



The Skyhawk Association Quarterly



R.G. Smith's *Sandblower*

THE A-4 EVER

SPRING 2005

Skyhawk Association

VOLUME 11 • NUMBER 2

Feature: Boy in a Skyhawk

*Membership Drive
Overdrive*

Flight Testing the Scooter • Puresome Unplugged • TINS • The Dumbest Contest
Skyhawk "508" and Lt. Al Carpenter • Attic Attacks • Take No Prisoners • Update Updated
Boom-Boom Room • Size Does Matter
Seasonal Board Meeting • Prez Sez



www.skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• Raven's Report •

By Bob "Raven" Hickerson

Association Moves Forward on All Fronts!

The *Skyhawk* Association is off to a strong start in 2005. The membership campaign that was launched at the September 2004 meeting is already producing promising results. After four years of declining membership, that trend was reversed between the Annual Meeting last fall and the February 2005 Board meeting in Dayton. The challenge now is to keep the numbers moving up, and as I said in the last issue, if each member recruits one other person to join our association, the future will be secure. The membership drive contest, for both individuals and squadrons, is still in progress. *Prizes are waiting to be won.*

Member Survey ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Located in this Journal is a membership survey that we ran in the last issue. A considerable number of members have returned that survey, and we are running it again in this issue in hopes that more members will do so. It's vitally important that the Board understands what you expect of your association, so take a few minutes to fill it out and return it to me. If you include contact information, such as your email address, you will be eligible to win a three-year membership renewal during a drawing this summer.

Association Schedule ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Realizing that our members need time to arrange for attendance at meetings and events, the Board has approved a two-year schedule for planning purposes (see schedule, p. 22). Some events are familiar, but some new initiatives are in planning:

1. The Annual Meeting for 2005 will once again be held in conjunction with Tailhook in Reno, NV, next September (see Scheduling Stuff for details). The association will host a luncheon, and thanks to program chair Whizzer White, **our distinguished guest speaker will be Admiral James L. Holloway III, CNO 1974-1978.** As in the past, the association will man a booth and is currently in the process of negotiating for a shared admin suite with other attack aircraft affinity groups. *Make plans to attend and standby for more details!*

2. The member surveys that have been returned unanimously endorse the idea of holding regional meetings of the *Skyhawk* Association. Realizing that holding regional meetings will require a great deal of coordination and planning, the Board has committed

to planning a *Skyhawk* Symposium to be held in February 2006 in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, in conjunction with our regular Mid-Winter Board meeting. If you would like to volunteer to help with this effort, please send me an email.

3. As shown on the schedule, the association is planning to hold its Annual Meeting for 2006 in October in the Washington, D.C. area, during the same time period as the Marine Corps Aviation Association Symposium. We're hoping to have an event at the Air and Space Museum and draw *Skyhawk* Association members that haven't been able to attend an Annual Meeting on the West Coast. Of course, the association will have a presence and luncheon at Tailhook 06.

New Directors and Officers ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

At the Board meeting in February, the Board voted to increase the number of directors from 9 to 13, and as you can see by the sidebar, those slots were filled at the meeting or in subsequent Board action. This move will bring new blood into the association and give us a significant increase in manpower to help achieve our ambitious agenda.

As you can see, the Board has appointed a new Treasurer, Steve Richmond, and a new Assistant Treasurer, Chuck Wolf. These officers will join me in forming a Finance Committee that will bring increased oversight and accountability to the stewardship of *Skyhawk* Association funds. These actions are in response to forth-coming regulations which will increase governmental scrutiny of nonprofit corporation boards and financial activity.

Strategic Planning ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Every quality organization needs a roadmap, and *Skyhawk* Association is no different. For that reason, this spring we will begin the process of developing a strategic plan to guide our growth for the next 3-5 years. The planning process will be conducted online to allow the greatest number of members to participate, and preliminary results will be discussed in a special planning session at Tailhook in September. If you would like to participate, please send me an email (hickers@beecreek.net), and I will make sure that you are included.

A-4s forever! Raven

NEW DIRECTORS & OFFICERS

In recent action, the Skyhawk Association Board of Directors appointed the following new directors and officers to terms as indicated.

Steve Richmond of Alameda, California – appointed Treasurer of the Association. Steve works as a Quality Engineer for Rolls-Royce Engine Services and is well-versed in non-profit financial management. Steve replaces long-time Treasurer Ernie Laib who recently retired after years of service to the organization.

Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul of Raton, New Mexico – well known to *Skyhawk* Association members, Puresome was appointed to serve the remaining term (FY 07) of retiring Director Ernie Laib. Jack was currently serving as Vice President (Navy) and has previously served as a Director of the Association.

Mike Green of Cashmere, Washington – appointed to fill a new Director (FY 08) position. Mike is a former Marine and retired electric utility executive well known among Marines affiliated with the *Skyhawk* for his efforts in organizing two all-Marine *Skyhawk* reunions. Mike will work on increasing membership and building our database of potential members.

Joe Turpen of Frankfort, Kentucky – appointed to fill a new Director (FY 08) position. Joe is a former Navy Intelligence officer currently working as a microbiologist for the state of Kentucky. He is an avid *Skyhawk* modeler and will spearhead the association's relations with modeling associations and related organizations.

Dan Brannon of Stafford, Virginia – appointed to fill a new Director (FY 08) position. Dan is a retired Marine who is currently working as a financial planner and managing an office for First Command in the Washington, D.C. area. Dan will work to establish corporate affiliations for the *Skyhawk* Association.

Mark Williams of Edmonds, Washington – appointed to fill a new Director (FY 08) position. Mark is a retired Marine also retired from Boeing, where he worked as an engineer. Mark has agreed to serve as the Coordinator of the *Skyhawk* Association Ready Room.





Skyhawk Association, Inc. Officers and Directors

Founded by M. Davis White
A4pilot@aol.com

Bob Hickerson
President and Director (FY 06)
hickers@beecreek.net

Jack Woodul
Vice President (Navy) and Director (FY 07)
Puresome@comcast.net

Ed Jobin
Vice President (Marines) and Director (FY 05)
ed.jobin@goodrich.com

Terry Cooney
Secretary
skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com

Steve Richmond
Treasurer
serichmond@aol.com

Dan Brannon
Director (FY 08)
dnbrannon@firstcommand.com

John Gabbard
Director (FY 07)
john.gabbard@domsoftware.com

Mike Green
Director (FY 08)
agreen@crcwnet.com

Ted Langworthy
Director (FY 07)
flybear@peoplepc.net

R.R. "Boom" Powell
Director (FY 06)
vigihawk@cox.net

A.D. "Bud" Southworth
Director (FY 05)
buds@walkerscl.com

Joe Turpen
Director (FY 08)
forrestal@fewpb.net

David Weber
Webmaster and Director (FY 06)
darweber@verizon.net

Mark Williams
Director (FY 08)
readyroomcoor@a4skyhawk.org

Chuck Wolf
Director (FY 07)
wolfsindoorsoccer@earthlink.net

Skyhawk Association, Inc.
2421 Clubside Drive
Beavercreek, OH 45431
skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com
Website: www.skyhawk.org or
www.a4skyhawk.org
David Weber, Webmaster
darweber@verizon.net

BOMBS AWAY!

