

THE A-4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL VOL 29-3



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Fire in the Bowl: Part II

Still Flying: Intel Report

75 Squadron

A Skyhawk Ejection: MCAS Cherry Point

713 Members

Fall 2023

<https://skyhawk.org>



THE PREZ SEZ

Gene "Blade" Atwell

BOD Meeting and Hook 2023 Report

By George "WP" Blosser for President Gene "Blade" Atwell



Attending Board Members and Guests

BOD Business

The Skyhawk Board Meeting was held on Friday, August 25, 2023, in Reno during Tailhook 2023. Routine reports were issued and discussed.



Former IAF A-4 Pilot Rami and wife Etty Lothan attending from Tel Aviv with Director "Gunny" Ravgiala.

- As of August 15, 2023, the association membership is holding steady at 713 members. At present, 40 members are in various stages of being past due. Additional reminders will be sent as soon as possible after the BOD meeting.
- Extra Challenge Coins will be ordered as they have been a popular sale item this past year.
- Directors Cooney, Linder, Frommelt and Dollarhide were recommended for reelection to the board. The motion was unanimously approved.
- The winter BOD meeting will be in the spring of 2024 in Pensacola, Florida. Date TBD.

Tailhook23

This year's convention was well attended, with multiple presentations scheduled for the three-day event. Attendance on Friday evening for the *Bud Roach Mixer* exceeded 4,000.

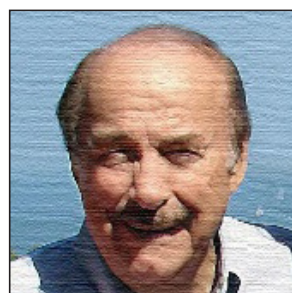


Gene "Blade" Atwell

The year's vendor participation totaled 72, the maximum for the Nugget Hotel facility. Accordingly, Tailhook leadership is considering moving to a new hotel for the Hook24 Convention. Final arrangements are incomplete at present. Initial indications are that Hook24 will be scheduled on August 22, 23 and 24, 2024.

Attack Luncheon and Ready Room

The Attack Luncheon was sold out, and CDR D.D. Smith (USN Ret) treated attendees to an excellent presentation. CDR Smith covered his entire Navy career including a video of his famous ejection during spin tests in the F-14 at Pax River. Many stories filled the *Attack Ready Room*, along with renewed friendships from years past. The Attack Ready Room highlight this year was an unplanned visit by VADM Mike Boyle, Commander 3rd Fleet. Mike related A-4 stories from his father, CAPT Ron Boyle, who flew the Skyhawk for many years.



DD Smith Guest Speaker

Skyhawkers Reunion!

Please SAVE THE DATES!

USMC Skyhawkers have a reunion planned at the **Hilton and Holiday Inn Resorts, Pensacola Beach, FL, 11-13 November 2024 (Mon-Wed)!**

All drivers, maintainers and aficionados welcome!

Point of contact is Mark Williams at rogerwilco14@gmail.com, 10432 Button Willow Dr, Las Vegas, NV 89134, or 702-778-5010.



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

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION, INC.

Officers and Directors

Gene Atwell
President/Director/Webmaster
geneatwell@gmail.com

George Blosser
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

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

Lionel "Digger" Rotelli
Director
diggerrotelli@spcglobal.net

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 •

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JOURNAL STAFF

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.

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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 magazine. 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: A Royal New Zealand Air Force A-4K Skyhawk fires two Zuni rockets over White Island Volcano, while in trail formation on another Skyhawk, with a rear mounted camera on the centerline bomb rack. RNZAF photo, courtesy Don Simms.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.net

■ **From: Al “Soapy” Carpenter**
Subject: Worm on the cover (Larry Elmore)

Seeing this pic of Worm brought a special kind of pain – the pain of loss and sadness. He really was a great guy – BUT, he did his thing and squeezed the most out of life, doing that which pleased and fulfilled him. One could wish no more than to end one’s life on such a high note. OK-3, old friend! (Larry died in a sky-diving accident, just two days after flying his last A-4 flight. – Ed)

■ **From: Bob “Boom” Powell**



Three Skyhawk drivers and a WW2 Hellcat pilot
L-R: Worm Elmore, Pigmy Paganelli, Bob Gohr, and Bob “Boom” Powell

Great to see the late, great Larry “Worm” Elmore on the cover of the Summer 2023 *A4Ever*. While not up to flying a Skyhawk, he did the next best gig an old Naval Aviator could hope for flying Sia Marchettis 260s for Air Combat USA “teaching” dogfighting to clients who become a “fighter pilot for a day.” Terrific fun and a chance to pull G on weekends. Detachments were at various cities across the US of A. One of my earliest -- and subject in my first Catwalk column -- included Worm and another A-4 stalwart, John “Pigmy” Paganelli.

Over many dets together I heard tales of flying with the “Snakes” of VA-86 in Vietnam and his adventures as OinC of a VSF detachment on Intrepid. He lived life to the fullest.

■ **From: Richard “Dick” Cherba (phone 612-720-3181)**

This was training at Chase Field after finishing my last training flight in the F-11 on November 24, 1961. I then got orders to A-4 training with VA-125 in Lemoore, a new base in the San Joaquin Valley, out in the middle of nowhere. I then was assigned to VA-22, USS Midway and flew 12 combat flights in Viet Nam. I think the A4 website is full of information and I liked the story about the test pilot Rahn.



■ **From: Dave Ayers, A-4/A-3 pilot**
Subject: Reminded by 29-2 TINS Round and Round She Goes...

My second squadron assignment was to VAH-10 flying the A-3B Skywarrior out of NAS Whidbey Island, WA. After a nine-month deployment to WESTPAC aboard USS CONSTELLATION (CVA-64) and a quick turn-round, we deployed to the Med aboard USS FDR (CVA-42) in June 1965 for a six-month cruise (that actually ended up six months). It was during that deployment that I experienced my most noteworthy flight in the A3.

On 13 August 1965 my crew, B/N Ltjg Wayne Paul and C/N ADJ-1 Ace Gridley, was assigned as duty tanker to cover the final night recovery. We were the last plane to launch because our Skipper, CDR Russ Farley, had made a couple of bolters before trapping, which was most unusual for him. We launched and assumed the overhead pattern and waited until we got clearance to land after the last small jet had trapped aboard. My first pass was very steady with good Meatball-Lineup-Angle of attack. We touched down in the wires and bounced right up into a bolter. As I turned downwind for our next approach my crew and I evaluated the pass and could not explain why the bolter. The second pass was a repeat of the first ending again with a bolter after touching down in the wires. This time we all agreed that something was going on that we did not understand because the passes were steady and right into the wires. After two more passes that ended in bolters, and becoming aware of impending low fuel, on the fifth pass I took a high-dip at the ramp. That’s where you lower the nose crossing the ramp and pull it up into a normal landing attitude approaching the deck. This time the tailhook caught a wire and we were aboard. The LSO gave me a very harsh debrief and I could not argue with him. But because two experienced

pilots made seven bolters in successive recoveries, I downed the airplane figuring that something was not right. That was an understatement.

