THE A-4 EVER

Skyhawk Association Journal Vol 30-4

Contents:

665 Members

Winter 2024-2025
https://skyhawk.org

THE PREZ SEZ

Gene "Blade" Atwell

Gene "Blade" Atwell

Every time I look out of the window and see the snow, I question my sanity since I'm ready for the beginning of summer promptly every year on 1 September. However, the logical leap to realizing what we did in our not-so-recent past (and for some, our recent past) doesn't bode well for sanity with this crowd. But, I digress....

We've advertised in the past for a replacement to the Journal Editor, Dave Dollarhide, and Hide has found Mat Garretson as his replacement. Those of you in the A-7 community know him well and I cannot overstate how big of a deal this is for The Skyhawk Association going forward. Here's his bio: (https://blueangelsdecades.com/meet-irish) A sharp hand salute to Irish for taking on this responsibility!

Yesterday I made my room reservations for Hook 25 which will occur 21-23 August 2025. Well worth the trip and a great place to sponsor a squadron reunion. Here's the website: (https://book.passkey.com/event/50925629/owner/16854/home?mobile=true&dw=412)

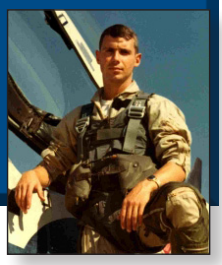
Our Board of Directors will meet in San Diego April 14-17, 2025 and anybody in the area is welcome to join us. We'll be at the Wyndham Bayside. We are still looking for a sailor to step up as VP with eventual fleet up to Prez. That is our number one agenda item in April.

Finally, many thanks to Hide, Stephanie, and Irish for producing, editing and publishing this digital Journal once again!

Blade out

WELCOME ABOARD, IRISH

From Dave "Hide" Dollarhide Editor



Dave "Hide" Dollarhide

Meet Mat "Irish" Garretson, the next *A-4Ever Skyhawk Journal* Editor to be. Mat has recently become a member of the "SA" and will work with Hide in publishing the Spring issue in March, after which, Hide will step down.

In a nutshell, Irish is presently writing for the Blue Angel Association, has published a book on the A-7 Corsair, *Legends of Warfare,* a series published by Schiffer Publishing, and continues to write about Naval Aviation. He served in VA-205, is a private pilot and never stops "doing."

We are delighted to have Irish join us in the Skyhawk Association. Meanwhile, I'll look around for an A-4 shirt.

Mat "Irish" Garretson

In memory of
M. Davis "Whizzer" White, D.D.S
(1939-2007)
Founder of the Skyhawk Association

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Winter–2024-2025 •

REGULAR FEATURES:

IRREGULAR FEATURES:

JOURNAL STAFF

THE A-4 EVER

Dave "Hide" Dollarhide – Editor.
Gene "Blade" Atwell – Webmaster.
Feature Contributors: Doug Bohs, 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-4M Photo from Hun, by G. Roberts A-4 Division

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.net

Remembering SIOP, an email string that began with an inquiry from a UK modeler and led to replies from former Nuclear Delivery pilots.

From: Mark Cassidy

Subject: Modeler question for carriage of a Mk-7 bomb

I am a UK based modeler with a spare A-4 Skyhawk kit and I was reading about the Skyhawk with its mad antiflash hood attachment. That sowed the seeds of a diorama for me. I want to build a Skyhawk at wave top height, armed with a Mk-7 just before it pulls up to lob or loft its weapon at its target. It's a "what if" kinda scene, where the Cuban missile crisis went hot.

File photo VX-5 A4D1 with MK-7 nuclear weapon
Ewea[pmwweweaponweapon

I've seen pictures of the Mk-7 mounted centreline and I have a 3d printed model of it. My question is, with an operational warload of a Mk-7, would the A4 have carried wing mounted droptanks as standard or was it mission dependent? And, as a follow up, would the pilot have ditched the tanks pre bomb run in order to get as much speed as possible or kept them?

Maybe I am in the wrong place. I need to look for the tactics manual or something, if such a thing exists. Apologies if am in the wrong place and thank you for any information you might be able to give me.

From: Todd "Hun" Frommelt

From the USMC side, chances are really good that the tanks were on until dry, then pickled as soon as possible. The A-4 didn't have the range to launch from Asian-Oriental bases to realistically get to a target without both drop tanks, and to have any chance of getting to a target and back someplace friendly would be a major problem gas-wise even with the tanks dropped as soon as they were dry. Now the USN may have had a runway (flight deck) LOTS closer to the bad guy target but, I'm betting they still would have planned to drop their tanks when dry. Air refueling may have been a thought, but not in a nuclear threat environment. I did actually plan some missions and it was SOP to drop the tanks as soon as they were dry.

From: Dennis Carroll

Same, tanks off when dry. My two favorites from an old memory. My recovery was to eject part way back in a small communist country. At that time the whole country had three layers of mine fields between 12' tall fences. Once on the ground to dig a hole, cover it and stay there for days. To reduce my exposure to the fallout. Then find the river and float down to the sea on x day & get picked up by sub.

Years later I got a pic of myself in front of the actual nuke tgt. Also met a retired air defense officer. He manned an SA-6 site that was along my Flt path. In Asia the target was far east Russia a grass emergency airfield? Had the old weapon that stuck in the ground with mechanical timers. Not sure how deep and wide the crater would be. Intel was sure there was a hard surface under the grass.

First for a loft the pilot would have found his IP (initial point) to start his 4G pull up. Press and hold the pickle. A LAB timer would automatically start and when it timed out would release the weapon. There was an automatic broadcast tone on guard to warn others that a weapon was being launched. That was a good time to put the shield down and make sure the eye patch was on. It was all calculated prior to the mission and completely memorized. Every few months we would have to brief the complete plan from memory. Target, bomb fuze settings, route description of check points and arrival times escape route, survival and evasion to a pickup point. The IP could be the target itself, starting a carefully controlled loop. The bomb would be released just over the top. We would continue up while going like a bat-out-of hell trying to escape the fireball, shockwave and high energy radiation, which could tear the aircraft apart. Note that is why the flight control surfaces were painted white to reflect the heat and not melt. If over the top a chute would deploy (depending on the type of delivery Ed) to slow the descent, providing additional time to escape. If tossed, it could be a couple of miles. Once you depressed and held the pickle you needed to be on the exact heading, wings level, pulling 4gs and 500kts for a perfect loop to an Immelmann maneuver.

We would pickle the drop tanks once they were empty to save fuel enroute and also to make sure we could obtain 500kts at sea level to start the delivery. Then, we'd accelerate out at 600 Kts clean. These missions were always at extreme range, with not enough fuel to return to the ship. The follow up escape and evasion was complex through a nuclear battle field. I did not believe there was a reasonable chance of success.

We would be issued white flight gear as well to protect against the extreme heat and an eye patch was provided to wear on one eye so the flash would only blind us in one eye and provide time to recover.

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

They would put us in a special flight simulator with the world's largest flash bulb. Light it off and sure enough you were blind in that eye. …not fun. One had to stay on time across whole route within seconds, otherwise you might end up being vaporized by ballistic missiles. We made strip maps with highlighted route, tick marks every minute, turn points, new heading, & time to next turn. You were constantly recomputing your ETA for the target. (Then adjust speed to make sure you would release on time to fit into the overall SIOP plan.) No need to monitor fuel focus on the route, timing and hugging the earth to avoid a missile engagement.

After launch we would climb up to 35,000 feet for range then descend at idle to low altitude upon approach to the enemies search radars. Based on intel or hearing a click of the radar signal when it swept across your aircraft. It could take 20-30 mins gliding down at idle. The route was generally planned at 360kts (6 nm per min) to ease the constant calculation of time to go. Then accelerate to 420kts (7 kts per min) then finally to 500kts at IP for the release maneuver.

The weapon I remember back then was a B-57. One is on display in the Pima Air Museum in Tucson, AZ.

From: Jack "YP" Woodul

Pretty close to wot I remember. When I went thru the Scoot RAG, VA-43 in Oceana, our weapons training was 60% nuclear, 40% conventional. LOTS of hi/low Nav at Yuma, did Idiot Loops til we were blue in the face, practiced lots of other interesting delivery methods

The final mission check in the RAG was A-20-R, Hi/Low/Hi mission with tanking and delivery of a 2000# shape, all for score. All my mistakes cancelled out and I managed a 400' hit out of my Idiot Loop. Close enough for a Doomsday Device.

In the fleet, I got to fly a mission with a REAL bomb from the ship's store with the nuke stuff removed, leaving just the conventional charges. Test of the bomb, loading crew, mission, and function at Ground Zero at Pinecastle target. I had a complete white flight suit and gear and the white clamshell for the cockpit. LOTS of big guy scrutiny for this one! Luckily, all systems worked; I dinna get lost, and the lay down delivery worked and the bomb went mini BOOM.

(I wrote a story about this).

In the Med, there were always two Scoots and an A-6 configured with a nuke roped off in the back of the hangar bay, guarded by some REALLY SERIOUS Marines. When you were the duty bomber, you had to go down and stomp and salute and convince the Devil Dogs that you were NOT a commie, climb in and check out the package.

Serious stuff, 'eh? I made a Duty Bomber badge that ended up on the RR display board. It was not serious. Once upon a time. SIOP meant threading your way thru all the possible nuclear delivery devices with perfect timing for all. Chances of getting fried were rather high.

