

Skyhawk NEWS

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The Quarterly Journal of the Skyhawk Association

A-4s Forever!



Photo by 2001 J. C. Rittner

Skyhawks fly Brazil's first carrier ops

Forty seven years after her first flight, the mighty little Skyhawk is still making naval aviation history.

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CVN-76 Christened on Reagans' anniversary

Mrs. Reagan christened the USS Ronald Reagan on their 49th wedding anniversary at Newport News Shipbuilding on March 4th.

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Crash kills RNZAF Skyhawk pilot

Royal New Zealand Air Force Squadron Leader Murray Neilson, 37, was killed when his A-4K Skyhawk crashed near IMAS Albatross, Australia on February 16th.

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On the 1MC

President James "Jim-Bob" Moriarty

first trip to San Francisco.

It was the summer of 1967. The smell of flowers was in the air. There were other smells, too. Home on leave from my first tour in Vietnam, as an electronics technician serving with VMA-211 in Chu Lai. I spent my 30 days free time traveling across the country. Just prior to returning to Vietnam, as I was coming through the Portland airport to make connections to San Francisco, I met a young Navy LTJG, who had just completed flight training with my brother. I'm an identical twin, and the LTJG was confused until I explained that I was *not* the Marine F-4 driver Moriarty he knew, but instead his double. As a close relative of a good friend, I was immediately accepted as a compatriot and taken home for a weekend with his family. Before I left for San Francisco, the LTJG gave me the phone number of a good friend of his who lived there, a young English woman named Bobbie. He pressed me to phone her, offering assurances that since I was virtually kin, I would undoubtedly be made welcome.

Because I was neither an officer nor a pilot, I hesitated to make the call. Still, the LTJG had been so insistent that, finally, I did. It was one of the better decisions I've made in my life. My reception was all that had been promised; Bobbie and her friend Ann invited me into their home, giving me their couch to sleep on and treating me as if I were a distant but beloved relation.

Recently, while on a "Daddy, let's go look at colleges" trip, I drove my daughter through the wine country of northern California. Given that it was only yesterday that I could hold her and her adorable smile in one hand, and given my fondness for northern California, it was a delightful journey. It was also a journey of strong memories. I had been in these hills before, and passing through valleys flush with the faint scent of spring I was filled with nostalgia, remembering my

Given that my country splurged by paying me an eye-popping \$212 per month (although also gratuitously allowing me another \$30 per month to serve as a target, and yet another \$50 per month to serve as an aerial target), lowering my food and housing expenses sounded GREAT. Meeting new friends became icing on the cake.

As I got to know Bobbie and Ann better, I became very fond of them both. But I developed a special affection for Bobbie. Her great love, and her fiancé, was a Navy A-4 pilot then serving on the Bon Homme Richard off Yankee station. Having served with an A-4 squadron, I knew how the pilots loved their aircraft. But what I learned from Bobbie and Ann was how tight knit the relationships were among all of the A-4 "family," and the deep affection felt by the people who loved the pilots who flew the A-4. Suffice it to say, once I was accepted into the fold, no matter how mongrelized the background by which I had arrived, I felt a loved and valued member of the "A-4 family." Bobbie, Ann, and I exchanged letters for the remainder of my eventual three tours in Vietnam, and so it was that one day I received a message from Bobbie announcing that her fiancé had been shot down over North Vietnam and captured. I felt Bobbie's enormous sense of loss. As a member of the extended "A-4 family," I grieved along with her. When I returned from Vietnam and entered my new life, Bobbi and I lost touch. But I have never forgotten her, or her well-developed sense of community for each and every A-4 related individual. Most of all, I have never forgotten her devotion to and affection for her lost love.

Bobbie later married another attack pilot, a Navy A-7 pilot, but I suspect, given the depth of her feelings, that she never really got over her, and indeed our loss. It's still hard today for me to think of our beloved A-4s and not think as well about those courageous young pilots who risked, and in many cases gave up, so much to carry out their assigned missions. So, for Bobbie, wherever she may be: We still love you today, and will remember both you and your young pilot, always.

Semper Fi
Jim-Bob

Dues to increase June 1st

The Skyhawk Association Board of Directors unanimously approved an increase in annual dues. The action was necessary to cover increased printing and postage costs, and allow the Skyhawk News to print a larger edition with more pages. The increase will also provide funding for future projects, such as special event mailings, and for printing membership recruiting and promotional materials.

Effective June 1st, 2001, dues for all members will be:

One year at \$30, or 3 years at a discounted rate of \$75.