Maintenance did a thorough investigation and found that the Angle-of-Attack system was miscalibrated, such that with an on-speed indication the airplane was actually a couple of knots fast. Thus, when we touched down in the wires two things were wrong: 1- The faster speed meant the nose was flatter with the tail higher and the hook did not reach the wires. 2- The faster speed caused the airplane to bounce up rather than settle into the landing, again not allowing the hook to engage.

So, my high-dip maneuver turned out to be the only way to get the tail down such that it could catch a wire. The inspiration to take the high-dip was a blessing.

■ **From: Barrett Tillman**
Subject: A-4Ever Great Escapes question about identity of Hugh Batten

I was acquainted with Hugh Batten when I almost ran the Aces Assn (talk about herding cats). Interesting chap:

- Wings ‘43 age 20;
- VF-83/CV-9 44-45; 7 notches.
- WW II: NC, 2 DFCs, 7 AMs.
- 70 missions Korea with VF-91 in 52-53; DFC, 7 Ams
- XO VA-93 56-58 Tico cruise; CO VA-112 60-61;
- CO VX-4 62-63
- Navigator Connie 63-64
- Captain ‘65, ret 1974.
- Died N Orleans 1990 age 67.

From: Gary Verver
Does this confirm Hugh is the person in the photo?

From: Barrett Tillman
Rates 89 percent probability on my Recognition Scale.

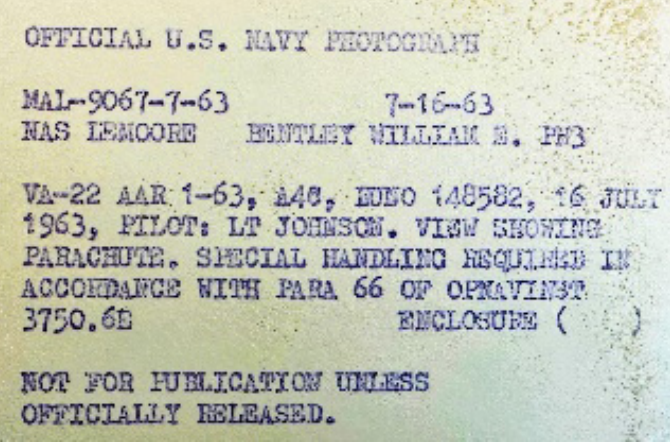


■ **From: Austin Johnson**
Subject: Sharing records for R.V. Johnson (VA-22, 1963-64)

My grandfather was Lt. Richard Virden Johnson; he flew A4D’s with VA-22 in 1963-64 off the USS Midway. On your VA-22 site, you note that in 1963, he safely ejected from his A-4D (BuNo 148582) south of NAS Lemoore. I have a number of records and photographs pertaining to this crash; as long as it’s permissible, I’d be happy to share them with you.

I’d also ask if you have any other information on my grandpa in your records. Prior to VA-22, he flew A-3’s in VQ-1 FAIRECONRON out of Atsugi, Japan. He left the service in 1964 and went on to fly for TWA for the rest of his career.

From: Gary Verver
Thanks Austin, we’d love to have copies of your photos and information and permission to add them to the SA site. We don’t have any further information on your grandfather or any photos of BuNo 148582. However the USS Midway 1963-1964 Cruise Book does have a photo and some squadron information and is at [USS Midway \(CVA 41\) WestPac Cruise Book 1963-64 - VA-22](http://USSMidway(CVA41)WestPacCruiseBook1963-64-VA-22) (navysite.de)



I’m not an A-3D person, but from the web, “Detachment Able” was reorganized into Electronic Countermeasures Squadron One (VQ-1) at NAS Iwakuni, Japan on 1 June 1955, it was the first squadron dedicated to electronic warfare. The A-3 Skywarrior, or “Whale” as it came to be known, served the squadron for the next three decades. In 1960 VQ-1 was moved to NAS Atsugi, Japan and redesignated Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron ONE” There also is VQ squadron information, including photos, on the web at [History – VQ Association](http://History-VQAssociation)

From: Austin Johnson
That’s great; thanks Gary. Many of the documents pertaining to grandpa’s crash are stamped with messages similar to this. Should I be concerned about distributing documents marked like this?

■ **From John Cooper**
By now you should have received your summer issue of the Skyhawk Association Journal. BRAVO ZULU once again for another outstanding issue! I especially liked the cover photo of Larry Elmore hugging his (and my) favorite aircraft! There’s also an interesting article about a laser guided Bullpup called a Bulldog as well as a Bullpup with a Sidewinder seeker head named a Bullwinder, neither of which I had ever heard of. Both of these would have been good ideas to do away with the need to follow the Bullpup *continued...*

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

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

continued..

to the target after release by keeping those flares in its tail lined up with the target. That had certainly made a simple firing solution to those AAA gunners in VN.

My own personal claim to fame as a brand new nugget in the VA-192 WFGDs was to sink a newly purchased Navy target speed boat with a dummy Bullpup. It was a target but apparently they never thought anyone would hit it. This was in the SOCAL Naval Operating Area off San Clemente Island. For that achievement when we got to VN I got to launch a Bullpup at the Thanh Hoa Bridge with predictable results.

As always there are some great discussions in the magazine's Letters to the Editor as well as some good TINS tales and more adventures of Youthly Puresome. If you are not a member of the Skyhawk Association, I urge you to join. (<https://skyhawk.org>).

■ From: Editor

Subject: Photo

During a conversation about a login problem for Randy "Sluggo" Compton, he asked about this well-known photo taken by Peter Mersky.

From: Randy "Sluggo" Compton

Yessir, that is the pic. Saw it in the Summer 2018 issue. The photo was taken in the Fall of 1989. I was flying the "T-Bird" with Pete in the "trunk." Dale Vezey was flying the Super-Fox, MODEX 4. Coincidentally, #4 also had Veze's name on it. Roy "Flash" Gordon was flying the Tomcat (I forget the name of the cone RIO). I checked my logbooks, hoping to find in the Remarks a notation about Pete, but there is none; thus, I can't give you an actual date.

We'd gone out on a 1v2 against the VF-101 F-14. The plan was to save a little gas for getting a head-on pass photo. We had a change of command coming up, and the Skipper wanted an "air combat" pic of us working against VF-101, since supporting the RAG was our (VFC-12) primary tasking. We flew several passes, with Pete and I out there in a stepped-up loose cruise, trying to get a good A-4 vs F-14 pre-merge picture. This picture was then also used as a going-away memento in "Hail & Farewell" events, with squadron pilots all signing the matboard around the picture for the departing shipmate. Sadly, a few months later, on 15 Feb 90, Veze would be killed in a midair collision with an F/A-18 during a 2v2 engagement while on a Cecil ACM Det in support of VFA-106. He was flying the same A-4F as he was in the picture, MODEX #4.



Photo by Peter Mersky.

The Distinguished Flying Cross Society

www.dfcsociety.org

2023 Reunion

"Vietnam War – 50 Years Later. Thank You For Your Service"



WELCOME HOME

Distinguished Flying Cross Society Reunion '23

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John Pastuf, East Syracuse, NY
Joe Ausley, Sunset Beach, NC
Mick Cael, Woodland, WA
Marlow Pounds, Ontario, OR
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Gerald Sauders, Centerport, NY
Raul Caceres, Reno, NV

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Robert Sadler, Washington, UT
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Fire In the Bowl!