• Spring 2005 •



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NEWSLETTER STAFF



Bob "Raven" Hickerson – Chairman and Editor.

Margaret "Warrior Princess" Bone – Managing Editor, mbone@ec.rr.com.

David "Twidget" Weber – Technology and Website.

Feature Contributors: Boom Powell, Jack "Puresome" Woodul, Davis "Whizzer" White, Joe Turpen, Ed "Viking" Jobin, Bud Southworth.

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Contributions

We actively seek contributions from members, including news, photos, historical documents, anecdotes and other items of interest. Submissions may be edited due to space limitations in the newsletter. Contributions may be emailed to the Newsletter Editor at newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org or mailed to Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624.

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Cover: *Sandblower*, one of R.G. Smith's most popular paintings, depicts a flight of A4D-1s on low-level ingress to a desert target.

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

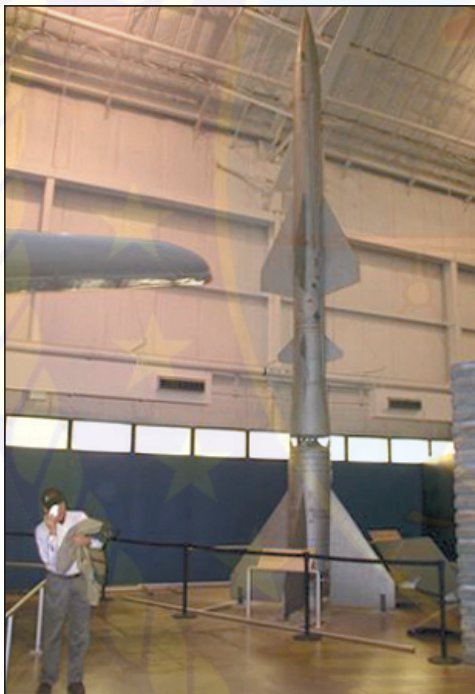
• Your Board At Work •

Summary of Board Meeting Minutes

Skyhawk Association, February 5, 2005 – Dayton, Ohio

The Mid-Winter meeting of the Board of Directors was called to order by President Bob Hickerson at 0835 on Saturday, February 5, 2005, in Dayton, OH. Directors present were Bob Hickerson, John Gabbard, Ed Jobin (Vice President – Marines), and Boom Powell. Directors absent were David Weber, Chuck Wolf, Bud Southworth, Ted Langworthy and Ernie Laib. Other officers present were Vice President (Navy) Jack Woodul, Secretary Terry Cooney and Treasurer Steve Richmond. Member Joe Turpen was also in attendance. A quorum was established by President Hickerson's use of David Weber's written proxy.

Hickerson informed the Board of Treasurer and Director Ernie Laib's resignation due to ill health. Motion to appoint Jack Woodul to fill the remainder of Director Laib's term (FY 07) was approved.



Bored Member Boom Powell shown here shortly after he climbed up, then down, the SA-2 Guideline surface-to-air missile to disarm that bad boy, at the request of museum directors at the Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson AFB, Dayton, OH, following Feb 5th meeting/buffet. (photo by EOD team.)

Reports:

- ☐ **Membership.** Membership stood at 743, a gain of 50 over the previous report in September 2004. A goal of increasing membership by at least 100 net (for a total of 850) during CY 2005 was discussed.
- ☐ **Financial.** Treasurer Steve Richmond complimented former Treasurer Ernie Laib on his excellent records and presented preliminary reports for CY 2004. The Board approved a motion to move the association bank accounts from Royal Bank of Canada to the Bank of America.
- ☐ **Webmaster.** David Weber submitted a written report on website activity. The site is enjoying almost 1000 hits per month, and in January 2005, we had visitors from 88 countries. We have had a number of new SDO volunteers, with over 50 squadrons currently manned by an SDO.
- ☐ **Newsletter.** The newsletter editor reported strong satisfaction with the newsletter format and quality, thanks ingreat parT too proffessonil editin by Mrgaret bone.

Under Old Business, the Board discussed commercial affiliations and agreed to address this area in greater detail in the near future.

New Business: the Board took the following action:

- ☐ Proposal to increase the number of Directors from 9 to 13 – Approved.
- ☐ Proposal to appoint Mike Green and Joe Turpen to two of the new director positions – Approved (see sidebar, p. 2)
- ☐ Proposal to establish a Financial Committee and position of Assistant Treasurer (the Committee to consist of the President, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer) – Approved. Note: Director Chuck Wolf was appointed Assistant Treasurer.
- ☐ Proposal to approve the CY 2005 contract of Managing Editor Margaret Bone – Approved.
- ☐ Proposal to procure a multi-media projector for recruiting and marketing – Tabled until the Fall 2005 meeting.
- ☐ Proposal to approve the CY 2005 budget – Approved.

Discussion items:

The Board discussed the following:

- ☐ Development of criteria for processing requests for support from external organizations.
- ☐ Strategic Planning. Hickerson reported that a strategic planning process would begin in the spring of 2005.
- ☐ Lifetime Membership category. The Board discussed establishment of a lifetime membership but tabled the discussion until a later meeting.
- ☐ Appeal to Skyhawk Modelers. New Director Joe Turpen reported on plans to establish a Skyhawk Association presence at regional and national aircraft modeling shows.

Director Powell was appointed to chair the Nominating Committee, which will recommend a slate to fill the positions of directors whose terms expire in CY 2005. The slate will be presented to the Annual Meeting of Members to be held September 9, 2005, in Reno, NV, in conjunction with Tailhook 05.

The Board discussed a two-year calendar of events (see 'Long Range Plans' on page 22). The meeting was adjourned at 1135.

See complete minutes and reports at the Association Ready Room, which can be accessed at www.skyhawk.org.



Skyhawk Bored Members shown after coloring their paper placemats following an all-you-can-eat Annual Meeting/Bufet somewhere in Dayton, Ohio. Winning the coloring contest was Ed Jobin, note dollar bill prize. Puresome and the diner behind him found a shirt vendor whose price was right. L to R: Jobin, Steve Richmond, Joe Turpen, John Gabbard, Bob Hickerson, Puresome and Terry Cooney. (photo by Boom Powell, of course.)

HARRY GANN'S GALLERY

Bicentennial Skyhawks 1976

One of the ways that our country's bicentennial year was celebrated was to allow each military unit to dedicate one aircraft with a memorial paint scheme. VT-24, a USN advanced training squadron based at Kingsville, Texas, chose to commemorate this historic event, not with a specially painted aircraft, but by flying by a well-known monument, in this case, Mount Rushmore. To my great fortune, I was the chosen photographer.

Harry Gann



BOOM-BOOM ROOM

• Powell's Puzzlers •

Oh sure, you might think these are elementary questions, Watson, but be advised they come from none other than Boom Powell, who sits up at night thinking about how to challenge, yet not insult, our distinguished readers with his puzzlers. Try these.



Question 1: What were the only three USN A-4 VA squadrons that did not make it to the Vietnam fracas?

Question 2: What model A-4 is shown in this picture?



Question 3: What models of the A-4 were outfitted with windshield wipers similar to those found on cars?



Answers:

Question 1: VA-81, VA-83 and VA-64 (all AirLant squadrons).