NEW MEMBERS

Raymond Ackerman, Pensacola, FL
Lance Alsheimer, Lexington Park, MD
Bill Baerresen, Reno, NV
John Bastin, Trenton, OH
Thomas Campobasso, Fayetteville, GA
Michael Dodick, Mandeville, LA
Samantha Fisher, Nashville, TN
Mat Garreston, Eagan, MN
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Bill Hertel, Grandbury, TX
Allyn Hinton, Corpus Christi, TX
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William Klett, Faifax Station, VA
Dennis Laack, Camarillo, CA
Mike Lange, Como, MS
Julie Macholz, Trophy Club, TX
Margaret McMahon, Crownsville, MD
Michael Mentley, Crownsville, MD
Glenn Merchant, Colorado Springs, CO
Bob Mills, Georgetown, TX
William Oehl, Sealy, TX
Scott Peter, Mandeville, LA
Sandy Pilkington, Virginia Beach, VA
Jack Reed, Wallingford, KY
James Reeves, Midville, GA
Anthony Serfustini, Marco Is., FL
Dave Thompson, Collierville, TN
Dennis Warren, Las Vegas, NV

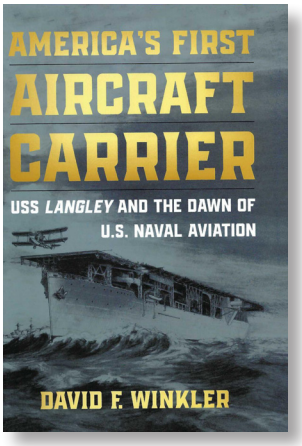
Join or renew, and give someone a one-year gift membership for $20 more.

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

Read? you think we *read?*

AMERICA'S FIRST AIRCRAFT CARRIER
USS Langley and the Dawn of U.S. Naval Aviation

By David F. Winkler
Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland. 2024.
284 pp. Ill. $39.95
Reviewed by Peter Mersky



This heavily researched history of the first American aircraft carrier might be considered the story of two entirely different ships that began in the first years of the 20th century, as America seriously developed a fleet of ocean-going battleships and assorted other ships—most notably 1907's "the Great White Fleet" of President Theodore Roosevelt. Great Britain was involved with beginning a totally new class of capital ships, one that would operate a new comer to the world's arsenal, the airplane. Just in time for what was, indeed, the *First* World War. (Who could foresee there being a *second* one, much less a third and more, given how fear-mongering pundits of the 1950s and 1960s freely forecast what was to come.)

With a surprisingly highly detailed description of early century programs of funding and construction of a small fleet of coal-carrying colliers. The U.S. fleet did not want to defend British support of bringing coal to American ships bringing the "Stars and Stripes" into areas far from U.S. ports. Indeed, to say the first U.S. collier would become the first U.S. aircraft carrier following Britain's initial success in WWI was to ignore what became a major program to design and finally produce a bona fide–if initially limited–air-capable ship of whose main weapon was, after all, equally capable of being launched and recovered for offensive missions against an enemy target.

It is also surprising how active the collier USS *Jupiter* (AC-3) was before she was decommissioned in 1920 to begin her transition to and her new career as America's first true aircraft carrier, making several deployments to supply the fleet with coal wherever it was needed.

The discussion period about using the *Jupiter* as the ship to be changed into a carrier was long and complicated, and a wonder any conclusion was reached at all! At one point, thoughts turned to using it as a seaplane carrier–which at the time meant flying boats–which was usually where U.S. Navy expertise lay.

Various personalities make their appearance early in their careers such as John Towers, Cdr. Husband E. Kimmel, later RAdm, CO of the Fleet at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese made their surprise attack on December 7, 1941, and BGen. William "Billy" Mitchell, who would be in a few years better known for his sometimes-brash concepts about the future of Army aviation versus Navy ships, and later his court martial. His Martin bombers sank the WWI German battleship Ostfriesland on July 21, 1921, during a demonstration mission when the ship was anchored offshore.

Cdr. Winkler's research and ability to absorb all he had learned is quickly apparent from the first pages. Details of the *Jupiter*'s busy early years and the equally busy years she and her crew endured to decide to convert "the covered wagon," as she was affectionately known, after her conversion as the *Langley*, and to ferret out their "new" ship's little-known personality, capabilities and drawbacks.

Early developments and operations on the flight deck with the cadre of early Naval Aviators are fascinating reading as are the first Navy carrier aircraft, such as the first operations of the Naval Aircraft Factory (NAF) PT (Patrol Torpedo) "seadrome," a briefly produced (33) torpedo-carrying aircraft, a hodge-podge collection of other aircrafts' parts produced as a floatplane as well as a wheeled land plane in the fashion of the time, yet the author notes it "roared down the deck" which is hardly within the limited capabilities of the WWI-era of early carrier types.

There have been a very few book-length accounts dealing with the Navy's carriers of early decades of deployments and accompanying aircraft and new flight rules and procedures of their unique and often highly dangerous–yet important–atmosphere, which quickly became the crown of national defense and diplomacy.

The *Langley* moved back and forth from Norfolk to Washington, D.C., displaying for the public, politicians and senior Navy people. When the carrier was in dry dock, then-Imperial Japanese Navy Captain Yamamoto Isoroko, who had studied at Harvard and had spent much time in the U.S. and thus, spoke English fluently, got his first look at a carrier. He would take the experience back to Japan to no doubt use when he planned the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. No doubt the lengthy exposure to Americans focused his knowledge and concerns about his country's future enemy in WWII.

Cdr. Winkler's account constantly amazes me: the original collier *Jupiter* had a well-defined career, then it became the first U.S. carrier alternating between that of an active busy seaborne experiment, followed by part of its nation's growing defense as it took on growing numbers of aircraft each with a specific purpose and mission, lasting and somewhat proudly, but sadly as it went into harm's way to meet its end in combat against a tough, highly capable enemy whose many faceted operations had learned their trade and skills by closely watching how the American carrier crews had learned and developed their new trade and mission. I will note that following the chronology of the various fleet exercises in which the *Langley* participated was somewhat difficult because the author did not always indicate the year.

The year 1924 was a time of moving, shuttling back and forth along the Atlantic coast participating in several exercises to display the capabilities of its air groups while dealing with its flight deck's position of the ship's smoke stacks, a concern that remains even in today's modern designs in different ways, creating air bubbles that occasionally interfere with

the safety of daily aircraft approaches.

By late 1924, the *Langley* made its long-scheduled trip to San Diego to join the Pacific Fleet, bringing new aircraft and their crews. Oddly enough, the Naval exercises of the period would pit U.S. forces against those of Japan as well as the ships' companies, as well as bringing more and new aircraft to replace the older and rapidly aging aircraft that had first served as the *Langley*'s initial air groups for newer, stronger, more powerful aircraft that could dive straight down over a target and deliver a more accurate strafing run. Vought's UO-1 "fighter" was soon replaced by the VE-7 also from Vought when the UO-1 proved unsatisfactory. Cdr. Winkler's research and resulting narrative delivers occasionally esoteric but very interesting often little-known information that makes his biography of this country's first aircraft carrier much more than simply another account of another flattop, which also makes it an important and unexpected companion to the recently published (also by the Naval Institute Press, which we just reviewed in the Winter 2024 issue) biography of Eugene Ely, who it might be said started the entire concept of an aircraft launching from and recovering aboard an American warship.

The book even gives details of Cdr. Frank W. "Spig" Wead's storied career as portrayed in the 1957 John Ford-directed film "Wings of Eagles," which very rarely appears on TV. John Wayne plays the title role of this pilot who turns screenwriter to tell the story of Naval Aviation from the beginning through WWII. The *Langley*'s story appears in the early periods shown in the film. A few of the other actors who appear in various roles that today's enthusiasts might recognize are Walter Brennan, Ken Curtis (known as Festus in the long-running TV "Gunsmoke" western series), and veteran western star Ward Bond of TV's "Wagon Train" fame.

Cdr. Winkler keeps a tremendous number of details together, yet in entertaining chronological developmental sequence throughout the narrative, not an easy thing for an historian and author. However, he is definitely up to the demanding challenge. The between-wars narrative covers the *Langley*'s busy schedule of encounters with the Fleet, including its new aircraft carriers, mainly the *Lexington* (CV-2) and *Saratoga* (CV-3), which would join the force to play an initially major part in the early Pacific war after Pearl Harbor.

Great Britain did have several carriers and its own naval aircraft that saw considerable pre-war service. During the war, the British made great use of a mix of their own and several American aircraft such as the Grumman F4F Wildcat (which they called the Martlet), and later on, the Vought F4U Corsair, Grumman F6F Hellcat and TBM Avenger. France had a single CV, the *Bearn*, the only carrier France produced until after WWII. Converted from an unfinished battleship, the *Bearn* entered service in 1928, but was taken out of service in mid-1942 to ensure she was not used against the Allies. Her aircraft consisted mainly of French-manufactured types, but did include a squadron of Vought V-165Fs, exports of the American SB2U Vindicator dive bomber, whose main claim to fame came when they were flown by Marine Corps crews in the climactic Battle of Midway in June 1942.

France was quickly overwhelmed by Germany in June 1940, and most of its Navy ships and aircraft were quickly assimilated into a single unit named for Vichy and for a time fought alongside the Nazi Blitzkrieg –their aircraft colorfully marked in yellow and red stripes– from approximately 1941-42, especially during Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942. Strangely, although the *Langley* was busy throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and her crews came and went, the book's narrative seems peaceful with little concern for events that were building toward the cataclysm of World War II.

On a personal note, seeing the author's reference to then-Lt., later RAdm. Rufus Fairchild Zogbaum, Jr., (1879-1956), who at the time was serving as the carrier's "gun boss," or head of the ship's weapons department, and his career that ended with his promotion to two-star rank of rear admiral, as well as his achieving a Naval Aviator's wings of gold, he also notes his being the son of noted illustrator Rufus Fairchild Zogbaum (1849-1925), whose magazine work in the 19th century paralleled that of western artist Frederick Remington and other major illustrators of the period. (I graduated in 1967 from the Rhode Island School of Design's illustration department but admittedly, I never showed capabilities that even approached those of the senior Zogbaum.)

I would have been interested to see how talented his son—a Navy pilot and two-star admiral—might have been. As things transpired, Lt. Zogbaum had to deal with Eugene Ely who was monitoring progress of the construction of a landing platform for Ely's early aircraft, which was being built right over the CO's quarters, which did not please the captain, then-Captain-later RAdm-Charles F. Pond at all; he complained of the noise.