Part Two

By Doug Bohs

In the Summer issue of this publication the article titled *Fire in the Bowl Part One* dealt with the rescue of LTJG Grant Townsend. Townsend released his single 1,000 lb. bomb on the first pass. On his second pass he released two 500 lb. bombs and his A-4 was downed when one or more of the bombs simultaneously blew up.

What caused the bombs to detonate? Was it anti-aircraft fire? LTJG Townsend stated the VA-23 pilots were not taking anti-aircraft fire during their strike operation. RESCAP A-1 pilot, LT Clint Johnson of VA-25 also confirmed they were not taking anti-aircraft fire during the rescue operation. It seems unlikely that small arms fire was responsible.

On 20 April 1965 Midway A-4C pilot LT Phillip Butler of VA-22 pilot was downed while on a night bombing mission. He released his bombs and his plane was immediately destroyed. His Wingman LT Richard “Skip” Brunehaver witnessed the incident and confirmed there was no enemy fire during LT Butler’s bombing run. Butler survived but was captured after evading the enemy for 4 days, spending almost 8 years as a POW. Phil recently confirmed he was sure a fuze issue brought him down,

Prior to LTJG Townsend being downed on 28 July of 1965, three A-6 Intruders from the USS *Independence* were taken down by premature bomb bursts. On July 14, a VA-75 A-6A piloted by LT Donald Boecker with LT Don Eaton as his BN, were downed when the first MK-82 500lb they dropped exploded prematurely under their wing. Donald Boecker confirmed the incident as well as the downing of the other two other Independence A-6 aircraft on separate missions the same month.

A-4E pilot LCDR Wendell “Wendy” Rivers of VA-155 (USS *Coral Sea*) was downed on 10 September, 1965. He was captured and released in 1973. It was reported he knew he had been downed by the dropping of his own bomb(s).

Midway pilots who provided documentation for this article recall three or more personnel in civilian clothing coming aboard Midway approximately two weeks after LTJG Townsend’s incident. It is unclear who they were or what organization they

were from. One Midway pilot suggested they represented Naval Ordnance Systems Command which provided technical support for weapons systems. While on board, they met with LTJG Townsend and discussed the downing of his aircraft. The fact that they came to the Midway and were asking questions indicates some type of corrective action was underway.

Stating the obvious, there are four main components involved in releasing a bomb. They are the arming wire, the bomb, the ejector rack and the fuze. A fifth component, a programmable arm and impact system, in this case the AN/AWW-1/M990 System, was responsible for at least one premature detonation incident and possibly more. See the reference to LT “Jake” Jacanin later in this article.

In a three week 1970 *Light Attack Weapons School* (LAWS) for squadron “Weapons Training Officers,” attended by then LT Dave Dollarhide at NAS Lemoore CA, every pertinent topic was covered. One subject was entitled

“Hazards of High Speed External Carriage of Bombs with Mechanical Tail Fuze” The first sub topic was “Cat Shots and Arming Wire Flutter caused premature fuze arming.” That speaks for itself.

Another subject covered in the LAWS course was premature detonation accidents caused by the M990 electric tail fuze followed by training on the new and improved replacement fuzes, MK-344 and MK-376. It was clear evidence that the Navy was taking action.

In the 1967 -’68 time-frame, Midway A-4 pilot LT William “Bill” Newman was assigned to NAS Patuxent River as a test pilot. One of his projects was to make video recordings of the behavior of arming wires at high speeds. They were observed to slap everything within reach including the fuze. Could this constant vibration cause a fuze to arm while still on the aircraft? Ordnance tape was the suggested solution.

The second topic is the bomb. As proven in the 1967

Forrestal Fire the Navy was definitely using WWII and Korean War era bombs that year. Two factors come into play. The bombs were stored in less than desirable conditions for decades. This caused rust to form and weaken the bomb casing which substantially increased their vulnerability to fire but for the purposes of this discussion impact shock as well. Additionally, and possibly of more concern, is the explosive material, Composite B, which is what these bombs contained, deteriorates over time making the bombs unstable.

This is where the ejector rack comes into play. The pistons on the ejector rack transfer a tremendous amount of energy to the bomb casing. Retired Ordnance Specialist CAPT Dave Lepard (who started as an E-1) indicated if an ejector rack was turned upside down and a 500lb. bomb was “ejected” it would be blown off the rack. Data provided by CAPT Lepard shows when an ejector cartridge was fired it generated slightly over 20,000 lbs. of force in .02 seconds. Couple that with a decades old bomb with unstable Composite B and as they say, you have a recipe for disaster. Additionally, if a fluttering arming wire could arm a fuze, imagine what a simple bomb ejection could do to an unstable or defective fuze.

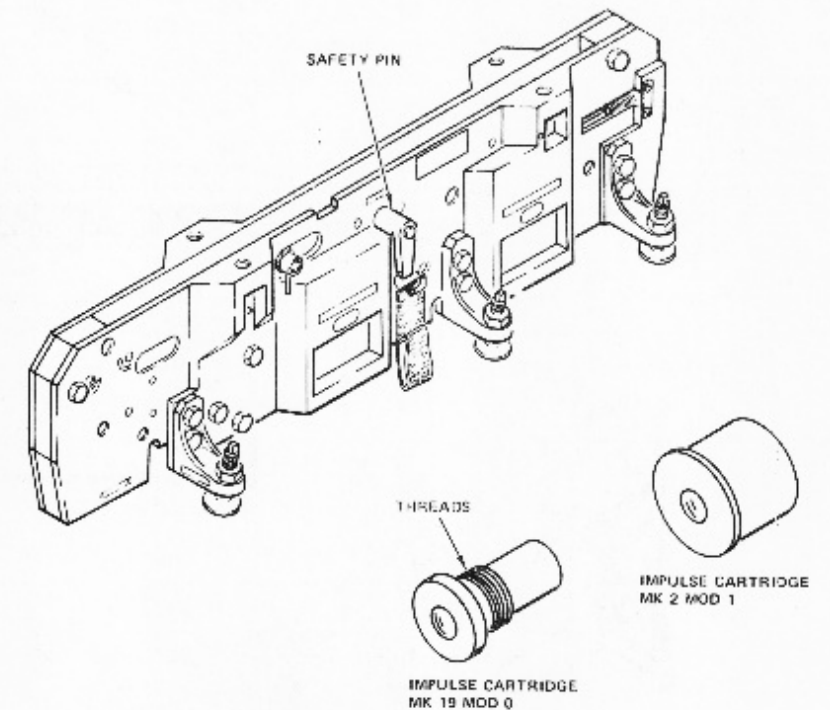
The fuze, of course, is the category which may have accounted for the majority of premature detonations although it would be almost impossible to quantify. Both mechanical and electrical fuzes were used in the Vietnam conflict.

Mechanical nose fuzes were known to prematurely arm while on the aircraft, due to arming wire flutter and in some instances the arming wire broke allowing the propeller to turn. This was documented in *Why Bombs Blew up on Fighters in the Vietnam War* by John Lowery on historynet.com. On 12 November 1965, Air Force Captain William Miller was killed instantly when one or more proximity-fuzed bombs exploded as his F-105 approached a Boeing KC-135 tanker to refuel. It’s an interesting read.

