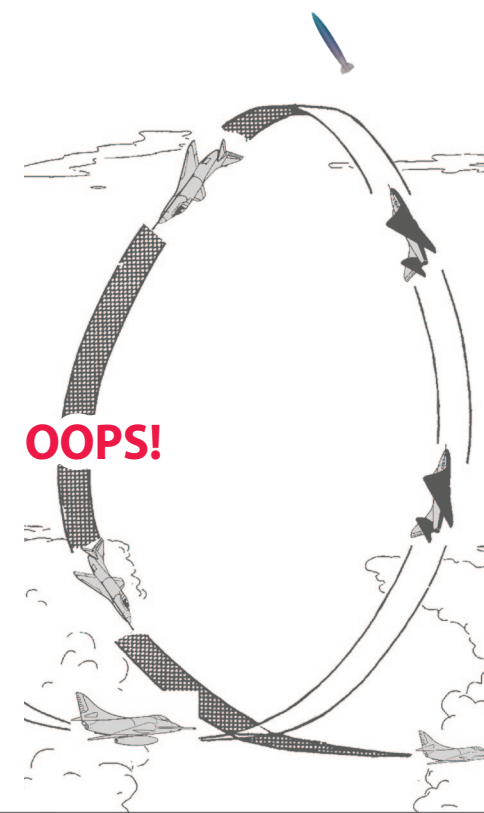
Passing over the bullseye, Jim began his pullup and at the 120 degrees nose up point, the heavy MK-104 left the centerline rack and there was a pronounced "jolt," that he'd never experienced.

There was a moment of, “What the hell was that?” and by then he was pointed straight down at the ground. He had a choice, continue the “loop,” or take the time to roll the opposite direction and pullup, so he continued. This now put him leaving the target in the opposite/wrong direction, back over the target with the bomb above quickly cooperating with gravity. As the Skyhawk sped away in the wrong direction, these were Jim’s fleeting thoughts, which added to his growing concern about how this graded flight was progressing.

Meanwhile, Woolly was focused on watching the climbing bomb as he circled at 7,000'. Suddenly, Jim heard several noisy and mostly unreadable radio transmissions, but was able to understand that Woolly had taken a buzzard through the windscreen and wanted him to go back to Cecil.

Woolly landed first and was quickly hustled off to the base infirmary. The buzzard had smashed through one of the windscreen quarter-panels, into his oxygen mask -- feathers, guts and the bird's remains had crammed into the cockpit next to the ejection seat. When Jim taxied in and shut the engine down, the ramp was deadily quiet. His instructor was gone, so there was no debrief, no nothing. Jim's crazy maneuvers instantly became an unseen event of the past and he readily passed the dreaded "Back Door" A-20-R.

SAVED BY A BUZZARD!



Puresome Unplugged

~ YP's Excellent Adventures ~

By Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

Cool Hand Lukeries 1963-1983 A Beginning of Sorts

Cool Hand Luke's wager that he could eat fifty eggs in an hour was still in a far, far future movie when brand new butter bar, Ensign Youthly Puresome strode into the Mustin Beach Officer's Club and met his first Apalachicola oyster. It was somehow appropriate that said oyster was naked and quivering in its half shell, and it just seemed right and just to slurp it down on the spot. Followed by fifty-one more. No wager or challenge had been set, but precedence certainly had. In the quest for Naval Wings of Gold, it seemed that competition wasn't only for flight grades, but manly bouts of scarfing and swilling came up naturally in the scramble for Ace of the Base for a Day awards. Puresome always said, "I'm your huckleberry" when such gauntlets were flung down. Youthly's strength was the strength of ten, pure in the knowledge after that first encounter with the nekkid oyster that he had only quit because the shucker in the kitchen had come down with heat exhaustion.

Later jousts over the years involved contests of massive nacho and jalapeno scarfing, and swilling just one more amber, frothing pitcher of Happy Hour Delight than anyone, except his skippers, who certainly were in another league. Squadron law was that they could down more Stingers than anyone and still buy hay for the horses.

So it happened that after he was catapulted into the Brave New World of Attack and Fighter pilotry, many such contests occurred, as nature intended. The results were not always pretty, particularly when Youthly met the famous and obligatory Filipino delicacy, the balute, but he knew that you had to expect some losses in an operation like this.

A REALLY BIG FISH

Miracles do happen, and even Puresomes do not stay butter bars forever. As he careered along, some actual saltiness adhered, and shore duty Youthly got to take cross countries to exotic military bases where big jets whined, certainly for proficiencies and often to expend excessive OPTAR monies. The down side to these excursions was that mighty belch fire war machines had a naughty habit of going "sproing!" enroute, resulting in surprise destinations, or deciding to bleed to death far away from the home Air Patch. Naturally suspicious skippers needed convincing sometimes when one of their birds was hard down at some exotic destination, but that again was just another of the Breaks of Naval Air.