The decade of the 1930s was filled with exercises and dry-dock maintenance, keeping the old ship in the best shape as possible. In 1937, in another drastic shape and mission change, the now-aging carrier was made a seaplane tender (now-AV-3), which reduced her flight deck by at least 25 percent as she supported PBY Catalinas that patrolled areas of concern, especially with apparent Japanese warlike intentions becoming clearer, with increased action in China on the ground and in the air, often by the use of IJN carrier planes involved, as well as Southeast Asia that would turn out to be much more important 20 years later as American forces entered yet another war in what would then be called Vietnam.

The *Langley* entered its first and last combat and was attacked by IJN land-based Mitsubishi G4M1 bombers (later known as Bettys in the Allied code system) on February 26, 1942, off Java when they dropped seven bombs on the poorly-armed ship, now without its flattop flight deck and defending fighters. The order to abandon ship came at 1:32 pm local time. However, the *Langley* remained afloat, but listing increasingly as water poured into her from bomb damage. Finally, one of the escorting American destroyers, USS *Whipple* (DD-217) eventually fired 9-inch shells followed by torpedoes into the first American carrier, which went under 74 miles from Java the next day.

The remaining chapters describe the fight by the *Langley*'s successor as the exhausted American fleet strove to retire and would soon engage a large Japanese fleet in the climactic Battle of Midway that June, in which four Japanese fleet carriers and their aircraft would be sunk by U.S. dive bombers, handing the Japanese their first major defeat.

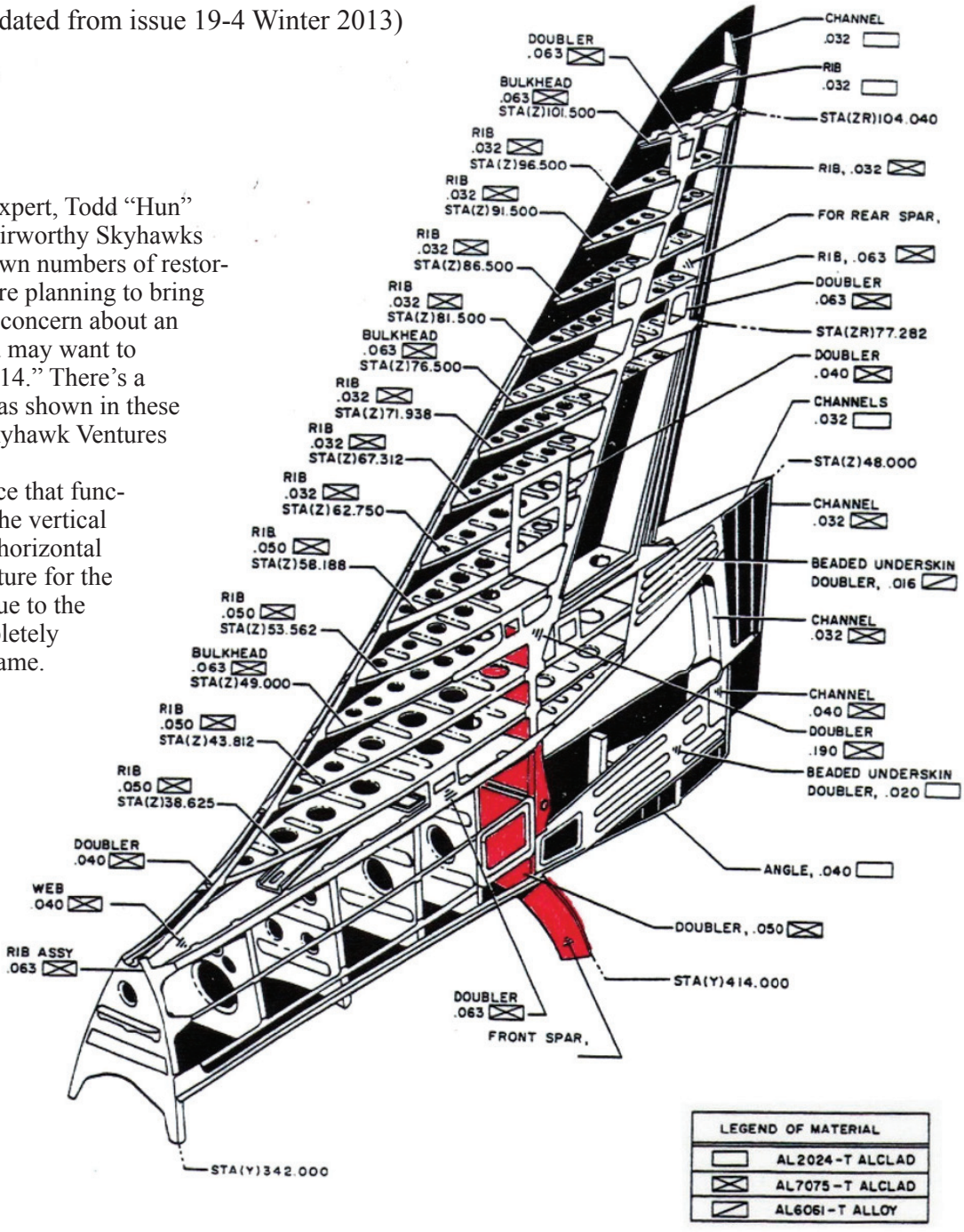
Critical Repair on 606

The A-4's Achilles Heel

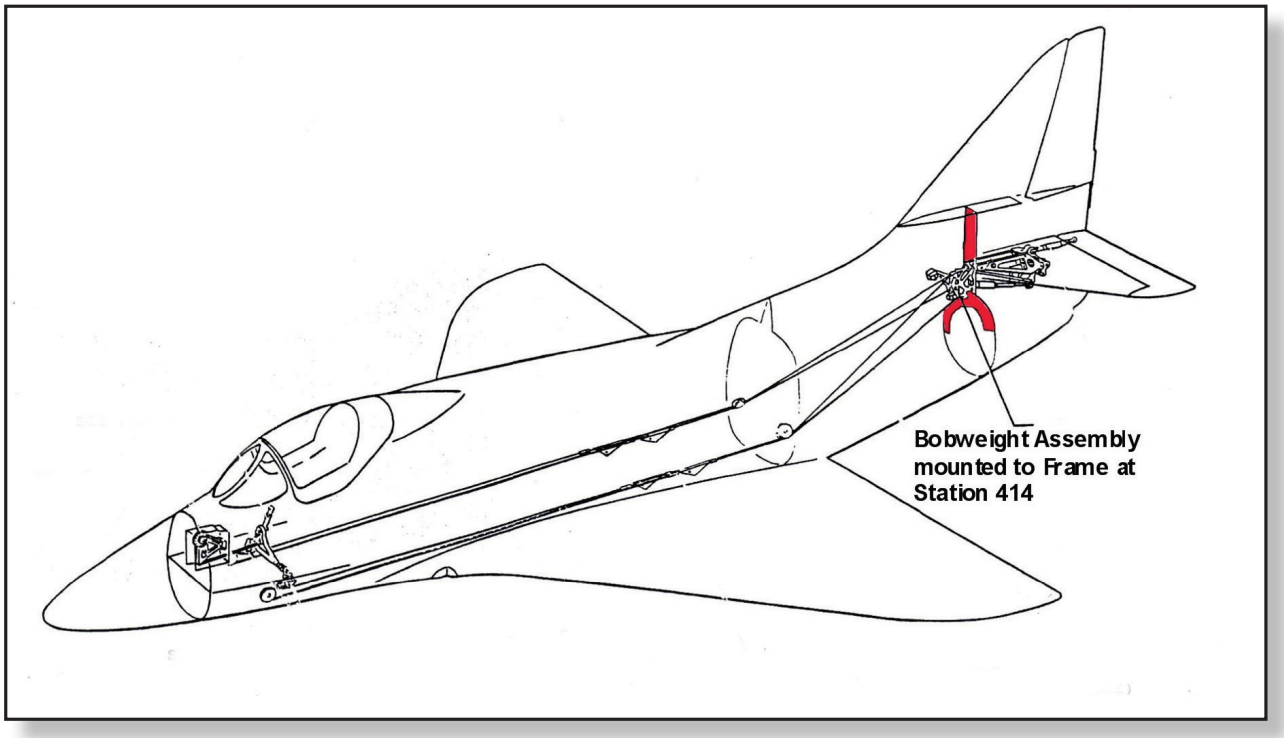
By Dave "Hide" Dollarhide (Updated from issue 19-4 Winter 2013)

According to our still flying expert, Todd "Hun" Frommelt, there are "about 45" airworthy Skyhawks worldwide. There are also unknown numbers of restorable airframes out there! If you are planning to bring one back to life, or have a safety concern about an A-4 you are presently flying, you may want to inspect the airframe at "Station 414." There's a possible corrosion "GOTCHA," as shown in these photos from the restoration of Skyhawk Ventures A-4C 149606.