Electrical Fuzes most certainly had issues in their early use. The author’s experience with the AN/AWW-1 system offers a small window into the early use of this system.

On 16 August 1965 LTs “Dave” Batson and “Jake” Jacanin of VF-21 were part of a four plane fight of F-4B Phantoms scheduled to make a bombing run in South Vietnam. As LT Jacanin dropped his first bomb LT Batson who was behind him in the “racetrack” pattern saw his plane disappear in a cloud of fire, smoke and debris. Miraculously his plane re-appeared still flying and made it back to the Midway with

MAU-9 Ejector Bomb Rack



a large hole in the fuselage and other smaller holes. When the pilots returned, the AWW-1 gear was pulled from the aircraft and taken to the AQ shop. A check of the AWW-1 voltage settings showed the most critical setting, the +300 volts DC, was dead on. The VF-21 Maintenance Officer requested a check of the calibration of the Simpson voltmeter. It was taken to the Midway Calibration Shop (who aligned the meter prior to the ’65 cruise). The check showed +300 VDC was actually +312 volts VDC. The +312 volts was thought to have compromised the circuitry in the fuze and armed the fuze while on the aircraft. The time elapsed between the time the bomb left the plane and when it exploded is unknown. Your author was the technician who set the system up prior to the mission and installed it in the aircraft. To my knowledge the AWW-1 system was never used again on the ’65 cruise.

There is a gap in my research of possible fuze related Navy losses, between September of 1965 and February of 1967. In his book *Rampant Raider*, Stephen R. Gray describes how on 2 February 1967 his A-4C was heavily damaged by what someone in his flight described as an “airburst.” A bomb (or bombs) detonated upon release. In spite of the blast he was able to land at Udorn with 200 lbs. of fuel and dozens of holes leaking fuel and hydraulic fluid. A reported investigation showed a faulty lot of fuzes which were said to be pulled Navy-wide.

continued...

Now, more on the Air Force and a fuze designated as the FMU-35. The following is from retired Air Force Colonel Leon F. Ellis Jr. who flew the F-4C Phantom out of Da Nang. *"I believe we were the first one to go down on 7 Nov 67 and Lance Sijan was the second on 9 Nov 67. Prior to our shoot down and capture, we had heard about these new fuzes, but had not been told that we would be carrying them. We knew they were coming, but had not heard that they were in stock at this time."*

"I had never heard about the bad fuze until I met Tom Moe. Given what I learned from him and others, here is what I believe happened and why I think that got us."

- Yes we did have some AAA tracers going by our aircraft on the dive to drop our bombs.

- But, when the bombs came off of our aircraft, BB600, blew into several large pieces -- almost immediately. In recent years I learned that the FMU-35s that exploded like that did so in 1.8 seconds from release and that seems exactly when our aircraft blew up (into several pieces according to our wingman when we came home from the war.) This is not typical of being hit by AAA. All AAA in RP1 was 37MM or less and it would knock a hole in your wing or even your engine, but we have never heard before or since of AAA blowing up an aircraft.

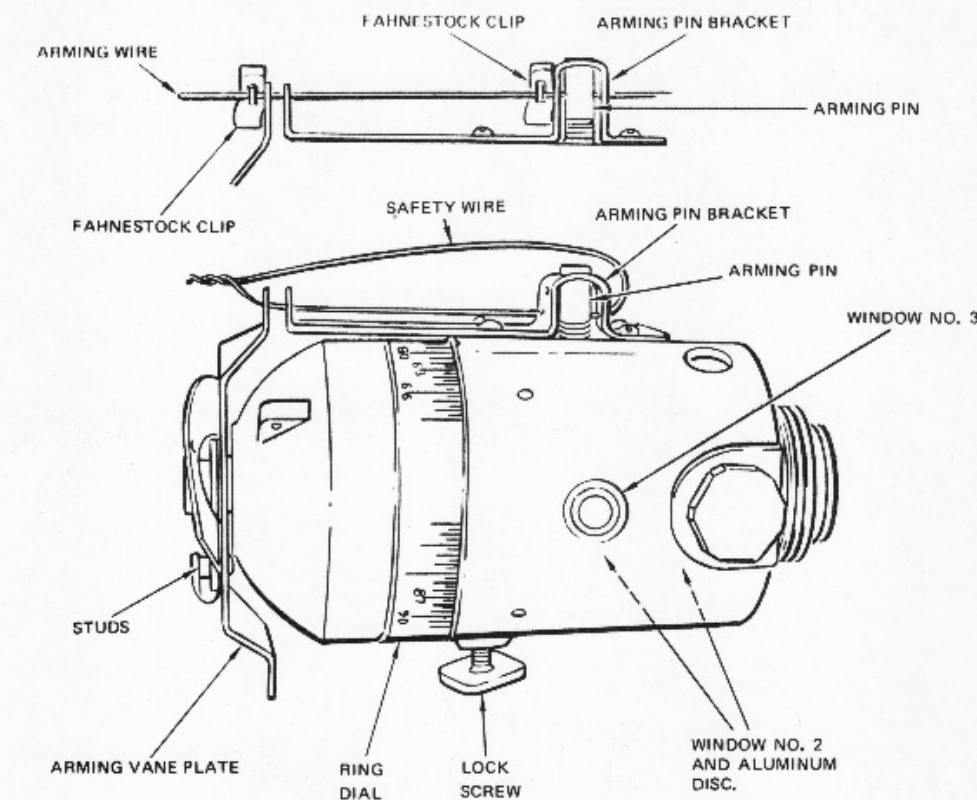
- The cockpit immediately flipped into strong negative Gs and then again flipped to positive Gs. All in less than 3 seconds.

- Fortunately my front seater Capt Ken Fisher and I both ejected quickly and safely.

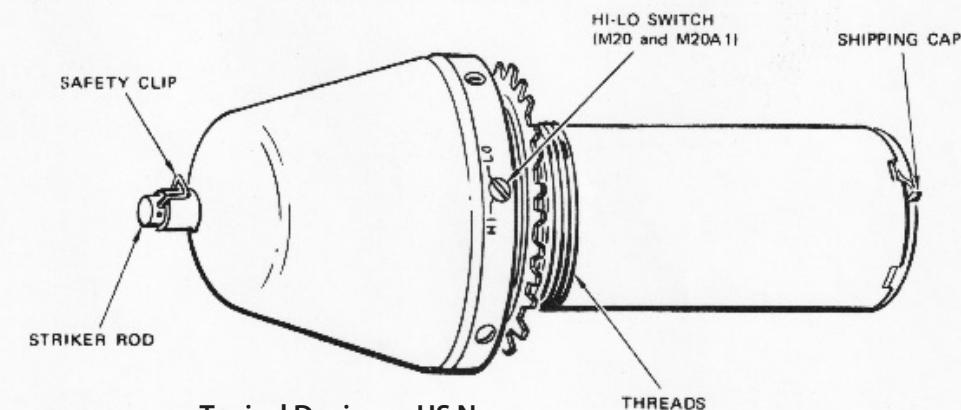
Based on the fact that our aircraft blew into several pieces in less than two seconds after bomb release, I believe it was the FMU-35 fuze." Captain Ellis was captured and released during Operation Homecoming.