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SecNav approves transfer of Skyhawk to Collings Foundation

By Rick Harris
Collings Foundation

It was reported in the Fall 2000 newsletter by Skyhawk Association President Jim Moriarty that Congress had approved the transfer of a flyable Skyhawk to the Collings Foundation. The transfer legislation was signed into law on October 30, 2000. The foundation immediately began working with the Naval Stricken Aircraft Office on the selection of a suitable aircraft.

Originally, it was hoped that we would have access to one of VT-7's recently retired aircraft. This was not to be. The foundation was soon notified by the Stricken Aircraft Office that all of VT-7's aircraft were being held either in war reserve status, or for foreign military sales. A new search was begun by identifying a new list of candidate airframes. Individual aircraft records were inspected and then, as the list was reduced, we inspected the finalist airframes first hand. After several false starts, a Naval Test Pilot School aircraft was spotted in the long line of VT-7, VT-22, and VT-25 aircraft.

Upon examination of the aircraft's maintenance records and a firsthand airframe inspection, it was determined that BuNo 153524 was THE aircraft. Having logged only 6,500 hours on the airframe versus the 11,000-12,000 hours carried by the rest of the TA-4 fleet, it has ample service life left on it for extended museum flight operations.

On December 4, 2000 the Secretary of the Navy approved the transfer of BuNo 153524 to the Collings Foundation.

In the original release by your President regarding the ultimate paint scheme to be carried by the aircraft, he stated that he "pleaded for Navy colors." Those particular pleadings were extremely low key and were accompanied by several renditions of the Marine Hymn.

In order to set the record straight, the colors selected were picked for one reason. The foundation is known for being historically accurate when applying markings to its aircraft. The foundation's F-4D Phantom carries the exact markings carried on the Phantom flown by Steve Ritchie the day he and Chuck DeBellvue got their fifth kill and the B-24 and B-17 carry accurate markings from WWII. The only sustained combat use of the TA-4 was by the fast FAC H&MS 11 Playboys. This is the sole reason the Marine colors were selected. The Playboy's call sign dates back to WWII, and in Viet Nam they performed their missions in the best traditions of the Corps.

The foundation continues to work with the Navy so that we may begin the return-to-service inspections. It is hoped the initial move from AMARC to Houston will have been completed by the time this goes to press.

Visit their web site at: www.cfwest.net



Skyhawk BuNo 153524 was originally built as a TA-4F at the Douglas Aircraft plant at El Segundo, California. The aircraft was built as part of the second block of two-seat "F"s and was delivered to the U.S. Navy in 1968.

After acceptance flights, 153524 began its operational flying career with Marine Air Group 43. Its duties with the MAG group are unclear at this time. After its initial MAG assignment, records indicate that it was assigned to the Naval Test Pilot School at Patuxent River, Maryland, and remained there for the rest of its service career.

The Skyhawk was used for a variety of missions, though its primary use was as a syllabus aircraft for test pilot students. The school uses many different aircraft for student evaluation, and 153524 was one of those aircraft. Later in its career it was used to carry an instrument package to record various flight profiles.

During its career 153524 was refitted as a "J" model aircraft. This modification included removal of the nav/attack bombing systems and an ejection seat upgrade to the Escapac I-G-3 seat. It

did, however, retain its more powerful Pratt and Whitney J52 P8 engine with 9300lbs of thrust. In 1993 this Skyhawk underwent major maintenance at Cherry Point and received numerous upgrades. One of these upgrades involved replacing the original wing with a newer "M" model wing.

153524 was subsequently returned to Pax River and remained there until August, 1994. It was at this time that a serious effort was being made to replace the TA-4 with the T45 Goshawk.

In August 1994, 153524 was officially stricken from the Naval inventory and sent to AMARC, Davis-Monthan AFB, Tucson, Arizona for storage.

In October 2000, a Congressional Act was passed as part of the Defense Authorization of 2001, to release one TA-4 aircraft for flight preservation to the Collings Foundation. Skyhawk BuNo 153524 was the aircraft ultimately selected by the foundation, and Secretary of the Navy Richard Danzig authorized transfer on December 4, 2000.

— R. Harris

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Back Issues

A limited number of copies of the Summer & Fall 1999, and 2000 editions are available by mail for \$2.50 each, post paid. Make checks payable to Skyhawk Association.

Write to us

We actively seek members' contributions of news, photos, historical data, anecdotes, and other items of interest. Content may be edited to accommodate space limitations.

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Skyhawks fly first carrier ops in Brazil's naval aviation history

International News

Story and photos contributed by Bill Sowers



This Skyhawk made the first catapult launch in Brazilian naval aviation history on 18 January 2001. Retired U.S. Navy officer Bill Sowers (lower left corner in photo at right) was the catapult officer.

Forty seven years after her first flight, the mighty Skyhawk is still making naval aviation history. Five Americans led launch and recovery operations from the AEL Minas Gerais (ex HMS Vengeance). Bill Sowers recounts the first launch.