Question 2: This picture shows A4D-1 (A-4A) 137821, although it looks like an A-4B because of the probe. This anomaly was noted by the founder of the Boom-Boom Room, and his intrepid research team speculates that this aircraft may have served as a test bed for the refueling probe that appeared on production models beginning with the A4D-2 (A-4B). If anyone has first-hand or even second-hand knowledge of this unusual A-4, please let them know.

Question 3: This answer from a member of the Skyhawk Study Group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/skyhawkstudy-group>), Jim Winchester of London, UK: "Firstly, the wipers were not to be found on any A4D-1 (A-4A) and were not fitted as standard on the A4D-2 (A-4B), as far as I know. There were definitely Bs with wipers, but were they introduced in a later production block or as retrofits? I can't say for sure that all Cs had them, but I think so. (Ed. Note: according to Brad Elward writing in *McDonnell Douglas A-4 Skyhawk*, all A-4Cs were outfitted with wipers.) Other versions with the wipers were:

- ✓ All Singapore A-4Ss, S-1s, SUs and related two-seaters
- ✓ The A-4L
- ✓ Malaysia's A-4PTM and TA-4PTM
- ✓ Argentina's A-4Ps and Qs.

Another member of the Study Group, Tom Debski, provided this: "The title of Aircraft Service Change 218 was *Furnishings-Installation of Windshield Wiper*. The wiper paragraph of the A-4C NATOPS said 'on aircraft incorporating ASC 218...', which would indicate that A-4Bs and early A-4Cs were delivered without. My guess would be it was incorporated in all Cs and some Bs."

BOY IN A SKYHAWK

(This article first appeared in the Dec 2002 issue of *Flight Journal* magazine.)

By Boom Powell



*North. North to the land of SAM.
North where the triple A was measured
in tons of exploding metal. North where
there were no friendlies on the ground.
North where the MiGs prowled.*

Looking back, I was a boy. Oh, nothing like WW II teenage lieutenants, but high school straight to university on a NROTC scholarship to the Navy training command and gold wings, through A-4 replacement training at NAS Lemoore and to a squadron that went to Vietnam when the air war was hot—the summer of '67.



Boom the boy goes to war, 1967.

My first mission was supposed to be into *South* Vietnam. That's what the experienced guys said. That is what they did the year before—a line period, maybe two, down on Dixie Station. Ease into the war; get used to it. Not for me. Not for Air Wing 10.

"Had a good bomb run that first time. Solid tracking.

The vee-pipper dead on, altitude and speed good. Push

the bomb pickle hard with my thumb. Nothing. Nada."

Worse yet, keyed up, after all the expectation, all the excitement, my first mission was a failure.

Rendezvous with the strike group went well. Thinking back, that was the hardest part. We had 24-28 jets circling, trying

to find squadron mates, section, flight leaders. I was Hawk-2 and finally tucked in on Hawk Lead's wing to the beach. Going "feet dry," I increased separation and began jinking. As a wingy I had only moments to find the target—a bridge if I remember—before rolling in. Timing was good, I and lead were on different headings, Hawk Three and Four even farther on the circle, making the ground gunner's job harder. Had a good bomb run that first time. Solid tracking. The vee-pipper dead on, altitude and speed good. Push the bomb pickle hard with my thumb. Nothing. *Nada*. Not the expected thump and my *Skyhawk* suddenly lighter. Frantically look down and check armament switches. They're all OK. Swear into O₂ mask. Pull out—late because of the distraction. Late means low and low means bad. Bad because bad guys shooting with every gun they have. Rendezvous on "Cork", Hawk-1. "feet wet" and safe, but the bombs are too valuable to jettison. SecDef McNamara said, "There is nooo bomb shortage." Reality on the line said otherwise. I divert to Danang. Red-hot tailhooker and I don't even get to land on the ship.

Landing and de-arming at Danang went well. Learned later, the Marines not only took my bombs off, but immediately hung them on one of their A-4s. The non-existent bomb shortage, you know. I trapped on *Intrepid* the next cycle.

That was my first. Dropped a lot of bombs and early CBU's (Cluster Bomb

Units), also fired rockets later with no problems. My squadron became "Pouncers"—specialists in subduing the flak before the main strike group rolled-in. Never did fly over South Vietnam that deployment.

The big Hs: Haiphong and Hanoi. Part of the politics that permeated the war in Vietnam, divided the North into six "route packages" with alternate Navy and Air Force responsibility which got vaguer as time passed. The infamous Route Pack Six was subdivided into A and B; Hanoi and Haiphong. By the end of the first line period we were over the Haiphong suburbs. Next time back, over the Big H itself. Some warm-up.

Petula Clark made the pop-charts with the song *Downtown*. Out on the carriers, we had our own set of lyrics.

When the brief is early, long and scary,
You can bet that you'll go—Downtown.
Again the line period's been extended,
'Cause you've got to go—Downtown.

Listen to the music of the Fan Song¹
softly singing;
Look and see the contrails of the MiGs
so swiftly winging;
No jamming at all...
The flak is much blacker there,
It shakes up the Scooters²; it shakes up
the Fates³,
To go Downtown. Tried flying fast and
slow,
Downtown, tried flying high and low,
Downtown, everything's shooting at you.

Look and see the airfields with their
runways so inviting.
See the interceptors come up to join in
on the fighting.
Get out of there:
The SAM's are much thicker there,
They come up in singles; they come up
in pairs.
Downtown, everything's waiting for you.

¹ Fan Song = Russian made fire control radar

² Scooter = A-4 Skyhawk attack airplane

³ Fate = F-8 (get it?) Crusader fighter

At the start of the deployment we created the Society of SAM, S.O.S. Had a good looking patch embroidered in Japan. Blue background, orange explosion like the SA-2 missile, A-4 silhouette coming out of the burst. By the time we went to Haiphong, having a SAM shot at you wasn't enough to qualify. Upped to two, then five. Finally, just passed the patches out to all the A-4 pilots.

As an LSO in-training, I was on the platform during a recovery when one

of those events occurred that make you wonder about *Chance, Fate, The Odds*. The recovery was going smoothly when an A-4 was in the groove. No radio calls, he simply appeared. As he flew closer we could see that he had no nose. The bulkhead in front of the pilot's feet was all that was left—a big flat area. Another *Skyhawk* had just trapped. The airwing LSO had his arm with the pickle raised—the signal that the deck was foul. He was concentrating on the battle-damaged *Skyhawk* and waiting for the large light that showed the deck was clear to go from red to green. I had turned around to watch the deck and yelled, “He’s hung in the gear!” The A-4 in the wires had his nosewheel cocked and could not move forward. The pilot brought the power up and “bounced” the brakes as he tried to straighten out. The bright red, flashing lights on the mirror came on and the nose-less A-4 roared overhead as the one on deck sped forward.

The pilot knew he had top priority in the pattern and banked steeply to come around and try again. The LSO was shaking his head and saying, “So close. So damned close.” Abeam the LSO platform, the *Skyhawk*’s nose pitched down as the J-65 engine quit and the pilot ejected. The plane-guard helo immediately picked him up, deposited him on deck and resumed its position. The rest of the airwing landed onboard. Ten seconds difference and the airplane would have been saved and the pilot saved a risky ejection and swim in the Tonkin Gulf.