As reported in retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Jack L. Drain's book titled *Life on a Short Fuze*,

M907E1/E2 MECHANICAL TIME NOSE FUZE



MK 43 TARGET DETECTING DEVICE AND M20/M20A1 PROXIMITY SENSING ELEMENT



Typical Devices – US Navy

retired Air Force Colonel Thomas N. Moe was also a victim of a fuze issue. On January 8th 1968 while flying his 85th combat mission Air Force Captain Thomas N. Moe's F-4 Phantom was blown out of the sky less than 2 seconds after he and Captain Scott Stovin released their bomb load. While still in his parachute he was heard on his survival radio yelling *"It's the fuzes it's the fuzes!"* ...a reference to the FMU-35.

The following is from *Life on a Short Fuze* and is a quote from Colonel Moe. *"Once I was finally dangling in my chute, I got on my survival radio and relayed what happened to another flight. At first the pilots in that flight did not know I was speaking to them in my parachute. I related what happened to them, and they radioed headquarters with the information. HQ immediately grounded the fuze and recalled other aircraft that had already*



A-4C 147709 with MK-82s USS Enterprise 1966 (USN)

taken off with the fuze, thus averting further tragedy." Captain Moe evaded capture for 3 days and was released years later during Operation Homecoming.

Jack L. Drain's book provides a great deal of information on various attempts to get answers to the FMU-35 fuze issues following the war. Tom Moe has attempted many times to find answers to the question; why were we using defective fuzes when everyone knew some of them were defective? If we knew the truth I'm sure it would be shocking.

The Navy and the Air Force used different fuzes and possibly different designations for the same type of fuze. Were there bad lots of fuzes? With a reported 7.5 million tons of bombs dropped on Vietnam between 1965 and 1975 the answer is most certainly yes. With the documentation I've been able to find and report here, it would be naïve to believe the number of losses reported as "enemy fire" so often in the Vietnam War were just that.

The following declassified information was provided by retired Navy Captain Lepard mentioned above, who spent his entire career in the ordnance field. It was copied from the Naval History Command and dated January 1966. *"Ordnance and pyrotechnic design is needed to enable carriage at 600 KIAS instead of 450-475 KIAS. Reliability and operating improvements are required of both mechanical and electrical fuses because of use on high performance aircraft. The mechanical fuses used were of World War II vintage, causing duds and extra hazardous conditions when any malfunction took place due to less than ample separation between the weapon and aircraft before the weapon was fully armed. Electrical fusing reliability and arming and delay times must be improved to provide, for example, reasonable delay times which do not risk casing ruptures before explosion."*

Although it may not have been widely known, the Navy was looking at the issues discussed in this article and was making an effort to resolve them early in the conflict. In tribute to all of those lost, injured and/or captured in these incidents, I hope my research provides more insight into another sad chapter of the Vietnam "Conflict."



DOUG BOHS!

Doug Bohs is a new, enthusiastic member of the Association and unlikely author of flying stories. Doug's time in the US Navy was as an AQ2 technician aboard the USS Midway. During those years, he was exposed to airplane accidents and incidents as seen aboard ship and heard about in the ever popular "Scuttlebut" huddles -- many dramatic events that have lingered in his mind.

Now, like most of us, he is up in years, with many still unanswered questions from the past. Doug has been driven to pursue the needed research to complete some of the stories. Most of the time, this means finding pilots, mechs or whoever was involved, using his communication of choice, the old fashion phone. As a result, we've published two of his articles, with more to follow.

Doug also saw the need to entice others to join our "Association." He began coordinating with carrier fraternal organizations to place ads in their newsletters, urging others to also join the Skyhawk Association. Our membership had fallen to below 700, but has now eased back above. Coincidence, maybe? Either way,

Bravo Zulu, Doug!

A-4S STILL FLYING - INTEL REPORT

USAF T-7A Red Hawk First Flight with TA-4J Skyhawk Chase Plane
A video seen on the *Boeing Aircraft* YouTube channel by member Brian Howe
<https://youtu.be/wbLviD22S18>

The Report

From: Brian Howe
To: Todd “The Hun” Frommelt

I tried to send this video off to the Skyhawk Assn., but can’t get into my account for some reason. I will sort that out later but thought that you could forward the video to them. This video was supposedly taken just a few days ago (Just before 1/6/23 -Ed). The T-7A Red Hawk is the USAF supersonic, high tech, replacement aircraft for their training command. This video shows its initial flight. Check out the aircraft taking the active directly behind the T-7A.

Take a quick look at the video, as Doctor Rich Sugden’s TA-4J, 158141, follows the USAF’s T-7A for its first test flight. The Screenshots to the right preserve that moment and the irony that the next generation Air Force supersonic trainer’s safety chase is a fifty-one-year-old Navy trainer.



**Thanks to
Boeing Aircraft**

A BRIEF HISTORY of: No 75 SQUADRON RFC/RAF/RNZAF

By Don Simms, former RNZAF pilot

No 75 Squadron Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was first formed in October 1916, being used in the home defense of Britain against German Zeppelin Airships during WWI. In 1918 the unit became part of the renamed Royal Air Force (RAF). In mid-1939 New Zealand sent personnel to England to train on Wellington medium bombers, 30 of which had been ordered for the RNZAF. However, when war broke out in September 1939 these crews and aircraft were placed at the disposal of the RAF, and in April 1940 No 75 (NZ) Squadron was formed. For the next five years the Squadron flew Wellington, Stirling, and Lancaster bombers over Europe. By the end of the war 75 Squadron had dropped 21,630 tons of bombs (the second highest in Bomber Command), laid 2344 mines and had shot down at least 45 enemy aircraft. The Squadron flew more sorties than any other Bomber Command unit. However, this impressive (and record setting) tally was not without heavy losses. Over 220 aircraft were lost and 1,138 members killed during the war, a loss rate that was one of the highest in Bomber Command.

In recognition of their wartime record, in October 1946 the RAF officially handed over the 75 Squadron title and badge to the RNZAF. This is the only occasion that the RAF has “gifted” a Squadron title and badge to another Commonwealth Air Force and is a tribute to the sacrifices and contribution made by all New Zealand’s in the RAF during WWII.

Post WWII the Squadron reformed at Ohakea and re-equipped, initially with twin engine Mosquito fighter/bombers and later Vampire jet fighters. In February 1958 Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, presented No 75 Squadron with its Squadron Standard, having earned the Sovereign’s appreciation for outstanding service. Fourteen Battle Honours were awarded, eight of which are depicted on the Squadron Standard (which now rests in the Base Chapel at Ohakea).

In June 1958 No 75 Squadron returned to the UK to convert to the then brand-new Canberra bomber (leased from the RAF) and soon after again found themselves in the thick of it, taking part in what was known as the “Malayan Emergency.” Based out of Singapore, the Squadron carried out bombing missions against Communist insurgents in Malaya for the next two years (this “police-action” had been going on since 1948 and had involved both RNZAF ‘strike’ Squadrons – 14 and 75, before finally reaching a conclusion in 1962). In March 1962 the Squadron returned to Ohakea and flew Vampire’s until the arrival of the Skyhawk in 1970. No 75 Squadron was disbanded at Ohakea on 13 December 2001.