Flight deck work was never work for me, only fun.

I was surprised when they called and asked if I would like to go on a one time mission and teach them how to launch airplanes off an old catapult.

I asked if they knew that I was 60 years old and the response was "I didn't ask how old you are, I asked if you could do it." I said, "hell yes" and left three days later.

The BS-4 catapult had not shot an airplane in 40 years. The interlock circuit was non existent and there was no ratchet and pawl protection. After about 40-50 no loads I was sure that I could get one shot off and, if need be, pull the spears back with a tractor for the second one. To my joy the old jigger system worked well and it was not needed.

The all American boy bridle arrester was not used. Kay and Associates had earlier decided to use throw-aways.

The linear launch valves were controlled by the old adjustable carrot instead of metering rods and the dry steam receivers had excellent drains. (I was concerned about water collection reducing steam volume).

There were rumors that the cylinders may collapse and jam the spears. After precautionary no-loads and study of the dead-load program, I was convinced I could get off at least one shot.

There was no Catapult Officer station, the deck edge lights were inoperative, and there were no wind direction or speed gauges. I established a close rapport with the non English speaking catapult captain and had him be my eyes for all the sensors. I used the ship's flags for wind direction and trusted the Captain and air boss to give me the WOD.

The launch bulletins were a little different than ours, and in Portuguese, but they sufficed after slight modification.

The A-4 test pilot from Lockheed was great. He was concerned about the shot as it was only a 150 cut with power stroke less than that. We discussed his anticipated first shot at length and decided to give him the benefit of the doubt and loaded the bulletin for a 20 knot excess.

We practiced hook ups and suspends until it was second nature, and also determined the hold back location. I could not read the brass elongation indicators so the crew remove the access plate and shined them every morning. Try this with our Navy.

On 18 Jan 2001 we made the first cat shot in the history of the Navy of Brazil. It was near 100 degrees F. and I made wind corrections for temperature and elongation.

The moment of truth had come. We went to first ready and hooked him up, followed quickly by stand by and fire. When a great sight it was to see him soar gracefully into the air.

The catapult shot 10 knots faster than I had anticipated and the opportunity to back off in our excess was available.

After discussion with the pilot, we decided to leave everything as it was because, under these circumstances, the pilot was just along for the ride until he got out from the ship a considerable distance. We thought this would be to our advantage when the Brazilian and Argentine pilots took their turn.

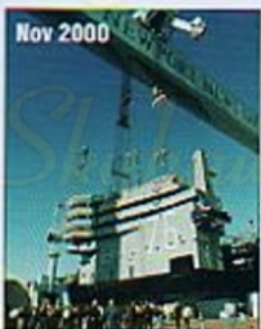
We launched the American ten times to prove that a operations could be done on this old ship, and then followed with 5 more shots for the three Brazilian and one Argentine pilot. One of the Brazilian pilots got an extra shot.

It was a great feeling of accomplishment for the Brazilian navy, and they were intensely proud of joining the world attack carrier nations. I was a celebrated hero and the Admiral stated that "on this day Brazilian Navy Aviation history was born." A great day for them and their country.

They were not nearly as proud as I was. For a 60 year old man to have this opportunity once again was one of the greatest feelings of my life.



USS Ronald Reagan CVN-76



Ninth Nimitz class carrier christened on the Reagans' 49th wedding anniversary



Top Left: In May 1996, Newport News Shipbuilding Chairman and CEO Bill Fricks presented a model of the ship to President and Mrs. Reagan.

Top Right: Artist rendering of CVN-76. When it is commissioned in 2003, it will be the most modern and sophisticated aircraft carrier in the world. It is 1,092 feet long, and will be home to 6,000 sailors, carry more than 80 aircraft and cruise in excess of 30 knots.

Above Left: President George W. Bush was the principal speaker for the christening of the ninth Nimitz-class aircraft carrier, USS Ronald Reagan, at Newport News Shipbuilding in Newport News, Virginia.

Above Right: President George W. Bush and Newport News Shipbuilding Chairman and CEO Bill Fricks look on as Mrs. Ronald Reagan breaks the traditional bottle of champagne against the ship's hull and christens the ship in her husband's name on Sunday, March 4th, the Reagans' 49th wedding anniversary.

March 1998: Six weeks after the keel was laid.

June 1999: Construction steadily continues.

March 2000: The bow is lowered onto the hull. The Reagan is the first Nimitz-class carrier to receive the new bulbous bow design, which increases hull efficiency and reduces drag. The new bow, which adds 36 ft. to the ship's underwater length, will be used on CVN-77, and may be a retro-fit change for all Nimitz carriers during overhaul and refueling.