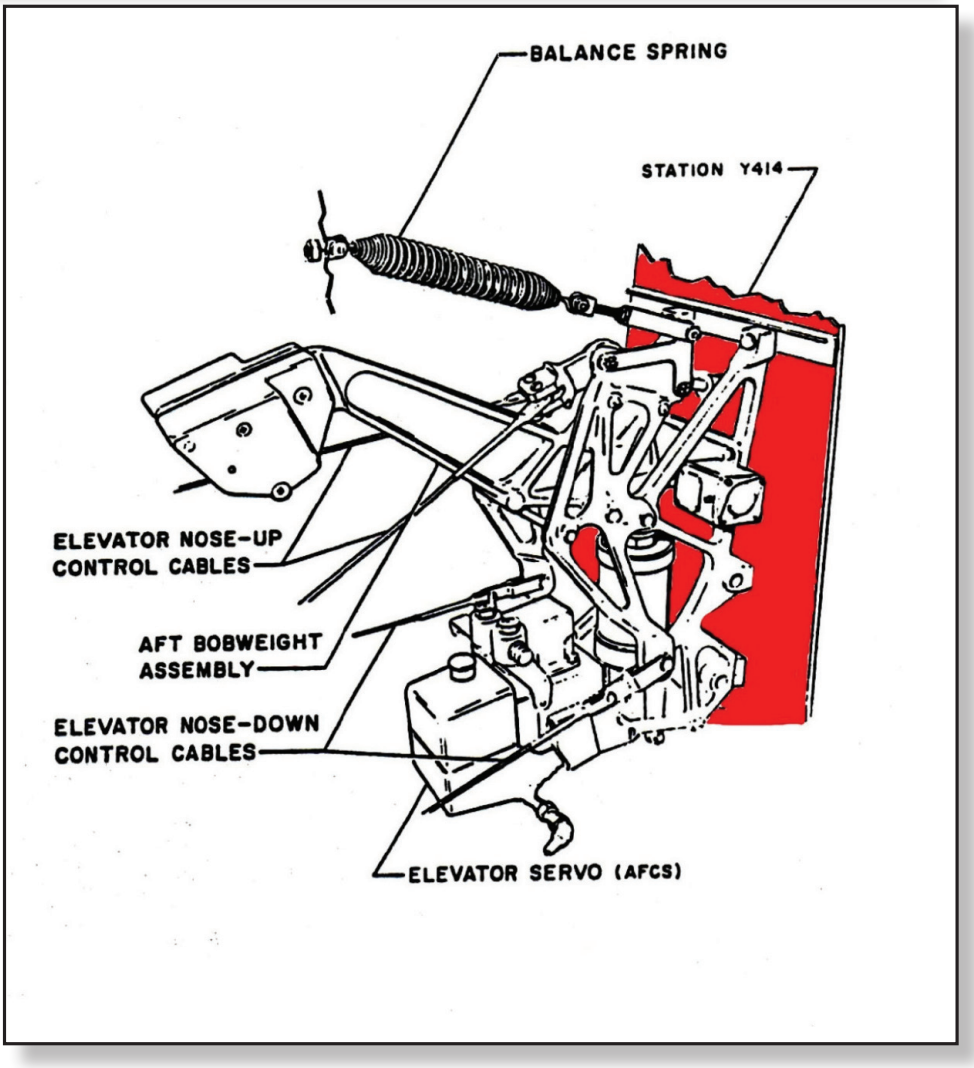
414 is a forged aluminum piece that functions as the lower main spar for the vertical stabilizer, the pivot point for the horizontal stabilizer and the mounting structure for the elevator bob weight assembly. Due to the location, it is impossible to completely inspect the forward side of the frame.



The Vertical Fin Lower Front Spar (in Red) Is A Solid Cast Fitting That Is Attached To The Aft Fuselage Frame At Station 414.



Much of the aft side of the heavy frame can be inspected after the horizontal stabilizer and a few panels are removed. It will usually appear to be in good shape, but it's the forward side where moisture likes to hide. With the tailpipe and heat shield removed and a good flashlight pointed up, you can see the bob weight assembly mounted in the center of the frame. You will probably see nothing unusual with the frame surrounding the bob weight assembly, but don't be misled. Corrosion is the defect you are looking for and to make a complete inspection, the painful task of removing the bob-weight assembly must be accomplished.



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Critical Repair on 606

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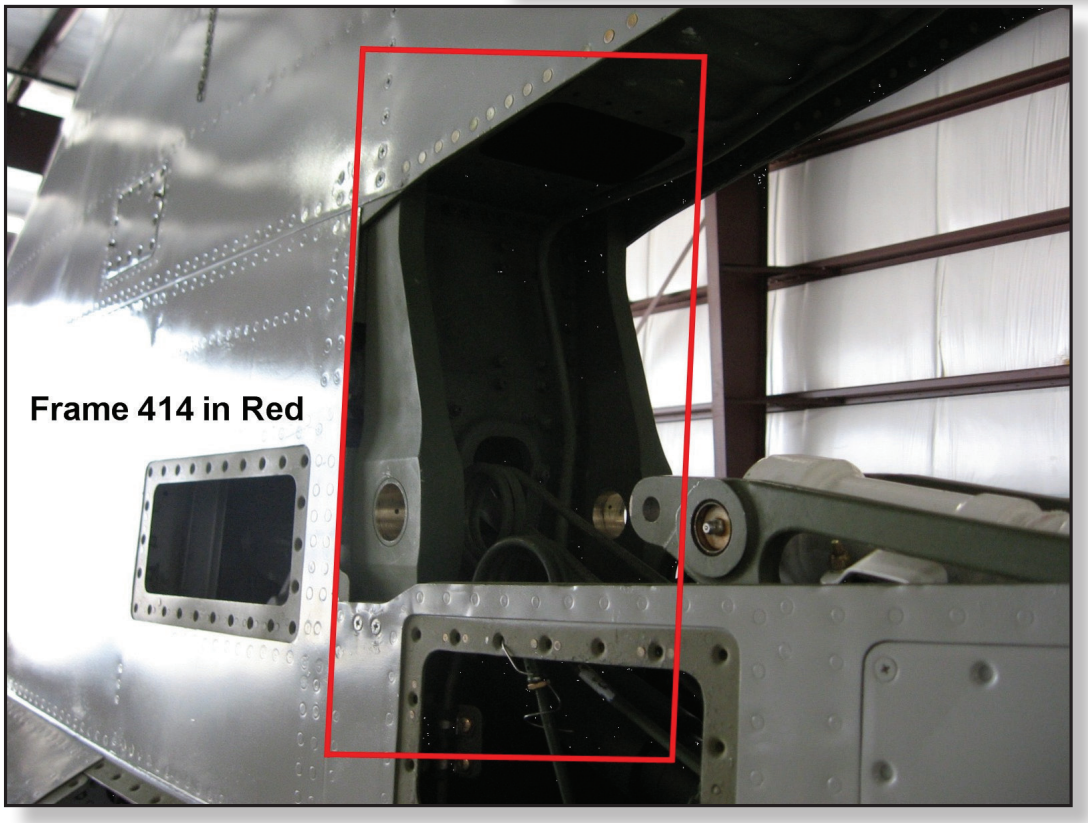
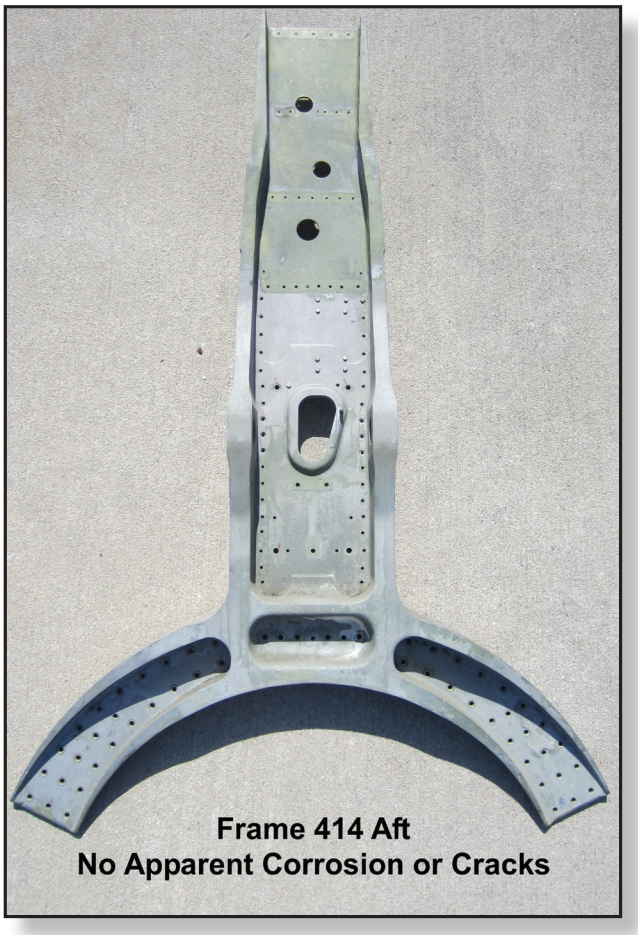
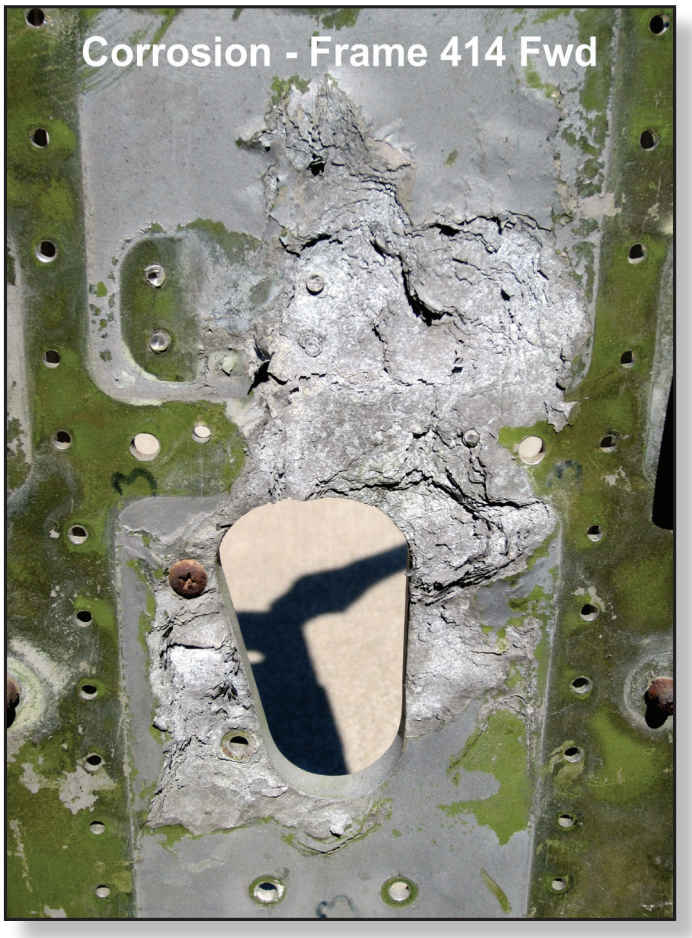
Moisture tends to remain behind the bob weight assembly and the resulting corrosion to the cast frame can be extensive. Frame 414 must then be removed, but this job is not for the average mechanic. A highly skilled airframes mechanic, experienced in the use of "huck fasteners," must be retained for the part removal and installation of a new one. This can be an expensive proposition but the frame at station 414 is a critical structure and a repair or replacement must be accomplished.