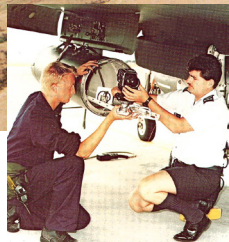


Don Simms



No 75 SQUADRON

RNZAF photos, unless noted otherwise



Aft view camera



75 Sqn pilots 1998



Thanks to Kiwi mech Glenn Turner - Hide at Sun n Fun



Don Simms – RNZAF simulator

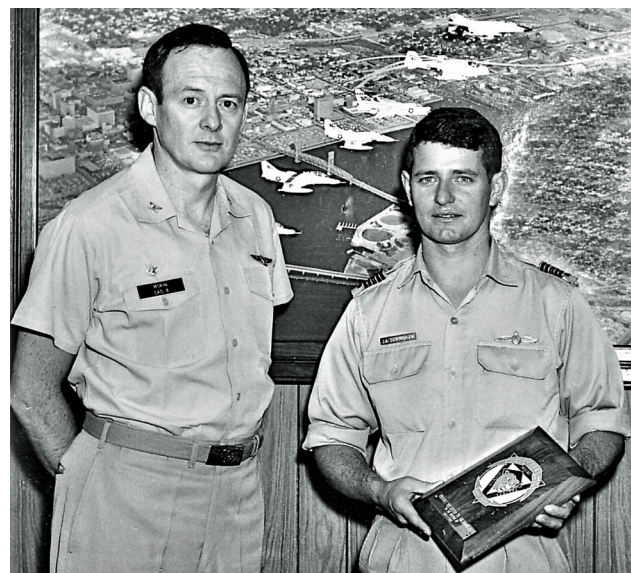


25 Years of Skyhawks

RNZAF Training

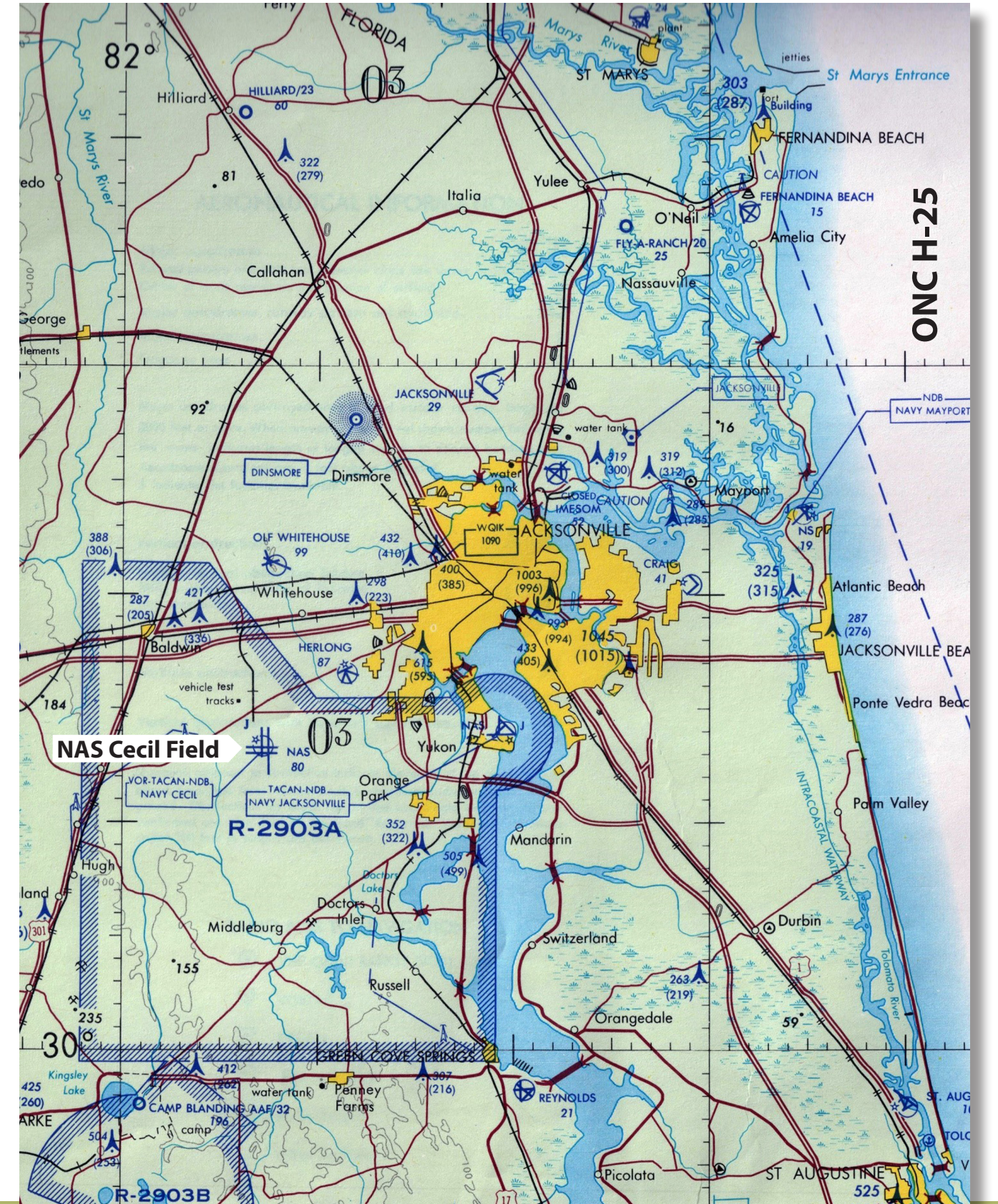


L-R Graeme Thomson, Ken Gayfer, John Woolford, Roger Henstock, Mike Callanan, Ken Cox, Murray Abel, Ross Ewing, John Scrimshaw, Trevor Bland. Don Simms



Then CAPT Jim Morin CAG-4 presents a commemorative plaque to Squadron Leader John Scrimshaw of the New Zealand Air Force 75 Squadron for their first A-4 Skyhawk class to complete training.