So it was not really unusual that Puresome ended up at Magnolia Blossom AFB one evening instead of at Fighertown on the Left Coast, where they had tribal rites at the Officer's Club, Mex Village, Bully's, and the like. There were also still folks around that had actually worked on Crusaders, and there were bushel baskets of parts left over when most of the squadrons there converted to Phantomery. But Youthly had no good choice but Magnolia Blossom when his TACAN-less F-8, happily being radar directed cross-country by less happy controllers, went "sproing!" and jetted a stream of hydraulic fluid at 3000 psi. over them old cotton fields below. The Blue Suiters didn't exactly say, "Whut in the hale is that?" when he taxied into the transient line, but his plane certainly didn't look like the lumpy many motored trash haulers



that populated their ramps. And, while they had enough yellow gear to have simultaneously started all the aircraft on any Naval Air Station, they didn't know about that there PC pump thing.

So Puresome AUTOVON'ed the squadron and explained that he wasn't exactly at Miramar, and would somebody please bring him a hydraulic pump? After the screaming subsided, a rescue mission was arranged, and it was time for a palatial BOQ room, civvies, cold beer, and at least some garlic cheese grits, since he could get a cheeseburger practically anywhere.

The BOQ room, shower, and arranging some wheels took time, and it was dark when he motored off base and past the usual fast fooderies. He looked in vain for some catfish place with lots of pickups around it, and was about to give up when a brightly neon-signed message that said "Papadoulis Diner" lit up the surrounding cypress trees and hanging Spanish Moss. "Bingo!" Puresome did a four-wheel drift into the crushed oyster shell parking lot and managed not to impact anything important. His stomach growls took precedence over any incredulity over howcum the Glory That Was Greece had come to the boonies of Dixie.

Inside the diner, Youthly found that he was the least senior of both the staff and clientele by some forty years. But cold beer was advertised, and when a little old waitress toddled over, he was ready. "I want two beers, a bowl of gumbo, and A BIG FISH!" She withdrew a pencil that was stuck in her gray hair bun and wrote his order deliberately. "How big a fish you want?"

"I want A REALLY BIG fish." The waitress just nodded knowingly and toddled back thru the pair of swinging doors to place the order.

The two beers and bowl of gumbo appeared and disappeared right quickly. The Greek Top Forty was on as dinner music, and Puresome reckoned he had heard the countdown to about ten when his waitress shuttled past, still BIG fishless.

"Say, M'am, how's that fish coming back there?"

"It takes a while to cook a BIG fish," she answered with a Greek version of the Sphinxie's Inscrutable Smile. Puresome got another beer and ate some crackers while he considered doing a Chicken Dance version of Zorba.

Finally, the swinging doors burst open, and his waitress staggered out with a platter she had to hold with both arms. On it was a broiled flounder about the size of the Parthenon. Through the circular windows in the swinging doors, the dark faces of the cook staff peered at the foo' who had ordered such a giant delicacy.

Puresome had been had, the gauntlet had been flung down, and it was time to pony up. As he tucked into rendering the monster slabs from the fishie's backbone, he regretted all those crackers... "I can do this! I can do this," he mantra'd, as ghostly, but very real legions of his Squid and Jarboon scarfing competitors watched from the wainscoting. Honor was at stake, and anything other than victory would be wussiness and disgrace.

But it was not filthy work that had to be done, it was delicious. Under the watching eyes of everyone in the diner, Youthly pacing himself, started disappearing flounder.

A clock with advertising for RC Cola on its face tocked away on the wall as flounder disappeared and Puresome's stomach distended over his I-Been-There belt buckle that the Olongapo Filipinos had fashioned from old practice bomb casings. No actual shirt buttons popped at rifle velocity across the room, but the edges of the stomach envelope were being explored and tested. Folks came and went at the swinging door glass, shaking their heads in either disbelief, disgust, or admiration.

Finally, there was nothing but a roly-poly fish head and a tail attached to the gleaming skeleton on the platter. The

collard greens and boiled potatoes still wreathed the remains, but Puresome, in some pain, figured they didn't count. With as much bravado as he could summon, he called for his check. Over in the wainscoting, his phantasm aviator audience nodded approval and disappeared with an audible "pop!" The Greek top forty had cycled thru a couple of times by then, and his diner audience had long since factored insanity into the equation.

It took iron will to actually stand up straight, much less walk the thirteen steps to the cash register without ripping fabric or something more ominous. But it was done, and Puresome made it outside into the darkness before doubling in half.

Even though he felt like the python who had devoured the entire pig and would have to lay in a torpor for a month, a smile crossed Puresome's greasy lips, because he knew he could add an Oak Leave Cluster to his Distinguished Scarfing Cross and maybe someday far away actually again order a Not Quite So Big A Fish.