Owners Porter Spangler and Dan Carr had 149606's frame 414 replaced and after seeing the amount of hidden corrosion there had been, I felt comfortable enough to fly the airplane aggressively to over 500kts in a few airshows.

Of course, what didn't make sense was the fact the first pilot to fly 606, Larry "Worm" Elmore, and I took the risk of flying the "Charlie" with no rocket in the ejection seat. The cost to install and operate an operational seat is exorbitant, but considering that a newly rebuilt J-65 engine was being used,"Worm" and I were willing to "roll the dice." We were both in our seventies at the time. …Yes, I know!



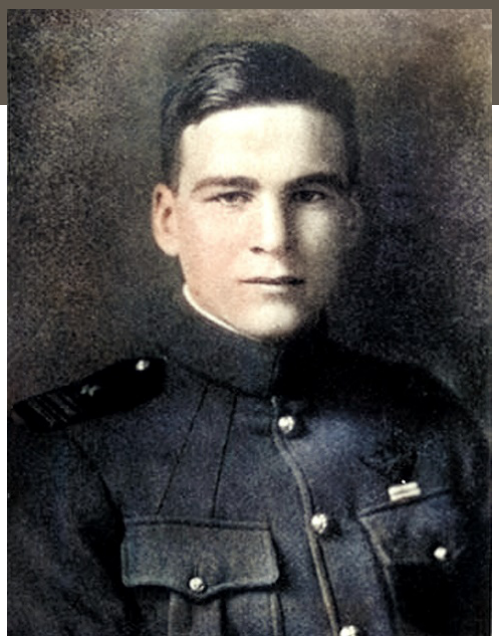




“Moisture tends to remain behind the bob weight assembly and the resulting corrosion to the cast frame can be extensive.”

David Ingalls, First U.S. Navy Ace of World War I

By A.B. Feuer - deceased
Permission to use Doug Bohs provided by son of Feuer



David Ingalls

Although U.S. Army Captain Eddie Rickenbacker's victories in World War I were exceptional feats, the exploits of his naval counterpart, David S. Ingalls, remain virtually unknown. Both men were from Ohio, but that is where the similarity ends. David Ingalls was born in Cleveland on January 28, 1899 and was destined to become the only U.S. Navy ace of the war.

In 1916, at the age of 17, David Sinton Ingalls entered Yale University where he took up flying by joining the university's flying club. The organization, founded by F. Trubee Davison, became known as the First Yale Unit. The members were wealthy students who were able to purchase their own airplanes.

Ingalls was an exceptional student pilot but, because of his young age, was not permitted active-duty status. He continued flying, however and was accepted for active duty on his 18th birthday. Ingalls graduated from flight school as U.S. Navy Aviator Number 85 and went overseas in September 1917.

While waiting for new planes to arrive from the United States, Ingalls was assigned to various squadrons in England for further training. On July 9, 1918 he was transferred to the Allied Naval Base at Dunkirk, France and attached to RAF Squadron 213 for combat experience. The squadron flew *Sopwith Camel* fighters and escorted bombers in raids on German airfields in Belgium. With the exception of heavy antiaircraft fire, the attacks were usually unopposed by enemy planes. The *Camel's* reputation had made the German pilots wary of trying to engage the faster and more maneuverable British aircraft.

After two weeks of what he called "exhilarating work," Ingalls was sent to Flanders to help with the construction of a flying field for the U.S. Navy's Northern Bombing Group. He was unhappy with this boring duty; however, and managed to wrangle permission to rejoin his squadron.

David Ingalls: Making U.S. Navy History

Once back at Dunkirk, it did not take long for David Ingalls to begin making U.S. Navy history. While on patrol with an English pilot, he sighted a two-seater German *Albatross*. The enemy pilot spotted the *Camels* at the same time, and dashed toward Ostend. The hungry *Camels* raced in pursuit, firing 150 rounds in short bursts. The *Albatross* quickly began to smoke, went into a slow spin, and plunged to earth in flames.

In articles about his exploits published in *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Ingalls described the daily routine of flight operations from the naval air station: "There were several kinds of patrols. Planes engaged in ship escort duty flew at low altitude, always within sight of the fleet, during Allied destroyer sorties against German bases on the Belgian coast. Very few enemy aircraft were seen during these missions, but our pilots could always look forward to a cold bath in the event of engine failure.

"In good weather, regular patrols were usually flown twice a day, morning, and evening, when enemy aircraft were also out *en masse*. Two flights were sent up during these patrols, one above the other for protection. Every time we clashed head-on with the Germans, it developed into the most confusing air battle imaginable. Friend and foe swarmed about the sky in all directions. The roar of motors, chatter of machine guns and the zip of bullets past the ears was like a deadly serenade. Midair collisions were not unusual. A couple of times, I witnessed enemy planes smash into each other.

"If the weather was bad, we flew small patrols up the coast and below the clouds, looking for German seaplanes. They were fond of flying in stormy weather."

"In addition to our regular patrols, we often accompanied bombers to Brugge, Zeebrugge and other enemy bases. We were seldom attacked while on these missions, because the Germans were reluctant to take on an armada of 30 or more bombers and fighters."

In the early morning of August 13, RAF Squadron 213 carried out one of its most successful raids against the large German aerodrome at Varsenaere, about 20 miles southeast of Ostend. Two *Camel* flights took part in the attack. One group was fitted with phosphorus bombs, and the other with 25-pound shrapnel bombs.

Ingalls recalled the mission: "Considerable confusion was created by taking off in the pre-dawn hours, since a *Camel* is difficult enough to fly in the daytime. But finally, everyone was climbing toward 10,000 feet where we were to rendezvous with another squadron. By the time we reached our assigned altitude, the sky was beginning to lighten, and it was possible to make out the shadowy shapes of the aircraft that were to join us. The leaders of the different flights flashed signal lights to get their men in formation, just as the first rays of sunlight appeared over the horizon.

"We flew along the coast until midway between Ostend and Zeebrugge, then dived and headed inland. Evidently,

Hailing from Cleveland and Yale, pilot David Ingalls became the first U.S. Navy flying ace during World War I

the enemy was still asleep, as no antiaircraft fire greeted us until we were roaring above the countryside at 200 feet. Our objective soon came within sight, and the squadrons split up."

David Ingalls pushed his throttle to full power and raced across the airfield. With his wheels almost touching the ground, he sprayed 450 rounds of machine-gun bullets into a line of *Fokkers* about ready to take off. Then, pressing for altitude, Ingalls zoomed his *Camel* low over the defending antiaircraft batteries. Barely escaping enemy fire, he banked his plane in a wide circle, threw the *Camel* into a dive, and headed for the hangar area. Quickly picking his target, Ingalls released four shrapnel bombs. Explosions ripped through a hangar and a searchlight emplacement.

"The Attack Rapidly Developed into a Grand Melee"

Ingalls continued his account: "For several minutes, we were busy diving, turning and shooting in all directions. The attack rapidly developed into a grand melee with many near collisions. The frightful blasts of shrapnel bombs, combined with the deadly clouds of phosphorus smoke created a hellish scene right out of Dante's Inferno.

"Finally, before we killed each other, our squadron commander fired a flare from his Very pistol the signal to return. We almost clipped the treetops streaking for home."

As Squadron 213 hurried back to Dunkirk, all remaining machine-gun ammunition was expended over German trenches. The mission had accomplished its objective, and all *Camels* returned safely to base.

Large-scale air attacks of this kind were infrequent, since their success usually depended upon the element of surprise. During a major infantry advance, however, Allied squadrons staggered their flights over German trenches so that there was always a group of planes covering the enemy's lines of communication and looked for targets of opportunity.

On September 15, David Ingalls participated in a surprise raid on the German aerodrome at Uytkerke. Using the same tactics that proved so successful at Varsenaere, Ingalls dived out of the clouds, dashed low across the enemy field and fired 400 rounds into a camouflaged hangar. He then pulled up sharply, made a tight circle, whipped across the flight line, and dropped four shrapnel bombs on a group of Fokkers.

Returning to Dunkirk, Ingalls and his wingman, British Lieutenant H.C. Smith, were just west of Ostend when they sighted a German two-seater *Rumpler* reconnaissance aircraft. The enemy pilot noticed the *Camels* about the same time and dived toward Ostend. Ingalls and Smith quickly followed. The *Camels* were much faster and a few machine-gun bursts at close range sent the *Rumpler* crashing in flames.

Three days later, while patrolling near Ostend with two other *Camels*, David Ingalls sighted an enemy observation balloon at 3,500 feet. These so-called 'gasbags' were tantalizing targets, but were well defended by antiaircraft guns and captured many an inexperienced pilot in their deadly webs.

Ingalls vividly described the dangers involved in trying to shoot down an observation balloon: "We flew up the coast at 8,000 feet, just beneath a thick layer of clouds. Opposite Ostend, we turned inland and, nosing over slightly to pick up speed, we approached the balloon in a wide curve.

"The enemy guns had plenty of time to get our range, and accurate antiaircraft fire rapidly began to blister the sky. One shell exploded under the right wing of my plane, sending shrapnel ripping through the fuselage, barely missing my legs.

"As we dived on the balloon, the German ground crew began hauling it down. We attacked the 'gasbag' from different directions, but our bullets had no effect. I made a quick turn, gained altitude, and dove again. This time, I kept firing until I had whipped past the target. Looking back, I saw the two observers jump from the basket. Their parachutes opened just as a burst of flame shot up from the balloon. Within seconds, the gasbag exploded into a ball of fire, then collapsed and dropped on three balloon sheds. The buildings also promptly erupted in flames.

"My Incendiary Ammunition Would Be Perfect Gift for a Surprise Party"

"All three of our planes were pretty much shot up. During the flight home, I noticed a group of German wooden barracks partially hidden by a grove of trees. My incendiary ammunition would be a perfect gift for a surprise party. I dived and raced in low, shooting at the largest target. The bullets must have struck something flammable. The building exploded and in moments, the entire complex was engulfed in flames. I was machine gunned from the ground, but nothing to worry about. Dunkirk was a welcome sight however."