NAS Cecil 1970



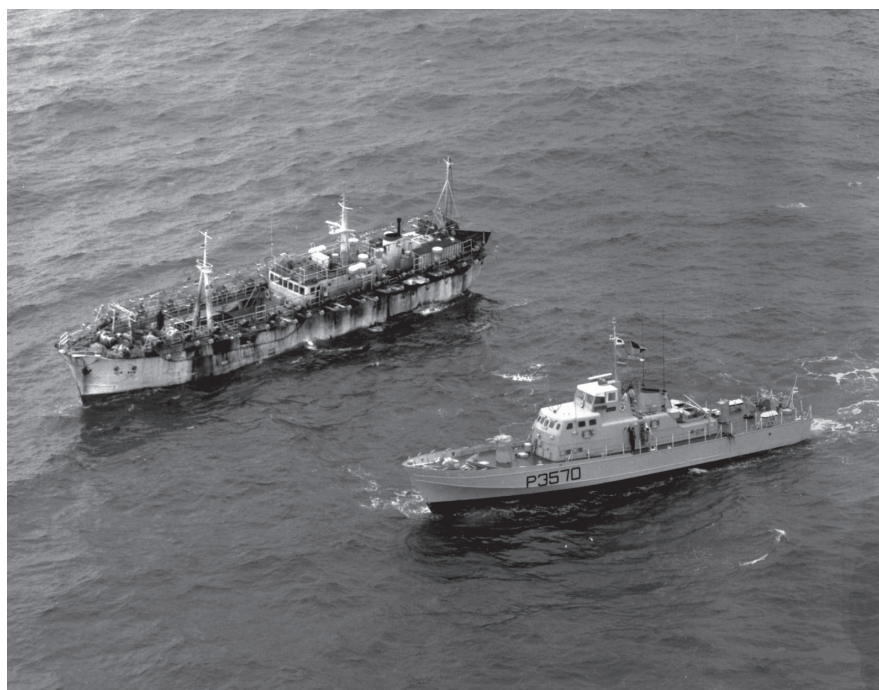
Firing Guns in Anger

Don Simms



A Summary of A-4 Skyhawks in the Kin Nam Incident

By Don Simms



Kin Nan and HMNZS Taupo – Kin Nam Incident by Bill Taylor)

On 30 March 1976 came a unique opportunity for the Skyhawks to fire their guns in anger!

During fishery protection duties of the Taranaki coast, the Lake class patrol vessel *HMNZS Taupo* had detected a Taiwanese squid boat, the *Kin Nan*, fishing illegally within the 12-mile limit. When challenged, the fishing boat headed for international waters, ignoring radio calls and warning shots fired from *Taupo's* .50 calibre machine guns.

Alan Reynolds was an Armourer working on the 75 Squadron flight line that day. *"It was the last day of the financial year and we were supposed to be just doing a normal practice weapons programme. A Happy Hour was planned for the end of the day to celebrate the end of the financial year. After the morning sortie had landed we were told to quickly down-load all practice weapons and load live weapons which were on their way up from the bomb dump."*

- NZ6208, flown by Flight Lieutenant Ben Compton and loaded with just 2.75in practice rockets, was scrambled at around 13:30hrs and told to head for the area and await further orders.
- NZ6206 and NZ6209 were loaded with live 20mm ammunition and two pods of 5in Zuni rockets each. The live weapons had been prepared in

response to an urgent Operations Order issued from RNZAF Operations Group at Whenuapai. This had been a feat in itself. The Bomb Dump was geared up for a week of practice weapons and suddenly had to prepare the real stuff. 20mm ammunition cans (magazines) were loaded with 50 rounds per can, the combination of rounds in each belt being referred to as 'battle mix' i.e. one round TP (target practice), ten rounds HEI (high explosive incendiary), nine rounds API (armour piercing incendiary) and finally one round APT (armour piercing tracer).

Alan Reynolds recalls, *"This resulted in a very serious CO Armament storming onto the 75 Squadron flight line demanding to know what was going on with 'his' live weapons. In the rush, nobody thought to tell him what was happening!"*

At approximately 14:05hrs '06 and '09, flown by Flight Lieutenants Jim Jennings and John Herron respectively, took off from Ohakea. Two more Skyhawks (NZ6251 and NZ6202), allocated to Flying Officers Ian Clements and Peter Hay respectively, were similarly loaded with live weapons and put on standby.

Ben Compton's Skyhawk reached the target area at about the same time as an unarmed P-3B Orion took off from Whenuapai carrying Group Captain Derek Flintoff, who was in command of the operation. He authorised Compton to make several low passes over the *Kin Nan* but he was not cleared to fire any warning shots with his rockets.

Jennings and Herron arrived in the area shortly after the Orion, at approximately 14:30hrs. With their arrival, Compton was ordered to return to Ohakea (presumably because he was only carrying practice rockets). He landed back at Ohakea at 15:10hrs.

At approximately 14:48hrs, after further repeated low passes across the bows of the fishing boat were ignored, Flintoff authorised Jennings to fire his 20mm cannon in front of the *Kin Nan*. The two-second, 53 round burst had an immediate impact, the squid boat put its engines into reverse and stopped dead in the water!

Both Jennings and Herron made several more low passes across *Kin Nan* to reinforce their point and then formatted (Joined in formation - Ed) on the Orion, while a party from *Taupo* boarded the *Kin Nan*. Once Flintoff was satisfied that the situation was under control, the Skyhawks were released and returned to Ohakea, landing at 16:00hrs.

Once all the aircraft were de-armed and put to bed, the planned Happy Hour got under way, albeit several hours late. Jim Jennings gave an account of the incident from his perspective to all present and a most boisterous evening was had.

John Lanham was acting CO of 75 Squadron when the incident unfolded. *"Clearly it had got to the point where the Government felt it had to make a stand. We suddenly got brought to readiness at Ohakea. We were to go out and stop the boat. A shot across the bows is one thing, sinking it quite another. We were told to load a pair of Skyhawks with 20mm cannons and Zuni rockets. There was enough fire power to sink a frigate. Two pods of Zunis are like*

a salvo of 6-inch shells, it would literally have blown the trawler out of the water. The drama rapidly escalated to a P-3 shadowing the trawler and exercising operational control of the mission, via operations in Auckland, who were connected to Wellington with supposedly the PM on the other end of the telephone. As I recall there was some silly code word made up ... which would be used in the event of the worse-case. Eventually, authority was passed to us to fire a shot across the bows. Appropriate instructions were given and verified and Jim Jennings rolled in and fired a burst of 20mm into the sea in front of the ship — which immediately stopped. The cannons are very loud and when you see the fountains of spray erupting just ahead of you it is very hard to mistake the intent."



Jim Jennings RNZAF

John Hosie heard about the incident years later, from the US Coastguard. *"I remember being up at Hawaii on a seminar some three or four years later; hearing a US Coastguard Captain say, 'If you go fishing in New Zealand waters and don't have the right licences, they don't bugger around, they'll just blow you out of the water; no questions asked.'" We never had any trouble with foreign fishing boats for years afterwards, not a problem. It doesn't hurt to be able to do something a little nasty and the maintenance of a small Skyhawk fleet was very, very modest.*

Squadron Leader Jim Jennings completed over 50 years of RNZAF service. In that time, he clocked up a total of 2,234.1 hours flying the Skyhawk, making him one of the highest holed RNZAF Skyhawk pilots.

GREAT ESCAPES

Gary Verver's Losses List

VA-46 A-4C 147754 – LTJG Lou Randolph

The Escape - Pilot Saves Jet After Sea Crash

“JACKSONVILLE (AP) – The story of a pilot who flew his plane to safety after it crashed was told with awe Wednesday at Jacksonville Naval Air Station. A Navy spokesman told the story as it happened in the Mediterranean Tuesday night (07 January 1964 – ed) during exercises off the carrier *Shangri-La*.

Lt. (J.G.) William L. Randolph of Jacksonville was the pilot. He was flying an A-4C Skyhawk jet bomber equipped with two 300-gallon tanks for aerial refueling of other planes. (There was most likely

a “refueling store” mounted on the airplane also – ed) The spokesman said Randolph’s craft was catapulted from the carrier but, failed to gain flying speed and hit the sea about half a mile from the ship. Randolph reported that he jettisoned the external fuel tanks and gunned his plane into flight.