The port city of Haiphong is an island. Lots of bridges equaled lots of targets. We would blow them up, the Vietnamese would rebuild them, we’d blow them up again. I dropped one of the bridge spans with a pair of thousand pounders. Three



Getting a tow.

divisions of A-4s were in the attack, but the destruction was mine. During the brief, the strike leader divided the target into near, center and far sections. The idea that pilots come back knowing exactly where their bombs went is false. The most common damage assessment was “Target obscured in smoke and dust.” We all had a pretty good feel for our drop, but until the photo-recce birds brought back pictures after the smoke had settled, it was only a hunch. The pictures showed a fifty-foot chunk missing from the near side, Hawk division’s aim point. My other flight members admitted hits short into the roadway or alongside into the river. A good feeling to see direct results after hanging it out on a mission to the Big H.

Like everyone, I wondered what it would be like to be hit. I found out over the other Big H, Hanoi, during an Alfa strike. I was in my attack dive, tracking the target nicely when I felt and heard a big thump. I was close to release altitude so pressed the button and released my bombs. Pulled out and found my leader at ten-o’clock. As I was joining up, keyed the radio and said, “Hawk Lead, this is Two. Think I took a hit.” Realized I couldn’t breathe. Unhooked my oxygen mask. Hawk One acknowledged and said he’d look me over when we went feet wet. Crossing the coast he gave me the lead and flew close around my airplane. “All I can see is a couple of small holes in the nose. How’s she feel?”

“Good. There’s no flow to my mask and both normal and alternate pitch trim are out, but otherwise everything is OK.”

He tapped his helmet and took the lead for the flight back to the ship. We flew into the break as a section—not unusual after a big gaggle—and he broke first



Uh-oh, what’s this?

into the recovery pattern. He should have stayed on my wing; not that it would have made any difference. I lowered my gear, flaps and tailhook. Trimmed for the bomb run at 450 knots, I did not have enough stick authority to fly on-speed so I picked an approach speed that left me about an inch of back stick in case of a waveoff. As I turned over the carrier’s wake, the LSO called, “A-4 in the groove, you’re fast.”

“Rog,” I said, “and I’m staying that way.” I trapped. Taxiing up the deck, I got the first hints maybe my damage was not that simple. As I passed, flight deck crewmen were pointing at me; some had their mouths open. I parked, climbed out and looked at my *Skyhawk*. Except for the tip of the nose, the fuselage and inner wings



The year, 1967. The model, an A-4C.

...BOY IN THE SKYHAWK

CONT...

were coated with wet, pink hydraulic fluid. The holes outside the cockpit had scorch marks, but were indeed small.

Back to the ready room, shed my flight gear, went down to debrief, returned to the ready room.. Maintenance chief called on the squawk-box, "Think the lieutenant might wanna see his plane on the hangar deck." Had my picture taken admiring the holes. The chief told me what they found. I was hit with three, not two, chunks of shrapnel. The unnoticed one had smashed into the formation light on the bottom of the port wing. The light was gone and the wires burned and frayed. The hole was one inch from the wing fuel tank. One of the others had cut the wires for normal trim, crushed the alternate trim mechanism and lodged against the rocket for the ejection seat. Half an inch farther and it would have probably fired. The third hit went into the nose compartment where it severed the line from the liquid oxygen bottle and nicked the hydraulic line for extending the nose gear. When I lowered my landing gear, there was enough pressure to lock the gear down, but hydraulic fluid sprayed from the nick into the compartment the oxygen had bled into. I was a flying bomb. That is when I began to shake. Two hours after being hit.

There were guys who did not want to know when it was their last mission—superstitious about getting bagged at the end. My battle damage was late in the deployment. Next day, went to Thanh Hoa for our airwing's crack at the infamous

bridge (didn't drop it), then an armed recce, Hai Duong, Thuong Dong and the fly-off to Cubi Point. My war was over for that year.

Skyhawk Quirks

The A-4 was designed with leggy landing gear so there would be clearance to hang bombs and other ordnance. In order to fit the nose-gear in, there was a "shrink link" that compressed the oleo as it retracted. If this link broke, the wheel would not fit in the well. If the nose-gear indicated an unsafe up, the procedure was to lower it and not try to raise it again in case it got stuck permanently. The main landing-gears rotated 90 degrees to fit in the wing wells—another possible malfunction.

"When I lowered my landing gear, there was enough pressure to lock the gear down, but hydraulic fluid sprayed from the nick into the compartment the oxygen had bled into. I was a flying bomb."

Until the TA-4 and "Fox" versions, the *Skyhawk* did not have nosewheel steering. Not unusual for Navy fighter aircraft; it saved weight and complexity. Steering while taxiing was done with differential braking. Since this was not accurate enough to spot for catapult shots, the deck crew used a tiller bar. The tiller was a six foot long steel pipe with a rod at the end which fitted through the hollow nose-wheel axle. A green-shirted sailor would use the bar to steer the A-4 onto the cat. Woe betide any pilot who did not see the fingers-tapping-nose signal that said the tiller was inserted. A forgetful tap on a brake would sling the man holding the end twenty feet—maybe over the side of the ship.

The free swiveling nosewheel also came into play after landing. Normally, after an arrestment, the CDP (Cross-Deck Pennant, the "wire") would start to retract pulling the A-4 with it, the retract would stop, the A-4 roll a few more feet freeing the tailhook from the wire, the pilot would raise the hook and taxi forward to clear the landing area.

The nosewheel would swivel backwards and—most of the



Another lovely day floating off the Vietnam coast.

time—trail back when power was added and the *Skyhawk* started moving forward. If the wheel angle, airplane speed, deck list, tire pressure, wind, waves or multiple other variables were wrong; the nosewheel would cock to one side and

not move without plenty of power and "bouncing" on the wheel brakes—which took time. This dilemma was called, "Hung in the Gear"... and a few more unprintable terms.

Skyhawk Weapons

Memories of the weapons we used in 1967, (stuff not found in the manuals.)

The 2.75" FF Rocket: FF for Folding Fin. Four stabilizing fins were supposed to open as the rocket left the tube. If one did not, it would spiral outwards heading who-knows-where or collide with another rocket. Out of any 19 shot pack one or more would usually malfunction. Dick Stratton who became a long-time POW and subject of the famous "bowing" photograph, was downed by an errant 2.75 inch rocket. Fun to watch—when your life was not at risk. Used for Flak suppression until the CBU arrived.

The CBU-24: an early model Cluster Bomb Unit. A streamlined clamshell filled with grapefruit-size bomblets. A nose fuze opened the halves a set interval after release, flinging the bomblets out. The bomblets armed by spinning and



This is a VA-15 A-4C, loaded for bear.

exploded on impact into hundreds of high speed fragments. (We were definitely not allowed to bring CBU's back to the ship.) Because the A-4 B and C had only three racks and the center usually held a fuel tank, the technique for using the CBU-24 was to preset one fuze 3 seconds shorter, arm only one side rolling in, pickle on target, lunge down and arm the other side, pickle again. Pulling off target you could look back and watch a ring of explosions build, then a second ring which overlapped and filled in the hole, knowing that within that figure-eight pattern the casualty rate was 90%.