In recognition for destroying the enemy observation balloon, David Ingalls was appointed acting commander of the 213 Squadron and on September 20, he was assigned to lead three flights, of five *Camels* each, as fighter escorts for the 218 Bombing Squadron. The dangerous mission was a daylight raid on the heavily defended town of Brugge.

Ingalls recounted the anxiety and excitement of aerial combat: "We rendezvoused with the bombers at 15,000 feet over Dunkirk. A *Camel* group was positioned on each flank of the 218 Squadron, while another group flew overhead to protect against an attack from above. My flight guarded the starboard side of the bomber formation.

"We flew three miles out to sea, then headed northeast, and turned inland near Zeebrugge. The Germans were ready for us. Upon reaching the enemy coast, we were greeted by heavy antiaircraft fire. I suddenly noticed four *Fokkers* to

continued...

Sopwith Camel.
Navy History and Heritage.

my right. They were some distance off, but coming in fast. I signaled my group to attack. We turned to meet the enemy head-on. I aimed for the lead *Fokker* and fired a few bursts. The German dived, probably hoping that I would follow. but, I was not that foolish. We were over enemy lines and many an Allied pilot had lost his life when he came within range of ground-based machine guns.

"I took a quick look around. The bombers, and escorting *Camels*, were nearing Brugge. I hurried to join them. I noticed three *Fokkers* circling in the vicinity, but they did not attack our formation."

As the bombers returned from the raid on Brugge, the enemy fighters hovered like hungry vultures, waiting to pounce on any damaged aircraft. Ingalls continued his account: "One of the bombers was having motor trouble. It was losing altitude and began to drop behind. Two *Fokkers* raced in for the kill. The lead German began shooting at the crippled bomber. I darted to the rescue, banked at right angles toward the enemy and fired several bursts. The *Fokker* began to smoke, and dropped to earth in flames.

"I quickly swerved toward the second German, but evidently the pilot was so intent on downing the bomber, that he did not see me. I opened fire at about 50 yards. There was no way that I could miss. I was so close, in fact, that I almost crashed into him. The *Fokker* turned over on its back, and went into a spin. I watched him fall for a few moments, but then was interrupted by bullets whizzing past my head. Three Germans were after me. I fired at the closest plane, threw the *Camel* into a shallow dive and raced to protect the damaged bomber.

"The *Fokkers* swarmed around us like maddened bees, shooting from below and behind. The air battle raged until we reached the coast, when the Germans finally broke off their attack.

"After landing at Dunkirk, I learned that I was only credited with one confirmed kill. Someone had reported that the second *Fokker* had pulled out of its spin. I was disappointed, to say the least."

Flurry of Air Activity Ascends over the Western Front

The last week of September 1918 produced a flurry of air activity over the Western Front. The *Camels* of 213 Squadron were sent up two or three times a day on low-altitude missions in support of a coming Allied offensive between Ypres and the North Sea. The squadron was divided into three flights. David Ingalls narrated one mission on which he was a group leader: "We climbed rapidly through a clear break in the clouds and headed 10 miles out to sea. Then, after testing our guns, flew up the coast, keeping at 4,000 feet, and just above the clouds. The trip seemed unusually long, but finally our flight commander turned toward land and we followed.

"My group's assignment was to bomb a cluster of aviation workshops that had been built next to an aerodrome. The Germans did not spot us until we plunged out of the clouds. Antiaircraft fire was heavy, but it is difficult to hit a plane in an almost vertical dive. We pulled out at about 200 feet and raced toward the junction of a canal and railroad track. Our target was just ahead and, like ducks in a row, impossible to miss.

"Fixing my aim on one of the shops, I pulled the lever dropping four 25-pound bombs. I looked up just in time to see the flight coming in above me drop its bombs late. I banked sharply to avoid being struck by one of the missiles. There were many direct hits by my group, while bombs from the planes above us dotted a vacant field with perfectly spaced little holes.

"By now, everyone was scurrying about the sky hunting for anything to shoot at. I had just opened fire on two lorries [trucks] parked near the shops, when bullets began zipping past my head. A nearby machine gun emplacement was empty. A moment later, I noticed *Camels*, from another group, climbing rapidly into the clouds, then diving and zooming across the aerodrome and firing wildly in all directions. It was amazing that we did not shoot each other down.

Sopwith Camel.
Navy History and Heritage.

"I circled the area one last time to assess the damage. Fires were still burning fiercely and I signaled my group to head for home. Suddenly, we came under heavy antiaircraft fire. I quickly climbed to 1,000 feet and dashed for a cloud bank. Then, my engine almost cut out. It seemed that it was hitting on three cylinders at most. By the time I reached the clouds, the motor was running a little better, but it was still running rough.

"Upon reaching the coast, the sky cleared. I sighted one member of my group. We waved to each other and set a leisurely pace for home. Momentarily, I sighted a German two-seater drop from a cloud formation and head out to sea. He did not notice us. I edged in behind the enemy plane and opened fire. The surprised pilot immediately tried to reach Ostend. I chased him almost to the Ostend piers. Then one good burst and he caught fire. I banked sharply back out to sea, just in time to see the two-seater crash into the water."

David Ingalls nursed his *Camel's* temperamental engine safely back to Dunkirk. He learned that all of the planes in his group had returned, although two pilots had been slightly wounded. Reconnaissance photos, taken the next day, revealed that the raid was one of the most successful missions ever conducted by the 213 Squadron.

On September 22, Ingalls was assigned as flight leader of five *Camels* with orders to seek out and destroy enemy communications and supply lines. Ingalls and his group took off at daybreak, and raced across the Belgian countryside at tree-top level. German aerodromes, ammunition trains, and army installations were the primary targets. Upon reaching Torhout, the flight attacked the town's railway station and blasted a nearby supply center. On their return trip to Dunkirk, the *Camels* bombed a horse-drawn artillery convoy and machine-gunned the accompanying soldiers.

On the 24th, after only a day's rest, David Ingalls and RAF pilot R. Hobson were sent out at 5 pm to hunt for a cunning German reconnaissance plane that had been photographing the Allied military buildup. Ingalls related the story of the mission, and his thrilling escape from death: "For quite some time we flew along the front at an altitude of 15,000 feet. It soon began to get dark, however, so we gave up the search and set a course for home. Moments later, I noticed antiaircraft fire ahead. Our batteries were shooting at an enemy plane that was flying over the Allied lines and hightailing it toward Ostend.

"I fired my guns to attract Hobson's attention, then raced in pursuit. I was about a mile inland, between Nieuwpoort and Ostend, when I came within sight of an old *Rumpler*. The pilot was flying very slow. I dove under him and came up fast, but I misjudged his speed and overshot the German. I threw my *Camel* into a dive to try again. This time, the crafty enemy pilot banked the plane to give his observer a perfect shot at me. I stayed beneath the *Rumpler* and made a wide circle to avoid the rear gunner's bullets.

"I kept maneuvering for a good attack position. But, while making one turn, the observer nearly got me. He caught me in his sights and fired a burst that ripped between the wing struts on my port side. I had flown so close to the *Rumpler* that I could make out the faces of the crew wearing their black helmets.

"After a few minutes of cautious dueling, I suddenly realized that the enemy pilot had decoyed me some distance behind German lines. I had to end the game quickly. I gave up the careful tactics, zoomed up on his tail and poured about a hundred rounds into the two-seater. A puff of smoke shot from the *Rumpler* and it burst into flames. I quickly threw the *Camel* into a steep dive to escape antiaircraft fire. Strategy dictated to try and reach the safety of the Allied lines by racing a couple of hundred feet above the ground. The dangers of flying this low, however, were from enemy planes above and gunfire below. The Germans had machine gun emplacements scattered about the countryside, specifically to shoot down low-flying aircraft.

continued...

"My Motor Stopped and Gasoline Began Streaming out of the Tank"

"Only a short time had elapsed when I heard the rattle of a machine gun. My motor stopped, and gasoline began streaming out of the tank below my seat. I immediately switched on the gravity-feed tank and the engine started again.

"A tall tree line suddenly loomed in front of me. I pulled back on the stick. Fortunately, the *Camel* is tail-heavy. The nose came up fast and I missed the trees by inches.

"The motor was running rough, only hitting on about six cylinders. I checked the rudder. It seemed to be working fine, but the ailerons answered weakly. More machine gun fire. I expected the rest of the controls to go any second. This was no time for trick flying. I sat perfectly still and, using the rudder, made short zigzag turns.

"It was a big relief when I finally crossed over our lines and was quickly out of range from enemy gunfire. When I reached the aerodrome, I came in slowly over the trees, and, with a sputtering engine, managed to land safely.

"Hobson also returned. He had been flying behind and above me and attacked the pesky German machine gun batteries. Hobson confirmed my report that the *Rumpler* had crashed in flames. My plane was a total wreck. I was given a new *Camel* the next day."

On September 28, 1918, British General Sir Douglas Haig began his fall offensive against the Germans in the Ypres Salient. Thousands of men and five hundred Allied aircraft were thrown into the battle.

David Ingalls described the 213 Squadron's role in the massive assault: "In the early morning hours of the 28th, we took off on our first strike of the day. Our assignment was to fly low-altitude bombing and strafing missions behind enemy lines. It was miserable flying weather—rain and strong winds. The squadron climbed to 4,000 feet, then gradually descended. We were at 300 feet when we crossed into German territory. The Allied artillery had created so much confusion in the attack sector that we were able to roam the countryside virtually unchallenged. Our bombs and machine guns methodically cut a tornado-like path of destruction throughout the area.

"As we neared Torhout, the enemy's main road to the front, we spotted a long horse-drawn artillery train. Our squadron commander dived on the inviting target and we followed. The execution of the attack was flawless, but horrible to watch. The German column was in a frenzy. Soldiers scattered for cover. Horses bolted, and the artillery pieces were pounded to junk as the frightened animals raced in all directions across the open fields. After our initial bombing run, we rapidly climbed for altitude, then dropped like angels of death upon the shattered remnants of the convoy.