November 2000: The 650-ton island house is lifted onto the carrier deck. This new design has new masts, new antennae arrangement, and a new outboard weapons elevator.

Photos courtesy Newport News Shipbuilding

Crash kills RNZAF Skyhawk pilot

New Zealand



Royal New Zealand Air Force Squadron Leader Murray Neilson, was killed when his A-4K Skyhawk, NZ6211, crashed near HMAS Albatross, Australia on February 16th. The Commanding Officer of RNZAF No. 2 Squadron was practicing for an air show at Avalon near Melbourne.

Neilson was in the lead aircraft of a "plugged barrel roll" manoeuvre in which the second aircraft is plugged into the leader's extended refueling drogue. Early reports indicated that the aircraft failed to recover from the manoeuvre and crashed into a thickly wooded area before he could eject. The second aircraft pulled out just meters above the trees, after Squadron Leader Neilson apparently yelled a warning over his radio.

RNZAF spokeswoman, Pilot Officer Karen Hill, said the crash occurred about 1km from the control tower at Royal Australian Navy base HMAS Albatross at Nowra, where No. 2 Squadron is based.

Australian Navy Chief Petty Officer Ian Williams, who lives on the base said, "I heard the whump. I new straight away what happened. A sad day."

Squadron Leader Neilson, a 15-year veteran in the RNZAF, is survived by his wife Sandra and two daughters, ages 6 and 8. He had been commanding officer of the squadron at Nowra since 1998.

The Neilsons were to have celebrated their 12th wedding anniversary and his 38th birthday on February 18th. Their two daughters had made him a birthday cake. That night, the family ate the cake without him at their home near the base at Nowra.

"We'll have that for him. He would have wanted us to sit down and enjoy it. That's the way he was," his wife said.

Mrs. Neilson said she understood his passion for flying when she married him twelve years ago. She willingly relocated from their home in Wellington, NZ to the RNZAF base at Ohakea, and then to Australia in 1998 when he assumed command of No. 2 Squadron.

"I knew what I was getting myself into. He died doing something he loved," she said.

His fellow pilots echoed that feeling as they celebrated his birthday at the officers' mess at Nowra.

No. 75 Squadron Wing Commander Nick Osborne brought six of their Skyhawks from Ohakea two days ahead of their scheduled exercise with the Australian Navy so they could watch Australia's biggest air show.

Wing Commander Osborne said Squadron Leader Neilson waited to practice the plugged barrel roll until they arrived. This manoeuvre has been a crowd-pleasing feature of RNZAF Skyhawk air show displays for many years.

He watched horrified as the Skyhawk failed to recover, taking his former student and friend to his death. Osborne taught Neilson to fly jets thirteen years ago.

Osborne said Neilson was very professional and it was "unbelievable" that he could crash.

"Muz was really well liked. He was down to earth and got on with the pilots and base personnel. He was born to be a fighter



RNZAF Squadron Leader Murray Neilson, 37, was flying a Skyhawk similar to this near HMAS Albatross, Australia on February 16th.

pilot. He was what the Australians call a Tiger. He had controlled aggression."

Osborne was commanding officer of No. 2 Squadron before Neilson, and he has temporarily assumed command of both No. 2 and No. 75 Squadrons.

Each year the two squadrons gather at Nowra to celebrate *Waitangi Day* (New Zealand Day) and thank their Australian hosts with New Zealand beer, wine and *hangi* (food).

RNZAF canceled their air show appearance, but did participate in the week-long Ocean Protector exercise with the Australian Navy as planned. RNZAF personnel were given time off to attend a full military memorial February 21 at Nowra.

Funeral at Ohakea

On February 23rd, a funeral service for Squadron Leader Neilson was held at RNZAF Base Ohakea in the hangar of No. 75 Squadron.

Defense Minister Mark Burton, top Defense officials, RNZAF officers, and Australian military personnel were among the seven hundred in attendance. After a eulogy at the hangar, a benediction was held at the base chapel. Volleys were fired and a bugler sounded Last Post.

Departing from the base, the RNZAF Band led the hearse, Neilson's widow and children, and the honor guard down an avenue lined with saluting Air Force personnel.

In a final tribute, three Macchi jet trainers and a lone Skyhawk roared overhead in the missing man formation as the procession passed through the main gate.

Skyhawk Association member RNZAF Flt. Sgt. Don Simms of No. 75 Squadron, and Royal Australian Navy Chief Petty Officer Ian Williams contributed to this report. Flt. Sgt. Simms was also a pall bearer for Squadron Leader Neilson.

RNZAF continues crash investigation

Skyhawk flight ops unaffected

Monday 12 March, 2001

The investigation into the Skyhawk crash in which Squadron Leader Murray Neilson lost his life on 16 February 2001 continues. The RNZAF investigation team has completed its work at the site of the accident (right) at Nowra and has returned to New Zealand to collate its report.