Bombs: After a period of using high-drag, fat bombs that were left over from Korea, the Navy settled on the Mark 80 series. The catch was, there were not enough high speed tailfins available so they were usually fitted with *Snakeye* fins. The *Snakeye* fin was designed to retard the bomb for low altitude drops. The Marines used them down south during close-air-support missions, but there was no need for them up north. (Survival Rule Number 1: NEVER fly below 3,000 feet—the range of shoulder-fired guns.) Heavy, draggy and complex, they were wired closed and dropped up north... because they were all we had.

Cannon: ECM (Electronic Counter-Measures) was vital to staying alive in the radar heavy environment over the North. Before leaving the states all *Skyhawks* had a *Shoehorn* modification which installed warning and jamming equipment. Small ice-cream-cone antennas were installed at nose and tail and to make space for the "black boxes," the ammo cans, and one of the 20 mm cannons were removed. The



Alert on Intrepid, a VSF-3 A4B is ready.

one remaining gun, with only 40 rounds, was probably mostly of psychological value—desperate coverage of a downed aircrew or the A-4 driver's favorite fantasy—a MiG kill. (The single MiG kill by an A-4 was scored using rockets.) A shack-like structure on stilts off the coast was frequently strafed to check your gun and aim. Since maritime aids were on the no-no list, gunfire from the shack was always claimed. A battle tank could not have survived the number of cannon shells put into that wood structure—which gradually grew shorter.

Skyhawks on Intrepid

Normally, navy airwings are assigned to the East or West Coast and a carrier, an airwing and the same squadrons remain a set team for years. Not Carrier Air Wing

Ten. Because of the need for striking power in Vietnam, the Navy changed the USS *Intrepid*, CVS-11, from an anti-submarine carrier to a special attack carrier. The "Fighting I" made three cruises to the Tonkin Gulf as a CVS(A) with three A-4 attack squadrons embarked. In 1967 CVW-10 staff, the VA-34, "Blue Blasters" and VA-15, "Valions", both flying A-4Cs, were based at NAS Cecil Field, FL. A reduced size A-1 Skyraider squadron, VA-145, "Swordsmen" and the oddly designated VSF-3

with A-4Bs were at NAS Alameda. No fighter squadron was assigned, but since there was a photo detachment of RF-8 *Crusaders* from VFP-63, NAS Miramar, a detachment of F-8Js from the VF-111, "Sundowners", who were already deployed on USS *Oriskany* would join the airwing to provide photo escorts. A detachment from VAW-121 with E-1B Tracers and VAW-33 in EA-1Fs provided early warning radar and electronic jamming respectively. Both units were based at NAS Quonset Point, RI. A helicopter det (Kaman HU-2Ks) from HU-2 in Lakehurst, NJ, rounded out the airwing.

To further confuse the coastal mix, *Intrepid* sailed from Norfolk, VA, through the Mediterranean, passed through the Suez Canal, before it was closed for the Arab-Israeli Six Day War, crossed the Indian Ocean and went through the Straits of Mallaca to get to the Philippines and Gulf of Tonkin. Despite the oddball composition, led by CAG Ken Burrows, Air Wing Ten dropped as much ordnance, destroyed as many targets, and lost fewer airplanes than most "normal" air wings.



Ed. Note: Retired CDR and Skyhawk Assoc. Director Boom Powell flew the A-4 and RA-5C *Vigilante* during his career, and following retirement, flew Boeing 747s. He writes for *The Hook* and other aviation magazines, and has published a fighter ace biography.



The boy boards the jet.

TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •



newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org

To the Editor:

January 28, 2005

Bob/Chuck: I'm pleased to report that today we acquired 10 ready room chairs for the Skyhawk Ready Room - since these chairs cost \$1500 each new, this is a tremendous savings and will go a long way in reducing our initial cost. Also, the Midway Executive Board approved our concept of painting our recent acquisition, A4F BuNo 154977, which was assigned to VA-23 during the 1968 and 1969 cruises in *Ticonderoga* and *Oriskany*, with the names of LCDR Larry Gosen and Lt Stan Smiley, both KIA. The aircraft will be loaded aboard *Midway* in late March. I am currently attempting to locate NOK of Larry Gosen and Stan Smiley to determine whether they would be interested in coming aboard *Midway* for a dedication ceremony.

Bill Gilchrist

(Ed. Note: Bill Gilchrist is spearheading an effort to raise funds for a Light Attack Community Ready Room in USS Midway. Those interested in making a tax-deductible contribution to that effort should contact Bill at a4driver@san.rr.com.)

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To the Editor:

February 26, 2005

I read "Who were Those Guys," about the Playboy FACs out of Danang with some interest. The article highlights the use of the TA4F as an observer and TACA aircraft well after the missions began.

When a student, just out of flight training, I was transferred with six other pilots to bring the TA4Fs rigged with equipment for air control overseas. We left El Toro and were on the runway with loaded guns when the *Pueblo* was captured, and were held, then went into Danang on the second day of the TET Offensive in 1968. I had about fifty hours.

I did not get back into a TA4F controller role until October of 1968 after going to Okinawa to be trained as a Forward Air Controller, and Battleship spotter. At that time the TA4Fs were in the three air groups: MAGs -11, -12 and -13, with two

each in Chu Lai with MAG -12 and -13, and the remainder in Danang.

Unlike the article by Adkinson, we did not do well, as we had few pilots, and were working in Route Package 1 in North Vietnam with the battleship. The first day I was to fly, I ended up with the investigation of my predecessor. The plane disappeared. The USS *New Jersey* used proximity rounds and shot down another controller who ejected and his plane almost hit the fantail of the ship.

I was transferred to Danang to fly with what was later called Playboy in Feb. of 1968, as was Capt. Cook, our other A-4 pilot in the F-4 Group. Only one plane was left at Chu Lai at that time. A number of those listed as Playboy FACs were flying with the group at Danang when we got there.

There were only four or five TA4s left at that time. Capt. Buffington was shot down and rescued in Laos, and I was assigned to be a company commander of a rifle company, but continued to fly. At that time we were flying most of our missions west of Khe Sanh, but I dropped down to Kham Duc where a massive force had been when I was still flying with VMA-311. We were attacked four days after I took over the company, and we flew over the area southwest of Danang as this was the obvious access route.

As I had been an intelligence officer, I had the advantage of knowing about where to focus, but during daylight hours could only tell what had been used, and not where the enemy was. My last mission with the air group was with a CBS photographer and he took pictures from Danang, to the area south of Chu Lai. In documentaries, I have seen some of that film. I had come to Vietnam with 80 hours, none in the single seat A-4. I left fifteen months later flying the C-117, and TA4, and was still with a reinforced rifle company with no other officers.

We were not as organized as the Playboy FACs were later to become, but we had the focus of working with the battleship and then on certain access routes. When Red Crown could not get in to rescue a downed pilot, we made

the last searches. It is apparent from the article that reorganized, focused and better trained, the later planes did a better job with less losses.

Robert "Gene" Lathrop

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To the Editor:

January 28, 2005

Bob, I just received my copy of the newsletter [Winter 2005]. Kudos to you and the rest of the staff - really a great job on the whole thing. It'll be interesting to see if you get any feedback from the piece on LGBs.

I always thought that the ARBS seemed like a good idea. Did it work well in practice? VA-164 was one of the few Navy squadrons that maintained and used the CP-741 (strange that I can remember that, but can't remember my own phone number!). It took some of the variables out of the bombing equation, and the ARBS would remove several more.