Despite a severely damaged wing and ruptured fuel lines that spewed fuel from his supply, Randolph was able to bring the plane back to the carrier and land on the deck, the Navy spokesman said. Sarasota

Herald-Tribune, Thursday, 09 January 1964.”

The following comments are from Skyhawk Association member and former “Clansman,” Tim Lynch, who says the word was that it was a “cold-cat” *“Thanks for reminding me of this incident. Yes, I was there and Lou did a hell of a job getting that plane back on board into the barricade. I was on the platform (but not “waving”). He said that he punched off the tanks simultaneously with hitting the water!”*



A-4C, 147754 was repaired and later converted to an A-4L in 1971, then stricken from the active roles on 05/29/78 after flying for another 14 years after the gear-up barricade arrestment. USN photo.

SIZE DOES MATTER

Modelers' Corner

Joe Turpen

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

Hasegawa's TA-4F“FAC” Skyhawk

Article by Doug Peterson



This is Hasegawa's kit number 07327 in 1/48th scale and was produced in 2013, the reissuance of the TA-4F with new decals. There are two aircraft represented by the model:

153491 H&MS-11 TM/00
153508 H&MS-12 WA/00



153491 spent most of its operational life with the Marines being assigned to H&MS-11, H&MS-12, and H&MS-24 as well as VMT-103. Navy squadrons this aircraft was assigned to were VA-164 and VF-126. Its operational life was from 03/27/67 to 03/31/92.

153508 spent its entire operational life with the Marines being assigned to H&MS-11, H&MS-12, H&MS-15 and VMT-103. Its operational life was from 05/31/67 to 05/26/72, when it was hit by a SAM, while operating out of Da Nang South Vietnam. The crew of the aircraft were recovered.

As for the kit itself, it's a typical Hasegawa kit. The fit was good and the detail is, as usual, excellent. The stripe on the fuselage is a challenge but it can be handled with some patience and perseverance. I really wish they would've made it either a multi part decal or provided an opening where the vent on the side of the fuselage is located. Right now, the challenge is making the decal seat there without wrinkles. The one thing a modeler might do to improve on this is use some aftermarket parts in the cockpit and to add some different weapons on the model. There are plenty of reference photos available that would help with that. Overall, though, it is an excellent kit.

Skyhawks Do It Better!



A-4 SKYHAWK EJECTION

MCAS Cherry Point

NTSB initial report data:

Time and date of accident – 1400 12 July 2023

Location – MCAS Cherry Point, NC
Douglas A-4K operated by Draken International

Narrative – The pilot ejected after a failed takeoff at MCAS Cherry Point (KNKT), Havelock, North Carolina and sustained serious injuries.

A conversation with Bob LaFrance, until recently, President of *Task Aerospace Inc.*, providing ejection seat and egress system products, services and maintenance



Draken A-4K in Lakeland, FL . Photo by Hide.

“The MCAS Cherry Point Ejection was a Draken aircraft. This is the first ejection using a commercially procured Rocket Catapult (RoCat - Ed) in the A-4. The US Navy and its suppliers stopped making the RoCat and Seat Man Separator for the ESCAPAC ejection seat in the early 2000’s.

In order for Draken, Top Aces, Brazil, Argentina and others to continue to safely operate the A-4, Task Aerospace gathered all the users together to develop/qualified Task as the new source (a long expensive program). It was a successful program, and day before yesterday (12 July -ed), it proved itself, saving the life of a Draken pilot.

Apparently, he was still on the pavement, or close, departing. That seat is 0-0. The ESCAPAC is the predecessor to the widely used ACES II. The RoCat on ACES II is just about the same exact RoCat as ESCAPAC. Many of our folks are ACES engineers, seat and Pyro, so when guys couldn’t get Pyro for the still-flying A-4s, we saw an opportunity.

It sounds like Top Aces is about to have a few more A-4s. You are probably aware that they are “building” A-4s at Falcon Field in Mesa, AZ. For us, it’s great to see the new level of commitment to that airframe. I imagine the A-4s would be parked if the initial group of operators hadn’t joined together to develop the Pyro replacement. It worked out very well.”

Thanks to Bob LaFrance, who took the initiative of contacting the Skyhawk Association to offer these comments



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

VADM James Busey 21 April 2023
Ed “Mofak” Cathcart, 17 June 2023, Altamonte Springs, FL
Jon Decker, 9 June 2022, San Diego, CA
Don Gerrish Jr., 22 January 2022, Orange Park, FL
Miles Edward Mixson, 4 August 2023, Topsham Maine
Tom Ogden, 3 August 2023
Major General Giora Romm IAF Ace, 11 August 2023, Israel
Roy “Bubba” Segars, 28 March 2023, Galveston, TX
WR “Bill” Smith, 12 February 2023, Mission Fiejo, CA
Richard Spreier, 12 June 2019, Freeport, FL
Terry “Torque” Sullivan, 25 June 2023, Columbia, TN

TINS!*

By Dave “Hide” Dollarhide

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

Hoser the Trickster



Hoser mounting his Crusader

Most have heard of Joe “Hoser” Satrapa, a colorful and aggressive Vietnam F-8 and later F-14 fighter pilot, well known for his love of making gun attacks in dogfights. Along the way, he accidentally blew his right forefinger and thumb away while working on one of his many personal guns.

His right toe was used to surgically replace the thumb, allowing him to have a “trim-thumb” and continue flying, while adding to his already unique reputation.

Few people know that he ventured out of the fighter pilot Navy to fly the EC-121 four engine “monster.” Later in retirement, he began a new career of flying S-2s, converted to turbine-powered fire fighters in California, continuing his love of risk-taking aviation.

Friend of the Skyhawk Association and well-known military aviation author and photographer, Peter Mersky finished his Navy career in the reserves. Along the way, in talking to Hoser, he was invited to come fly on the EC-121.

Peter explains. “I was an add-on for an early morning launch. After we got established in our orbit pattern, and had a nice breakfast from the galley crew, Hoser in the left seat starts to unbuckle and stand up, announcing he has to visit the head, way back at the tail end.

“Wait a minute,” I croaked, “I can’t fly this thing!!” I was not a rated Naval Aviator, although I did have a commercial/instrument rating obtained by my time at Reno before the Navy in 1967, but no time in such a 4-engine behemoth like this one.



Photo by Hide



Photo by Mersky.

Hoser laughed and continued to move away from the flight deck.

“Don’t worry,” he called, “it’s on autopilot and I will be back in 15 minutes.” Oy!! There I was at about 8,000 feet, or thereabouts, with heavy clouds all around. I could swear I felt the controls shiver a little from time to time, and damned if the plane didn’t once bank a little to the right, then return to level flight!! Almost like it was testing me and laughing a little.

True to his word, Hoser returned with a highly satisfied look on his face.

“See,” he said, as he slid back into his seat and buckled back up. “everything’s OK.” Yeah, right, I thought. I assure you, I was, indeed, completely alone in the right seat. If there was a copilot, he was no more than a voice call away, perhaps in that long fuselage as was the FE (and Pilot-in-Command - Ed.)

The flight went on as planned and we landed back at Oceana.”



Photo from Mersky



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Fall 2023 • Journal

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