Some engine components from the accident have been sent to an Australian materials laboratory for detailed analysis in order to determine engine performance and condition immediately prior to the accident. The results of that analysis will be considered by the investigating team alongside witness accounts, data collected from the second aircraft and the detailed on-scene investigation.

The team expects to present its findings to Air Commodore John Hamilton, the Air Officer Commanding RNZAF Air Command, in April.

"Although the investigation is not yet complete, nothing has been found to indicate that there is any problem with the integrity of the aircraft as a fleet and which would preclude continued flying operations," Air Commodore Hamilton said.

The terms of reference for the investigation team are full and include investigating the circumstances surrounding the accident, determining the cause or causes of the accident and ascertaining if orders, instructions and procedures were complied with. The team also has the authority to investigate other matters that appear relevant to the accident and are expected to draw out a number of causal factors and make recommendations. RNZAF executives will consider those findings and recommendations in due course. The findings or a statement summarizing the findings will not be released to the public before the RNZAF has had the time to consider the implications fully.

<http://www.airforce.mil.nz/hotgen/urgentnews.htm>



Politics, budget cuts threaten NZ air defense

Prime Minister denies end of Nowra pact will kill air combat role, Skyhawks

Wednesday, 28 February, 2001

According to New Zealand newspaper *The Dominion*, New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark doesn't expect the trans-Tasman Nowra agreement to be renewed. The pact between Australia and New Zealand provides for the deployment of RNZAF No. 2 Squadron to Nowra in a training role with the Australian Navy. It had been believed by many to be the job that would save the Skyhawk.

Miss Clark said it was her understanding that the Australian Air Force would provide its own aircraft (the British BAe Hawk) for the job when the Nowra agreement expires later this year.

She said, "Defense has run into very serious cost escalation, particularly the drop in the dollar in the last year," but the decision to reduce Skyhawk operations should not be taken to mean that they will be eliminated.

National defense spokesman Max Bradford seemed less than convinced. "The government is starving the New Zealand Air Force into the ground. It should be honest with this force's men and women and tell them that they are going to scrap the Skyhawks."

Defense Chief Air Marshall Carey Adamson said the Cabinet was forced into the reductions by severe financial strain on the Defence budget.

The RNZAF was allotted NZ\$233 million this year to fly 4,425 Skyhawk hours. This funding was for deployment of ten aircraft from New Zealand, and six stationed in Australia to provide air defense training for the Australian Navy.

Retired Marshall Robin Klitscher, defense spokesman for Returned Services Association, was not surprised by the spending cuts. He said the latest action was one step short of abandoning New Zealand's air strike capability.



Prime Minister Clark

Breaking News

Two Skyhawk mishaps in two days

20 March 2001
Ohakea, New Zealand

Bad luck continues to dog RNZAF Skyhawk squadrons. Two separate incidents resulted in damage to one Skyhawk and the loss of another.

In the first incident on March 19th, a Skyhawk from No. 75 Squadron at Ohakea AFB reportedly clipped a power line with its tail near Murchison. The pilot diverted to Woodbourne AFB near

Blenheim and landed safely.

It took firefighters an hour and a half to extinguish a grass fire ignited by the snapped cables.

Participating in training exercises with the Australian Navy on March 20th, Flt Lt Phillip Barnes of No. 2 Squadron, escaped injury after his Skyhawk crashed into the sea 90NM west of Perth. He ejected safely and was rescued by helicopter.