A Very Cosmic Roll

Eventually, Youthly joined what he used to derisively call "Senior Citizen Flight." All that running around with his hair on fire had left him with less hair. Had he cared about shining shoes, brass, and Physical Training, folks might mistake him for a Marine. He was supposed to think abstract thoughts and deal in concepts. Complex opportunities seemed to be few and far between, but Puresome scanned the skies and kept himself ready.

When he sauntered into the Old Tokyo Bait and Sukiyaki House for lunch, he was not really sensing an opportunity to excel. Usually, he just had a cold beer and some recently dead raw fish pieces, but he decided to check out the chalked-in specials back on the blackboard. There were seaweed and tofu California Rolls and some appetizers that did nothing about blowing up his kilties, but the last item sounded interesting: "Cosmic Roll—very, very, very SPICY! If you eat it all, you win a free bottle of Saki!" Puresome could almost hear the sound of a fifteen-pound iron gauntlet being flung down in front of him. "I'm your huckleberry!" He thought.

So when the sweet little Japanese waitress took his order of some warm sake, two pieces of bait, and the very, very, very spicy Cosmic Roll, she suddenly became a Round-Eye. "Are you sure," she had to ask and launched into the multiple "very" spicy thing. "Yes, Ma'am. Bring 'er on!"

"You want glass of water?"

"Nope. I don't want a blindfold, either."

So Puresome sucked on his warm sake and deftly dunked his bait into soy sauce and wasabi with his chopsticks, blinking a little when the mixture opened up his sinuses some after the first bite. Finally, his waitress brought out a plate with about eight round segments of a roll, which would have caught fishes in any pond, were it not for a dollop of evil green that crowned each one. Anticipating a horror show, the waitress brought a glass of ice water anyway.

She withdrew to the safety of a corner, and, behind the glass fish counter, the sushi chefs did their best to check out the coming action inscrutably.

In truth, the Cosmic Roll wasn't that bad. His chopsticks didn't even catch fire. Since he had his innards ulcerated by some really evil little green devil chiles down in Mexico, his Child Bride had maintained that he had no taste buds left in his burnt up mouth. Youthly didn't dispute that, but he figured that the Japanese had Gringo'd up their food some.

With the last piece gone, he raised both arms over his head in the classic gesture of victory, then pointed his smoking chopsticks at his empty plate and at the pointedly untouched glass of water. The Japanese wait staff was rather less demonstrative, but they smiled and accepted their defeat with good grace.

But when they brought his decorative bottle of sake with a shot glass, Puresome didn't leave with his trophy intact. As calmly as was possible, he unscrewed the top and managed to not gulp the contents.

After a lifetime in Naval Aviation, he had learned he'd rather die than look bad. Though things had changed in the Wings of Gold world, that much certainly had not.





Skyhawk Association
2421 Clubside Dr.
Beavercreek, OH 45431-2503

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
GREENVILLE, NC
PERMIT NO. 1

THE A-4 EVER

Skyhawk Association

Summer 2022 • Journal

Volume 28 • Number 3



Order additional patches

No flight suit/jacket should be without one of these outstanding patches. Additional quantities may be purchased for \$5.00 each (\$6 for non-members) plus \$1 postage, by sending your check or money order (no credit cards yet, sorry) payable to Skyhawk Association along with your name address and membership number (found on your card) to:

Skyhawk Patch
2421 Clubside Drive
Beavercreek, OH 45431

Join the Skyhawk Association and get a free patch

One of these outstanding patches will be included with each **new** membership. Want more than one patch? (Who doesn't?) See ordering info at left.

Memberships are **1 year - \$30** (\$35 Foreign)

3 Years- \$75 (\$90 Foreign) in US funds.

☐ New _____ Years

☐ Renewal \$ _____ Total Enclosed

YES, Sign me up! Send my patch and membership materials to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Call sign/nickname _____ A-4 hours _____ A-4 Traps _____

Skyhawk Squadrons: _____

Referred By _____

Payment may be made with personal check or with  by visiting www.skyhawk.org. Sorry, we are no longer accepting credit cards.

Join by mail: Send payment in US funds to:
Skyhawk Association
2421 Clubside Dr.
Beavercreek, OH 45431-2503

Limited copies of the A-4Ever Journals are available for members wishing to purchase back issues.

Domestic US only. Mail a request to Mark Williams at 10432 Button Willow Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89134.

- Include your name, email, mailing address, number of issues by volume and number (28-1, 25-2, etc.)
- The minimum order is 3 and the maximum of any particular issue is 10. Include a check made out to The Skyhawk Association.

\$3

*Per Issue
(postage included!)*