When CVW-21 went back to WestPac in '73 I wound up as O-in-C of the Cubi Beach det. I never worked harder and longer for no credit in my life! But I wound up taking a Super Fox on a test flight sans tanks & racks. WOW!! It unstuck the rate of climb passing 24,000'. I leveled off at 40,000' and did a slow descent back down to 37,000'. It went through The Number and stayed there in level flight. After descending back to 10,000' I did some acceleration tests, just for grins. (I had been flying F-8Hs before going back on active duty.) Starting at 250 kts, the A-4 would out accelerate both the F-8 and the F-4 up to about 400 kts. Passing 500 kts the rate of acceleration declined rapidly, so the F-8 then the F-4 would catch up.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it!

Johnny Bittick

(Ed. Note: Johnny Bittick contributed his recollections of VA-164's use of laser target designators and laser guided bombs during the squadron's 1972 cruise on USS Hancock - see the A-4Ever Winter 2005.)

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To the Editor:

February 2, 2005

Raven, I flew the A-4 (*Ed. Note: see "Does Anyone Know Why?," A-4Ever Winter 2005, page 8*) in the picture when I was at Pax River. We used it as an engine test bed, as I recall (memory → →)



SIZE DOES MATTER

• Modeling News •

By Joe Turpen

Though it is true that individuals who flew the *Skyhawk* founded the *Skyhawk* Association, the association understands that there are other people who have an interest in this great aircraft. That is why we welcome as members anyone interested in the A-4. Our association actively supports the modeling community. I was appointed to the *Skyhawk* Association Board of Directors with specific responsibility for developing a relationship with and supporting modelers. The association will sponsor a category and a *Skyhawk* Award at the 2005 National Convention of

the International Plastic Modelers Society, which will be held in Atlanta this summer. The same type awards will be sponsored at the region 4 IPMS contest in May. When possible, the association will sponsor seminars for *Skyhawk* modelers.

This regular column will feature kit reviews, news on aftermarket kits and other items of interest to the modeler. Also, to the extent possible, the association will provide assistance to members in researching *Skyhawk* modeling projects. Finally, the association website has a Modeler's Hangar which is available for

use by association members.

This column will be better if members provide input. I encourage any one interested in doing so to submit items for use here, or to pass on to me ideas for articles for consideration.



Here's a beauty built by Joe Turpen, a Hasegawa 1/32nd A-4F BuNo.155018 flown by VA-164 and named in honor of the squadron's great friend, Mrs. Jessie Beck, former owner of The Riverside Hotel and Casino in Reno .

Take No Prisoners cont...

➔ ➔ may be foggy on that count).

I was always told that the airplane was painted in the alternating pattern to enable accurate data acquisition during filming of special weapons release profiles (Toss/Loft and OTS). Can't vouch for that from personal experience as we didn't utilize the plane for that. I believe that prior and subsequent aircraft (I saw an F-18 painted in that scheme in ABQ on a trip through town) were used in a similar way.

At the very least, I've started a good rumor, which any Attack pilot knows is as good as the real story!

Cheers, Wadds

Ray Waddell, CAPT, USNR (Ret)



To the Editor:

February 1, 2005

Gasp. Amidst an otherwise superb Winter Newsletter, is the VA-155 insignia used to illustrate the TINS "Chute Shots". Old

A-4 *Silver Foxes* will be aghast to see the new, bland insignia that was created about 1987-- long after the *Skyhawk* was gone. The cobra and skull had pizzazz.

See patch image – VA -155

Boom Powell



VA-155

To the Editor:

February 7, 2005

Dear Boom,: I'd like to correct one part of your answer #2, concerning The Hump, which you wrote applied only to Ls and Fs. While I was training in VA-22 in 1968, following the Ranger cruise with A-4Cs, the squadron transitioned to Echos and Foxtrots, and took delivery of Echos with humps. We called them the Humpback Echos, so we'd know what engine and knobs we had, versus the Foxtrots that eventually became our sole model on the 1969 and 1970 *Bonnie Dick* cruises.

I don't remember if the Echo humps had much or any gear in them, then.

Bryan Remer

Redcock



To the Editor:

February 2, 2005

Raven: As I was reading Dave Dollarhide's piece on the USS *Forrestal* Fire & VA-46 A-4E Dedication in the Winter 2005 Quarterly, I got a really weird feeling. Sometimes for some reason a number sticks in my head and then later pops out pretty much on its own. In his article Dave reported that A-4E BuNo 152070 had been reconditioned and put on display at the Evergreen Aviation Museum. That Bureau Number jumped off the page... I'd flown it someplace! I grabbed my logbooks and sure enough, that airplane was in VMA-311 in WestPac. I flew many

hops in it at Iwakuni and Bien Hoa in 1972/1973. Don't know what its history was before or after (until Dave's report), but it must have been a good airplane for its number to have hung with me for over 30 years! I'm happy it was rescued from the boneyard. This makes me feel good for two reasons: first, a part of my personal history has been preserved; and second, contrary to some opinions I'm not old enough for my memory to have totally gone!

Semper Fi and A-4s Forever!

Jim McNeece...Professor

(Ed. Note: One of the great benefits of membership in the *Skyhawk* Association is access to the aircraft information databases available in the Members Only Ready Room – see A-4 BuNo. General Information and A-4 BuNo. Unit Deployment to find out what happened to your favorite A-4.)



Correction/Addition to Table 1, Who Were Those Guys? – A-4Ever, Winter 2005

Please note the following correction to the feature story *Who Were Those Guys*, by Larry Adkinson, published in the Winter 2005 edition of the *A-4Ever*: The name of Fritz Menning, Playboy 59, was inadvertently deleted from Table 1. With that addition, Table 1 of that article represents the most accurate list of Playboy crewmembers and call signs available.

SKYHAWK "508" AND PILOT, LT. AL CARPENTER

By Jim Caiella



(Ed. Note: Skyhawk Association member Jim Caiella's article is reprinted from the *American Aviation Historical Society Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 1, Spring 2004 with permission-see www.aaahs-online.org/ for information)

When a plain-vanilla A4D-5 Skyhawk, constructor number 13308, rolled off the Douglas Aircraft Corp. assembly line in El Segundo, Calif., in the mid-1960s, no one knew what the fates held in store for the little plane. By 1 November 1966, 13308 had been

re-designated as an A-4E and wore the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics Number 151138. Assigned to VA-72, the "Blue Hawks," several years previously, 13308 was known in the squadron as "508" by its Modex designator aboard the USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CV-42).

Its pilot that day was newly-minted Lt Allan R. "Al" Carpenter. He originally had enlisted in the Navy in 1955, right out of high school. He received his commission through the Integration Program and

won his wings of gold in 1963. He joined the "Blue Hawks" in 1964 and made a Southeast Asia cruise aboard the USS *Independence* in 1965. While aboard the *Roosevelt* on his second combat tour, he had already been shot down once on 21 August 1966. This mission was to be his 135th.

The 1 November, 1966 mission for 508 was to be a combined "Iron

"At about 5,000-feet on a 45-degree attack angle, Carpenter fired the four Zunis in quick succession "stirring the stick" around the aim point to get a better spread on the soft target below."