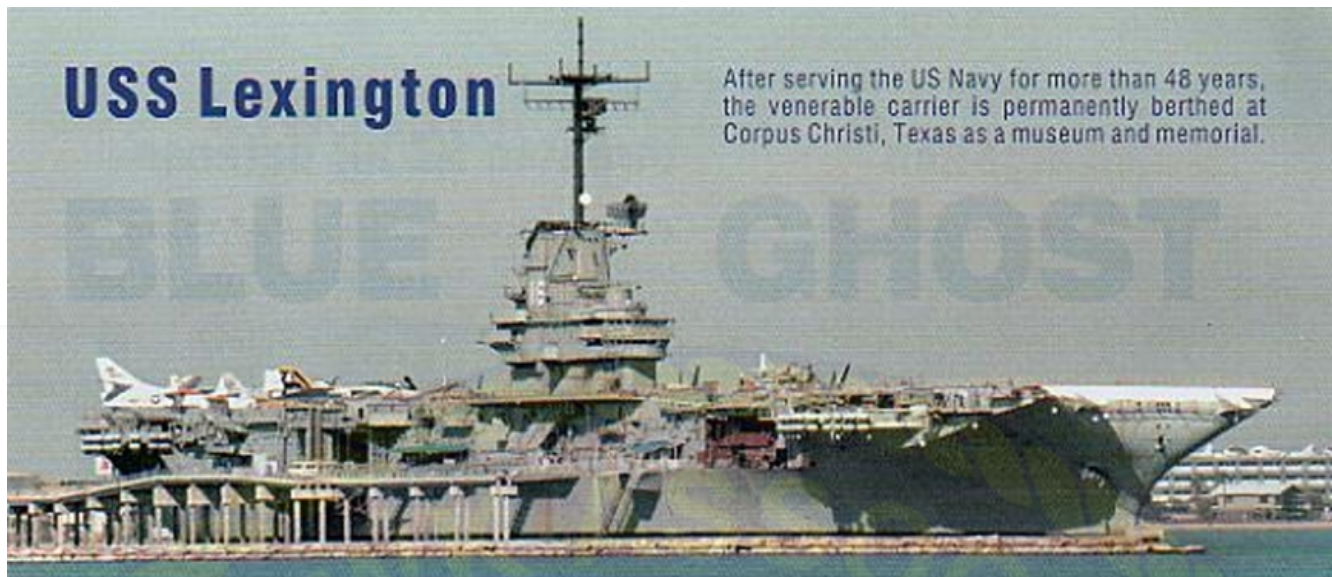
Both incidents were under investigation at the time of this report.

Prime Minister Helen Clark admits the Skyhawks are old but says reports indicate they are good until at least 2008.

Defense spokesman Max Bradford thinks otherwise and says the three accidents indicate the Skyhawks are unsafe and should have been replaced with F16s.

USS Lexington

After serving the US Navy for more than 48 years, the venerable carrier is permanently berthed at Corpus Christi, Texas as a museum and memorial.



The winter Skyhawk Association Board of Directors meeting was held in Corpus Christi, Texas. Before the meeting some of the officers and directors toured the USS Lexington.

The Essex class USS Lexington, was commissioned in 1943 and participated in nearly every major Pacific operation during World War II. Because of a non-camouflage blue paint scheme and Tokyo Rose's repeated and incorrect reports of her sinking, the ship came to be known as the "Blue Ghost."



For almost 30 years, thousands earned their "Wings of Gold" upon her deck from 1962 until she was decommissioned in November, 1991. Less than a year later in, October 1992, she began a new career in Corpus Christi as the Museum On The Bay.

Entering the ship on the hangar deck is a step back in time for veterans. Many notice that "it still smells the same." Five separate self-directed tours of all areas of the ship, fore and aft, top to bottom show visitors where all hands worked and lived at sea.

Highlights include crew's quarters, galley, engine room, sick bay, ready rooms, flight deck, bridge, fore'sle, junior officers' bunk rooms, Captain's quarters, and more. There are exhibits throughout chronicling the ship's history and honoring those who served, and gave their lives during Lexington's forty eight years of distinguished service to the Fleet, United States, and the world.

The museum is a non-profit organization which receives no federal, state or local tax funding. It is supported entirely by admissions, merchandise sales, special events, memberships and private grants. Visit their web site at: www.ussexington.com

Left: Aircraft on display along the angle deck.
Below Left: The Captain's chair on the bridge.
Center: The view from the bridge.

Below Right: A Skyhawk "ready" to launch on the starboard catapult.

Photos by J. C. Ritchie





Top: Combat Information Center (CIC). Center: The helm. Above: (Left to right) Skyhawk Association Vice President John Caldas, President Jim Moriarty, and Directors Jim Ritchie and Tom Elser.

Photos by J. C.



Angel in disguise. This is a genuine former Blue Angel #7, which was flown by Curt Watson in the 1983 season (see inset). It is exhibited as a USMC aircraft to honor the two missing aviators whose names appear on it, as well as all other MIAs.

The Lexington is lucky enough to have not one, but two former Blue Angels. Their other is the F9-8T which is displayed as such on the angle deck (see photo on page 8). It is dedicated to former Blue Angel Bob Rassmussen of the National Museum of Naval Aviation.

BA #7 photo courtesy Blue Angels Alumni Assoc.

COMBAT, an anthology of 10 novellas. Edited by Stephen Coonts. A Forge Book. ISBN 0-312-87190-2

Let's get this out of the way right now: The A-4 Skyhawk was the best military jet airplane ever built. So, how can a novella named *Skyhawks Forever* possibly be anything but Sierra Hotel? It's a lock, especially as written by Barrett Tillman, where fictional Scooter drivers get to snivel carrier landings, drop bombs, sink a ship, and kick hiney in dogfights—practically everything that makes life worth living. Tillman, who truly “knows some shit” about the Tailhook Navy anyway, provides accurate details of Skyhawk flying, carrier landings, and tactics, which are especially gratifying to the Oscar Foxtrot Skyhawk drivers asked to provide some of the information.