"Sandwiched between the murderous attacks, there was one humorous incident. Our squadron commander was chasing a poor bloke who was riding a bicycle and legging it for dear life. The German suddenly hopped off the road and ducked behind a stone wall. When the commander circled around and came in very low to see where his quarry had disappeared to, the fellow stood up and heaved a brick at his tormentor, ripping a large hole in the *Camel's* wing. I doubt if our squadron leader will ever try that again. He had a tough enough time trying to explain the unusual damage to his aircraft, but he was lucky that the German's aim was bad, as the brick could have struck the propeller."

Later in David Ingalls career. Aircraft unknown.

A War Record to be Proud Of

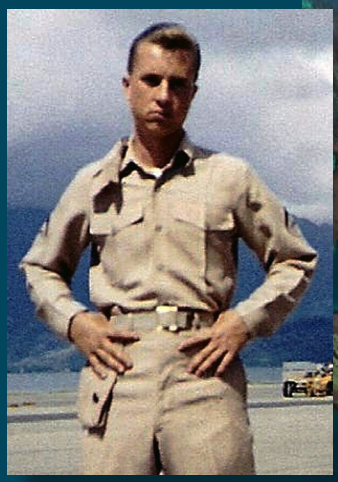
On October 1, 1918, David Ingalls was relieved of combat duty and sent to England to organize a U.S. Naval Air Squadron. His war record in the skies over France and Belgium was enviable. In only six weeks, Ingalls had flown 109 hours in *Sopwith Camels* made 63 flights over enemy lines; participated in 13 low-altitude bombing raids; engaged in 13 aerial combat actions; and shot down five German planes and one observation balloon. He was awarded the British Distinguished Flying Cross and the American Distinguished Service Medal.

After the war, Ingalls returned to Yale. He finished his studies in 1920 and graduated from the Harvard University Law School in 1923.

He became a member of the Ohio Legislature in 1926 and, in 1929, was appointed by President Herbert Hoover as Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Aviation. For a number of years he also personally flight-tested every plane adopted by the U.S. Navy.

At the outbreak of World War II, Ingalls returned to active duty. He served three years in the Pacific and was awarded the Legion of Merit and the Bronze Star. He retired from the Navy as a rear admiral in the U.S. Naval Reserve. David Ingalls died on April 29, 1985, at the age of 86.

JET FUEL FIRE ON THE LINE



By Norm Spilleth

JP4 jet fuel was used in Naval Aviation into the early ’60s. It was so volatile that we used it in our Zippo lighters. Sometime in the mid-’60s the Navy switched to JP5 which was less volatile and much safer to use on aircraft carriers. After the switch to JP5 we had to go back to PX lighter fluid for our Zippos because JP5 needed more than a spark to light a flame. On base, JP4 jet fuel was delivered to the flight line in 8,000 gallon fuel trucks.

I was a Plane Captain on A4Ds at Kaneohe Bay from 1961 to ‘63. One day in ‘62 as we were refueling our aircraft, the pump on the truck that supplied pressure to the refueling hose caught fire while a hose was connected to one of our A-4s pumping fuel under pressure. I was a couple airplanes down the line waiting my turn when I noticed flames shooting up from the pump which was located between the cab and tank. Eight thousand gallons of highly volatile JP4 was about to blow up and wipe out most of our squadron, everybody on the flight line, and maybe a couple of hangars.


October 12, 1962

RECEIVES MAST — LCpl. D. E. Davis, VMA-212, was presented meritorious mast by his CO last week. Davis was cited for heroic actions during a fire on the flight line.


RECEIVES MAST — Sgt. Ralph Strickland, VMA-214 was awarded meritorious mast from his CO, LtCol. E. N. LeFaivre, for extinguishing a fire which broke out on the flight line.

The Line Chief that day was Sgt Ralph Strickland and the plane captain closest to the fire was LCpl “Dink” Davis. Dink grabbed a fire extinguisher and climbed up on the truck above the fire, with one foot on the tank and the other on the cab, flames shooting up around him and started discharging fire retardant on the fire. The fuel hose was still connected to the aircraft when Sgt Strickland came running from the line shack, jumped into the now vacant driver’s seat and commenced to drive the truck away from the line towards the bay. I got the fuel hose disconnected from the plane just a second before the truck pulled away, dragging it along, spewing fuel, with Dink riding on top of the tank still fighting the fire. Seconds before crashing into the bay, Dink had the fire out and Sgt. Strickland stopped the truck. The heroic action of these two saved a lot of lives and airplanes that day. Both were recognized for their bravery with a meritorious mast by our CO, LtCol Ed LeFaivre.

LETTERS FROM YANKEE STATION

• Summer 1966 •

By Pete Munro

Hit During Egress

USS Oriskany, VA-163
Gulf of Tonkin, July 23, 1966

Letter home, July 23

What a day today was! But not too good for the "Saints." Skipper Foster (our Commanding Officer) got hit – it went thru his arm and across his chest. He ejected over a destroyer and was picked up quickly – but they had to amputate his arm four inches below the shoulder. The war's over for him, he'll be leaving in a few days for home and a medical discharge.

(*Ed. Note: Captain Wynn 'Capt. Hook' Foster was a founding member and officer of Skyhawk Association*)

Then I flew on a big re-strike to the Dong Nhom POL that you've been reading about. This time we finished the job. Bill and I were flak suppressors to hit anything firing at the strike group. Well, nothing opened up so we dropped our bombs on the target. A tremendous secondary explosion was seen with both Bill's and my bombs right on target. The main group had already left. We flew out low level in the hilly back country. As Bill and I started to climb crossing the coast, I took a hit right in the nose gear under my seat. It was a loud "thunk," and no disputing what it was. I lost most of my electrical gear except for my radio (thank goodness). It tore into the hydraulic actuating cylinder and started a fire – the fire was short-lived as I lost all the hydraulic fluid. It felt like the plane was coming apart but that sweet engine kept running. I finally cleared all the numerous unfriendly islands just off the coast and breathed easier.

I took some much needed fuel from the tanker – lowered my gear by the emergency means and made a no-flap approach to the ship. Everybody thought the nose gear would collapse on landing, as we didn't know for sure if it was locked, and the chances were that it wasn't. But it held up, and I made a beautiful landing if I do say so myself. The Captain of the ship also said so to me later.

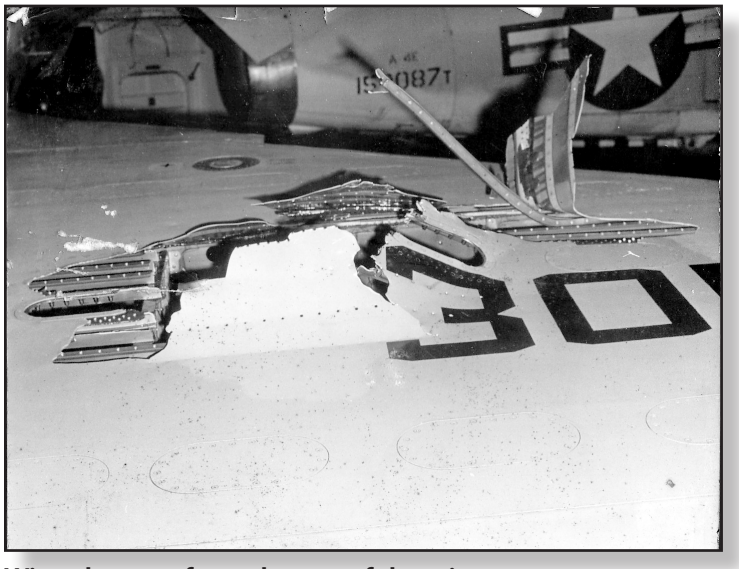
Wet-Wing Tanking Recovery

USS Oriskany, VA-163
Gulf of Tonkin, August 8, 1966
A-4E 151086

Taken from a letter home, August 10

Returned to the line after a buying spree and some relaxation at Cubi Point. There've been some action-filled flights for me lately. The day before yesterday, on our wedding anniversary, Bill and I were looking the coast over for some good targets. We found a couple of big barges and dropped a couple of bombs on them, damaging them both. We moved on down the coast and found a bunch more (at least 50). Bill sunk two and I sunk one with 1000# bombs. Then we found some trucks hidden along side of a road and we think we damaged, if not destroyed, a few of them.

I had one bomb left then and Bill had none. We found "our" train in the Qui Vinh rail yard. We've bombed this train before in different locations as it's slowly worked its way down south. I rolled in and pickled my last



Wing damage from the top of the wing. (Photo via author)

Wing damage to Pete Munro's A-4E 151086, underside. (Photo via author)

bomb as Bill flew cover above me – just a second or two after it released, a 37MM shell exploded just below my right wing. It tore a hole in the wing as big as a garbage can 3 ½' by 2 ½' and flipped the aircraft upside down! That's the fuel cell and the explosion was immediately followed by a large flash fire – but it went out!! That's the second time the fire went out – The Good Lord is my Fire Extinguisher. I lost all my wing fuel, of course, and experienced some control problems – but they were minor and everything held together. Bill, having seen the hit, didn't think I would be able to keep it flying so – he broadcast "Mayday" several times. We got over that BEAUTIFUL water, so I breathed easier knowing that if I had to get out I'd be picked up soon after. *(This paragraph was added later)*