Hand" and coastal recce mission around Haiphong. An "Iron Hand" mission was SAM protection and flak suppression support for another flight. In this case, a brace of RF-8A *Crusaders* photographing shipping in the harbor needed support. The coastal recce portion of the mission was a bit of freelancing up the coast toward China looking for targets of opportunity.

When launched, 508 carried a typical "Iron Hand" loadout. An LAU-10 pod

containing four Zuni air-to-ground rockets at Station 1 under the left wing outboard; two Mk. 82 Snakeye 500-lb. high-drag bombs on Triple Ejector Racks (TER) on each of Stations 2 and 4, inboard left- and right-wing respectively, and an AGM-45 Shrike anti-radar missile on Station 5, right outboard wing. The centerline position, Station 3, carried a 400-gal. fuel tank. His two wingmen had Stations 2, 3 and 4 as 508, but carried two Mk. 82 Snakeyes on TERs on Stations 1 and 5.

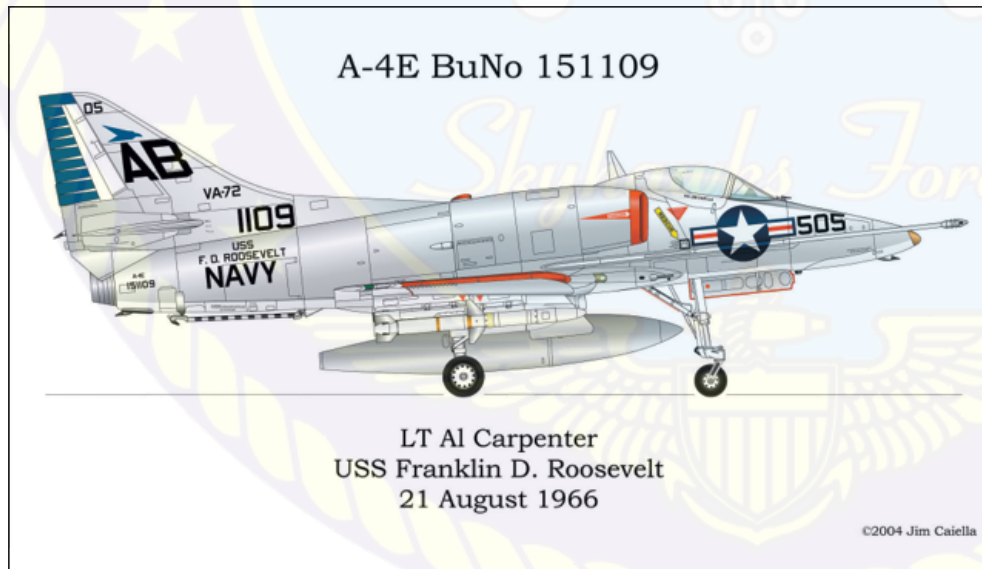
Lt Carpenter led the flight of three A-4s with the call sign "Soapy" to a point off the coast of Haiphong. As they listened to the RF8s start their run, Carpenter heard the Fansong radar he was monitoring switch into attack mode. Carpenter had been climbing to 9,000,' to what he described as "my pre-determined minimum

altitude for a 'down-the-throat' Shrike shot at the range I estimated to the Fansong." Picking up the launch visually, he set up, aimed and launched the Shrike. He

watched the Shrike until after its engine burnout when he saw that the missile was tracking to the site. He pushed 508's nose over and down toward the site, selected the Zuni pod and called for his wingmen to follow him. One, still concerned about the SAM headed their way, had his exclamations silenced once the Shrike hit its target and the SAM went "dumb."

As they approached the SAM site, AAA exploded all around. Carpenter noted that the "Flak was everywhere" and were not the puffy "little white 'cotton balls'" but "big, black, and ominous, each centered on an ugly orange fireball that faded to black as the round spewed its shrapnel in all directions." The three little Skyhawks pressed on.

At about 5,000-feet on a 45-degree attack angle, Carpenter fired the four Zunis in quick succession "stirring the stick" around the aim point to get a better spread on the soft target below. Carpenter has expressed a real appreciation for the 5" rocket, calling it his "weapon of choice" on such missions. He noted that the rockets were VT or proximity-fused. They would explode in a shotgun-like fashion at a preset distance from the target, further expanding the spread of damage. Pulling out from his dive at around 3,000-



feet, 450 knots and at maximum G-load, 508 was rocked by an explosion. The fire warning light immediately flashed on.

Calling out to his wingmen that he had been hit, he also ordered a turn-around to drop bombs on the site on their way out. This was not heroism, he notes, simply a matter of convenience and perhaps some necessity. The only way out was the way they entered, so they had to turn around. Carpenter needed to drop excess weight – the bombs, so why not on the target as they passed over? With 508 turned around and level at about 3,000-feet, Carpenter dropped everything -- bombs, racks, tank and empty LAU-10 pod. Then things started to happen fast.

Primary electrical power was lost so he popped the RAT, a ram-air turbine emergency electrical generator. Altitude being life, he started a climb to 9,000-feet where he would shut the engine down and wait before trying a re-start and heading for the open sea. In case this plan didn't work, he hooked up his zero-delay lanyard. This would separate him from his seat quicker in a low-level ejection. He then lost oxygen, quickly followed by the electricity again. A brief moment later as 508 pushed up through 5,500-feet, it slewed sideways. From its 20-degree upright climb, the *Skyhawk* turned turtle to the horizon. As the jet started heading downhill in its uncommanded roll, it quickly gained speed. Still under full power and slick – with no drag inducing appendages attached – the A-4 accelerated.

Waiting for the plane to right itself in its roll, the craft passed through 40-degrees nose down. A quick glance at the dead instruments showed the pitot-static system still working. The needle indicated 550 knots and was perceptively moving faster. Following his training, and with the final personal thought that, “Man, I’ll bet this is gonna hurt!”, Carpenter used the face-curtain rather than the ejection handles. Thirty-eight years after the event, he recalls every millisecond of what happened next -- the sound as the canopy explosive fired and the shield flew from the aircraft, the sound and push of the seat as it fired and “every inch of the ride up the rails.”

He describes entering the wind stream at near *Mach* speed as a blade moving

down his body. Every bit of it hurt and hurt badly. He felt the seat rocket stop firing and the seat pull away from his body. The zero-lanyard attachment caused the seat to separate before the face curtain was cut away. This action yanked his arms out into the airstream. The still near-sonic wind blast ripped his right arm from its shoulder socket, splintering bone. His left arm was dislocated as well. His pain, he said, was “unbelievable.” Then, the chute opened. The almost explosive deployment blew out two and a half gores of the fabric giving him a faster than intended descent. Carpenter has since calculated that the

“Following his training, and with the final personal thought that, “Man, I’ll bet this is gonna hurt!”, Carpenter used the face-curtain rather than the ejection handles.”

force of the opening was at least 40 Gs. The impact would be hard, especially on his already brutalized body. However, Carpenter’s concern turned to what would happen after the landing.

With a stiff breeze blowing and the holes in his chute, Carpenter expected to go deep into the muddy waters of Haiphong harbor and become – in his words – “a wind-propelled torpedo.” With his broken and dislocated arms it would be all but impossible to roll over onto his back and release the parachute’s Koch fittings. He was right. Out of breath and several feet under water, he became that torpedo. As he started to wonder how long it would be before he died, the motion stopped and he popped to the surface. Only years later did he come to under-

stand what had saved his life.