There is a twisty plot, a sly BVR Amraamski missile shooter, and evil Commie Chinese. There are manly men and a righteous female pilot named “Scooter” Vespa, who gets to sink a ship and get a guns-kill on an un-righteous Hornette driver. For card-carrying members of the single-seat Mafia, the climatic dogfight sequence is a triumph of the one-pilot, one-engine, and one-tail gunslingers over shifty missile shooters. For any Scooter driver that has ever sat in the saddle with his piper on the grape du jour, this short novel will make him want to go out and win another one.

Skyhawks Forever is published with nine other short novels in an anthology by Stephen Coonts called **COMBAT**. One of these days, I'll have to read the rest of the book.

- Pursome Sez

Flying Cover

Youthly Puresome hits the books



WITH FLYING COLORS - Confessions of a NavCad. Col. R. L. Upchurch. Xlibris Corp. ISBN 0-7388-1426-1

As all but the youngest Scooter Driver remember, back in the Misty Pre-Dawn of History, a plucky lad with two years of college and the requisite number of body parts could sign up for training as a Naval Aviation Cadet (NavCad) and hope to emerge some eighteen months later with Golden Wings and shiny Brown Bars. Col. Upchurch was such a plucky lad, and his memories of the process will remind anyone who has ever hoisted a book bag by command or enjoyed a “Screamer” instructor that only the details change. For those of us that remember the San Carlos Hotel and Trader Jon, as well as many of the bases and flying fields now closed, his story will bring smiles of recognition. The book includes a complete account of what became a famous audio tape that was made of a “Screamer” yelling over the radio at a flight that was made up of instructors substituting for students and goofing him with great ingenuity. For those of us used to training wheels on our aircraft, accounts of taming the wily tail-dragging SNJ are instructive.

The process of earning Gold Wings was never easy, and doing it as a cadet adds some thrills not enjoyed by officer cadets. I suspect, that for most of us, the best thing about the Training Command was getting the hell out, so there wouldn't be someone in the back seat, grading everything and occasionally tossing kneeboards. But Col. Upchurch seemed to stay positive and enjoy the happier aspects of the process. The only argument I might have with Cadet Upchurch is that he should have early on punched out the two acquaintances that actively wish him ill throughout the book - the fellow cadet from back home actually tries to get him cashiered. They all get to be buds in the end, and the Bad Cadet morns himself on his last flight, so there is ultimate symmetry here.

- Pursome Sez



VA-45 reunion at Pensacola October 18-21

Attack Squadron Forty-Five (VA-45) will hold a reunion for squadron and detachment members of 1968-1975 October 18-21, 2001, at Pensacola, Florida. Contact John Paganelli, 2461 West Bay Shore Drive, Gulf Breeze, FL 32561. (850) 932-9328
pignyl@worldnet.att.net

Wings and Hearts of Gold



Congratulations to Otto and Johanna Krueger, who celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary February 25th.

Have Skyhawk, Will Travel

Former VA-23 Black Knight Bob Ammann has taken to heart the slogan once emblazoned upon squadron matchbooks.

An old high school friend of Bob's painted a mural of Black Knight Skyhawks at sea on the back of his motor home. The front of the RV also sports a head-on view of an A-4.



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- P&W J52-P408 Representative, Kuwait (1982-83)
- Power Plant Project Engineer, Grumman St. Augustine Corp., St. Augustine, FL on the Royal Malaysian Air Force A-4L program (J65W-420) (1983-89)
- USN Civil Service (NATEC) J52-P408A Representative, MAG-14, MCAS Cherry Point, NC (1993-99)
- J52-P408 Engine Manager, Brazilian Navy (1999-2000)
- Consultant to Sunrise Helicopter Inc., Spring TX, J52 parts supplier
- Skyhawk Association member

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AOM

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Membership Meeting and Luncheon

Friday, August 17th, \$25/person
Reserve early.

Send checks payable to Skyhawk Association to:

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Check for program updates and details at:
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Bradenton, FL 34202-9265

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Join by mail: Send payment in US funds to:
Skyhawk Association
P.O. Box 182166
Coronado, CA 92178-2166



MINUTES

Skyhawk Association Board of Directors
20 Jan 2001

Present: President James Moriarty, Vice President John Caidas, Directors Tom Elser, J. C. Ritchie, and Ted Langworthy.

Also present: Jack Woodul, and guests host Paul DiAthos, and Clark C. Fraz.

Absent: Treasurer E. E. Laib, Secretary W. F. Foster, A.D. Southworth, Tom Wondergam

President Moriarty called the meeting to order at 1200 at the Corpus Christi Yacht Club, Corpus Christi, Texas.