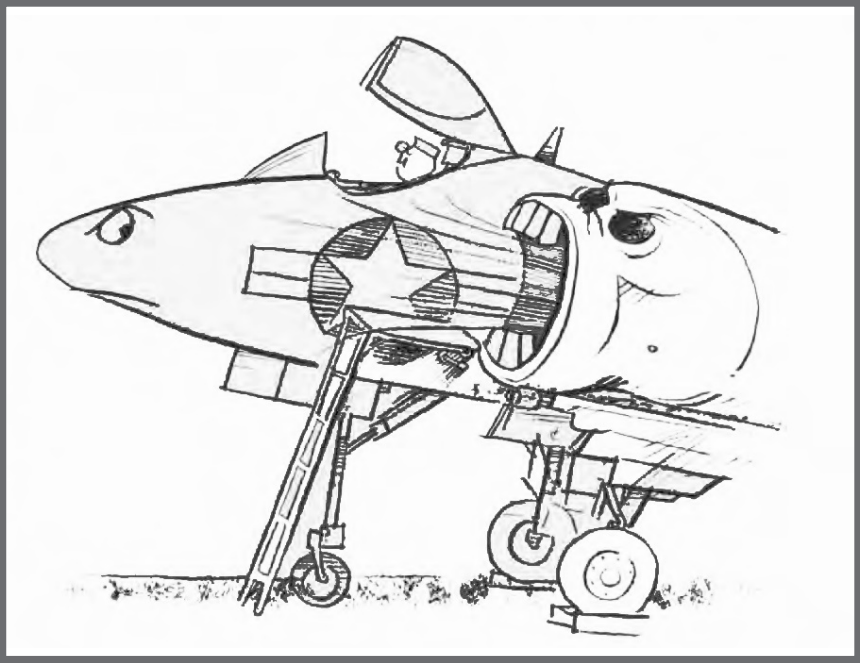
After we were 'feet wet', the reality of how little fuel I had left set in. I relayed to Fish 1 that it looked like only about 10 minutes left, and he called for any tanker on station. There was an immediate response from an A-3 circling near the ship, and we set up an intercept via TACAN radials. The sight of that A-3 with his drogue extended was like seeing an angel of God. After executing one of the quickest plug-ins, our tanker brought me back to the ship and started the straight-in landing profile. After we 'dirtied up' together, he broke to the right leaving me on a perfect final approach, and setting up in case I missed and needed him again.

…As I had lowered my gear, the utility hydraulic system was lost as a bunch of landing gear lines were severed in the explosion. So it was another no-flap landing like before – just a little control problem when slow – but I made an "OK" three-wire pass (perfect landing). Happy Anniversary!

British artist David Bright captured Pete Munro's A-3 tanker-aided, wet-wing recovery aboard Oriskany on August 10, 1966. Used with permission of the author.

Grandpa Pettibone - *Deadly Perch*

April 1963



A three-man crew from night check had towed an A4D-2N out to the designated high power turn-up area for final engine calibration checks.

The pilot-cockpit access ladder was in position along the port side of the aircraft. On the A4D, this gives a flat platform at the top of the ladder, which is flush with the bottom of the port side jet intake duct.

A jet mech was in the cockpit with the canopy open and had just turned the engine up to 100 percent, when he noted the oil pressure gauge had begun to indicate erratic readings.

He motioned to an electrician, who was sitting on a starting tractor nearby and this man immediately climbed the ladder and peered into the cockpit as the mech shouted an explanation of the problem. The engine was still at 100 percent.

The electrician moved back a little to see the malfunctioning gauge better, while the mech monitored the engine instruments carefully. Suddenly, the engine seemed to stall and coughed as though starved for air. The electrician was gone!

Glancing back at the intake, the mech saw only the man's head, and left foot protruding from the duct! The mech in the cockpit quickly slammed the throttle back to cut-off and leaped out onto the platform. With the help of the third man, who had been sitting on the starting tractor, the unfortunate electrician was pulled out of the intake and propped up on the ladder platform. Both men were reluctant to move him further in the face of his obviously serious injuries.

One man now ran for the distant hangar to call for an ambulance and medical assistance, while the other alternated between watching the injured man and the increasing amount of smoke pouring out of the tailpipe. Obviously, there was a good-sized residual fire burning in the engine.

The injured man said he could hold on, so his buddy left him on the platform, drove the starting tractor into position and as the third man returned, they gave the engine a dry run and the fire was extinguished.

The ambulance arrived within minutes and the man will survive his unforgettable experience, although several months of hospital care lie ahead of him

Grandpaw Pettibone says: **Great jumpin' jehosophat! Imagine anyone nonchalantly walkin' up a ladder to face a roaring, shrieking, mouth full of steel-alloy, beset by tons of air rushing into that gaping hole, and then be so idiotic as to turn around and back up towards it! He musta had his brains sucked out on the way up the ladder! That engine pulled him in like a bug up a vacuum cleaner and it could have been just as fatal! Now hear this: NEVER, NEVER stand in front of a live intake!**

★TAPS★

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

Larry Bauer, December 17, 2024, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

George Blosser, December 21, 2024, Smith Mountain Lake, VA

Vic Keir, September 4, 2024, Reno, NV

John Powers, June 30, 2022, Alexandria, VA

RADM Bernie Smith, November 1, 2024, Alexandria, VA

RADM Tom C. Watson, November 1, 2024, Orange Park, FL

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

Skyhawk Coming Home!

TINS!*

From Bear Hildebrandt
Author unknown

This may not be the truth, but it's the way I remember it.

~ UP CHIT ~

I've got to tell you a story about a guy who was in the reserves with me. Jack Hartman and I were A-4 pilots in the Naval Air Reserve in the early 70s, and we both lived in the Kalamazoo area. One day while we were sharing a ride to our drill weekend at NAF Detroit, he told me this story:

On Yankee Station in the Tonkin Gulf, in 1969, he was in his A-4 on the starboard bow cat for a night launch. He was loaded with 250 lb iron bombs and two external wing fuel tanks. Like the F-4, the A-4 needed a bridle to hook it to the catapult shuttle. The bridle had a permanent eye at each end, and the eyes slipped onto hooks on the belly of the airplane, and the body of the bridle was hooked over the shuttle. He went to full power. The shuttle fired and at about 70 knots or so the belly hook on the left side of the A-4, or maybe it was the eye of the bridle, broke. As the bridle whipped across the shuttle it took off his left main and nose landing gear struts and the airplane went down on its nose and left wing, shedding fuel tanks. There was an explosion, which killed one of the kids in the starboard catwalk, and Jack ejected out of the fireball as the bird went over the bow. His lower legs were singed by the flames.

Jack's a character, and since he lived through it, it's a hoot to hear him tell it. He went off in his RAPEC seat into the night as the bird went over the bow, and he thought he was dead. The A-4 was in a pronounced left wing down attitude as he ejected, so his trajectory went out forward and to the left of the ship.

The seat worked perfectly. He made one swing in the chute and hit the warm water of the Gulf. He shucked his chute, and counted his blessings. But the OOD's SOP for a bird in the water off the starboard bow cat was to make a hard port turn. Jack looked up, his MK3C flotation having inflated, his mask and helmet still being on, oxygen coming from his seat pan, and here came the pointy end of the boat. It hit him, doing maybe 30 knots, and he ricocheted down the side of the hull, through the barnacles, missing the main engine intakes, was knocked unconscious, and the stern watch saw him come up in the wake having somehow gone through the four propellers. The ship was in the middle of launch and recovery so it resumed course, and the plane guard destroyer astern never saw Jack, who was unconscious and only half afloat. One chamber of his MK3C had been punctured during his slide along the side of the hull. He drifted off into the night.

At some point soon thereafter, while he still had seat pan air, he regained consciousness and got into his raft. He had no radio. Over the course of the next day and a half, he drifted with wind and tide to within about four miles of the shore of Hainan Island. There was a low overcast that afternoon, but a random A-3 at about 500 feet flew right over him and reported the position to the boat, which dispatched a destroyer to pick him up. But by the time the can arrived from Yankee station 50 miles away Jack had drifted inside the three-mile limit of Hainan. Since the can presented a big radar return, its CO stayed outside territorial waters and called for a helo, which arrived when Jack was only about a mile offshore. The helo driver was gutsy and he dropped down on the water and ran in and picked Jack up. By then the helo was low fuel, so it landed on the destroyer, and they put Jack in one of those chicken wire stretchers for the long ride back to Yankee.

When they got to Yankee, the destroyer came alongside for unrep and they high-lined Jack across to the carrier in his wire stretcher. He had several fractured ribs and a fractured right arm. When he got to the carrier, the medics prepared to carry him down the long external escalator to sick bay, which was one deck below the hanger bay. But on the way down the escalator, they dropped him, and as he bounced down the escalator in his stretcher he broke his other arm. As the flight surgeon examined him, he asked Jack, "Did you even TRY to put on your brakes?" They sent Jack to Cubi Point on the COD and put him in the hospital at Clark AFB.

But wait, there's more---

A few weeks later he was on the mend and was hanging around the OPS office at Cubi, wearing Bermuda shorts and a tee shirt. The ops duty yeoman asked him if he was LTJG Hartman and Jack said he was. They handed him a message from the ship which directed him to fly an A-4 back to his squadron. It was an A-4 that had been reworked at the repair facility at Nippi in Japan. Jack said, "Well, OK." He borrowed some flight gear and manned up. His quote: "I was just a dumb JG." As I imperfectly recall, it's about 600 miles from Cubi to Yankee, all over water, of course and single engine birds weren't supposed to do that solo." But there was an A-6 going to the ship that day, so Jack arranged to fly wing on him and off they went.

Enroute, the A-6 lost its radar. His inertial nav also went inop, and his avionics suite quit, except for having UHF COM. As they approached Viet Nam, the ship was IFR, so the A6 said he was going into Da Nang. Jack said, well, OK, but I've got TACAN lock on the ship, so I'm heading there. He got a Charlie time and landed aboard. Jack said he hadn't thought about it ahead of time, but with one forearm in a soft cast and his ribs taped up, it really hurt when he arrested. He parked his airplane and when he walked into the ready room the brothers were aghast. "Hartman, what the hell are you doing here?"

It turned out that he didn't have an up chit from the hospital at Clark and was not authorized to fly. His squadron OPS officer lost his job for originating the message to Jack at Cubi.

So they put Jack back on the COD and flew him to Cubi again, where he stayed at Clark for a couple more weeks until the ship came in.

Great Escapes

Gary Verver's *Losses List*

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

(Kingsport News, Friday, July 17, 1959

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

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

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THE A-4 EVER

Skyhawk Association

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