1. Jack Woodul to make arrangements for luncheon. (Advance payments may be made to the SA treasurer Ernie Laib). He will also inquire about space for a hospitality room. It was hoped Ernie Laib will again agree to set up and maintain same.

Tom Elser will make arrangements for a luncheon speaker.

2. SA to have a booth at Reno in August. Jack Woodul volunteered to be OIC.

3. A discussion will be held at the August meeting to ascertain the location of the 2002 annual meeting. Possibility of a winter meeting in Pensacola in November to coincide with the Blue Angels last performance of the season was discussed.

4. Sales of the A-4 print were discussed.

5. It was agreed that our newsletter was first class and worth the effort and funds expended in production and mailing. Jim Ritchie was complimented.

6. With the growth of memberships, it appears our budget is in balance and the members present were satisfied with it as published.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 13:30.

John J. Caidas, Jr.
Vice President

Subsequent to the meeting, the Board decided by unanimous e-mail vote to increase all membership dues to \$30 for one year and offer the option of 3 years at \$75. The new rates will be effective as of 1 June 2001.

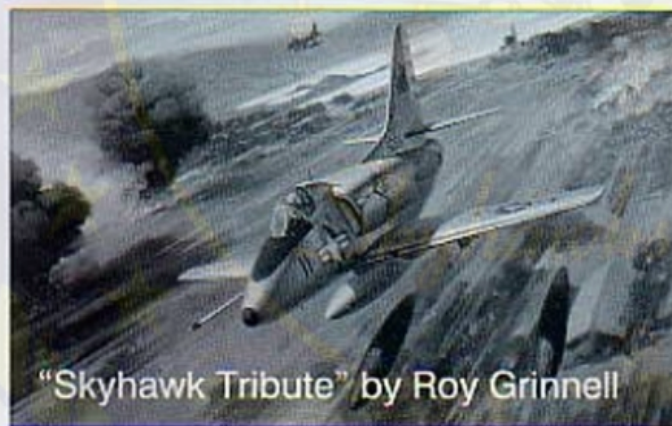
NOTICE!

Effective 1 June 2001

Dues for all members will be:
\$30 for 1 year \$75 for 3 years

Applications received prior to 1 June 2001
will be accepted at the rate of
\$20 per year (\$25 foreign)
for up to 5 years in advance

(All rates are U.S. funds.)



This fine art lithograph, which measures 25" x 32" overall, is reproduced from an original oil painting by Roy Grinnell. Each print is signed and numbered by the artist, and autographed by 23 USN and USMC aviators who flew the legendary Skyhawk. All means of reproduction, including the printing plates have been destroyed. This is a single, limited-edition of 850 prints.

Proceeds will be divided between the National Museum of Naval Aviation Foundation, the Naval Historical Society Foundation and the Tailhook Educational Foundation.

Prints are \$250.00 each, including packaging and shipping via insured FedEx 3rd day. Inquire for shipping and insurance rates for more than one print, or for next day air. Please also include your telephone number and e-mail address in your order.

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VC-8 Skyhawks to get adversary camo colors

By LTJG Jared Allen
VC-8 Public Affairs Officer

As you know, VC-8 at NAS Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico is the last active-duty squadron to operate the TA-4J Skyhawk. Since picking up the Fleet Adversary mission in 1997, the Redtails have been busy supporting the fleet by sending numerous adversary detachments to NAS Oceana, NAS Key West, NAS Fallon, and NAS Pensacola (to name a few). We have recently begun having our Scooters painted camouflage, mimicking potential adversary aircraft. We plan on painting three of them desert brown camo and the remaining four sky blue camo.

In June 2000, our Fleet Replacement Detachment's training facility became fully operational. We refer to it as the Skyhawk Training Facility. The equipment used to support this facility consists of large, wall-sized training panels, as well as other training aids and one flight simulator. All of this equipment was obtained from Naval Air Station Meridian, Mississippi, where it was being used to train student pilots at VT-7.

In March 2001, CDR Brad Steele will be relieved by CDR Vince Drouillard as Commanding Officer VC-8. CDR Steele will be moving

to Washington DC to be the editor of the Naval Aviation News magazine. CDR Drouillard is a Scooter driver from, VC-10 at Guantanamo Bay, and VF-43 at NAS Oceana (both squadrons now disestablished).

For more about VC-8, visit our web site at www.vc8.navy.mil. Also, the Spring 2000 (Vol. 40) issue of *World Air Power Journal* has a great article about Redtail Skyhawks with fantastic photographs.



USN Photo

CDR Vince Drouillard flies Redtail 103, over the Caribbean.



A4



Skyhawks Forever