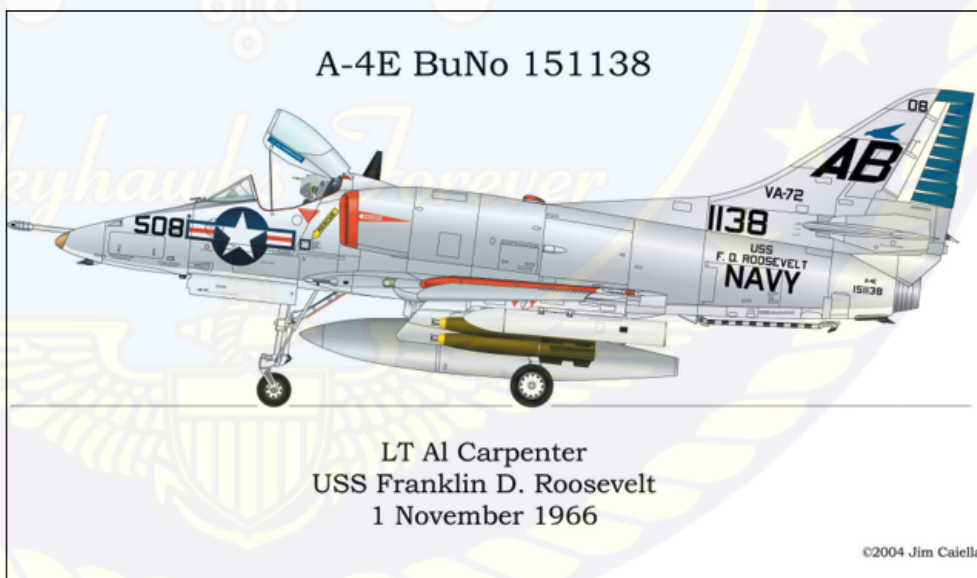
The parachutes had been recently modified to include a strip of fabric around its external periphery that opened upward. When the chute was pushed along the water, the strips dug into it, forcing the parachute to deflate. Ensnarled in his risers, with a half inflated flotation vest, his troubles were not nearly over. Despite the low passes by his “wingies” as well as other aircraft from the *Roosevelt* and USS *Constellation* to keep fishing boats away from him, the Vietnamese picked him up. Despite this, a rescue helicopter continued toward the boat until it

was severely damaged by AAA fire and forced away. Carpenter recalls his last thoughts as a free American.

“Damn – I’ve got the LSO duty tomorrow, and it doesn’t look like I’ll make it – how will they manage without me? Hmmm, I’ve gotten way too fat on this cruise – bet I’ll lose some weight, now!”

The *Roosevelt* did manage without him and he did lose the weight. He was repatriated after six years and four months of captivity on 4 March 1973. Retired in 1978 as a commander, Al Carpenter resides with his wife, Carolyn, in Cobbs Creek, Va.

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(Ed. Note: Jim Caiella is the associate director of photography for the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* in Richmond, VA., and has a twenty-eight year career in photo-journalism.)



FLIGHT TESTING THE SCOOTER

By Maj Drury W. Wood, Jr., AUS (Ret)



(Ed. Note: this article was reprinted with permission from the Winter 1990 issue of *The Hook*.)

Recently, I went to an airshow near Portland, Washington. Ordinarily, I do not go to them anymore because I am an enthusiastic participator, but a restless observer. However, I went to see the *Corsairs* start their R-2800s with a cough of black smoke and hear the P-51's Rolls snarl across the field, thinking that the airframes and engines were older than the pilots flying them.

All of the modern participants were there, including the F-teens. One of them was roped off where its heavily loaded wheel had dropped through the asphalt with nothing on the field capable of lifting it. On the row behind the immobile bird, reserved for current modern military aircraft, was an old friend - an A-4. Here was an airplane whose predecessor I had first flown 12 May 1955 as the A4D-2. Thirty-five years later it is still in service! A pair of young "Top Guns" stood in front of the A-4 doing a great PR job for the Navy and the airplane. I thought of the sea stories I could tell them about the early days of testing the A-4, but restrained myself. I turned away and saved those stories for this opportunity.

In rummaging through my memory attic, I recall being in the cockpit of an A4D 6,000 ft. above the Mojave Desert. The canopy was frosted over, the engine was dead, the ram air turbine would not drop out, and (because of the inevitable effect on the instrument panel) I had no indication of where the real world might be. I came up with a plan to try one more engine start before I pulled the curtain. The *Skyhawk* must have

read my mind, because the J65 came to life with its usual rumble and grumble and got us back to Edwards. The situation came about because the first A4D fuel pump was a ball bearing affair that would not operate under negative *G*. I had just gone through that point somewhere on the *Vn* envelope while doing my test profile when the engine quit. I still remember how quiet it was.

"The engineers initially scoffed at my indignant postflight remarks, but were nailed by the still running instrumentation which showed a positive and negative five *Gs* within three seconds."

Later, in an A4D-2, I was returning to Edwards after a routine test flight (routine meaning not worthy of a chase plane to see where you went in) and was pushing the speed and altitude limit for traffic pattern entry. So I opened the speed brakes, pulled the throttle to idle and pushed over. That's the last thing I remembered for several seconds. I had just discovered, accidentally, a divergent, longitudinal PIO (pilot induced oscillation). The engineers

initially scoffed at my indignant post-flight remarks, but were nailed by the still running instrumentation which showed a positive and negative five *Gs* within three seconds. One of the two solutions to this kind of thing (and the one I like the best) is to release the stick. The problem was solved by method number two with the addition of a bob weight to the longitudinal control system. This was the second time that I had been nearly done in by negative *Gs*. The first episode had been an eight negative *G* ride in an F4D over Long Beach Harbor resulting in the aircraft incurring major damage (*The Hook*, Spring 1990).

Another memory is of rolling out after landing at Edwards and opening the canopy to feel refreshed after taking several short airborne "naps." I had taken off

on another "routine" longitudinal stability test to be conducted at several altitudes beginning with 41,000 ft. at a fixed c.g. and descending in 10,000 ft. increments. I stabilized on the point and involuntarily went to sleep. I awoke in a steep dive and high subsonic *Mach* but was not alarmed. I checked the fuel and found that I was now out of limits for the higher altitude and went for the 31,000 ft. test. I stabilized and took another involuntary nap to

awaken a short time later in the same high speed, nose down condition as before. Again, there was no sense of alarm. A third time for the 21,000-ft. point with the same results - stabilize and nap time. By then I was out of fuel load and c.g. parameters, so I nonchalantly reported my imminent landing, called the tower, made a normal landing and opened the canopy to suddenly return to the land of the totally awake and living. This aircraft had a hybrid oxygen system using an old diluter-demand regulator coupled to a liquid oxygen bottle. It didn't work. There



A Scooter for the Army - the author flew a modified A4D-2N BuNo. 148483 during a 1961 competition for an Army close air support aircraft. The Skyhawk was fitted with dual-wheeled main mounts for unimproved airfields and had an A3D drag chute, as well as modified wings for the larger landing gear.

was the same amount of oxygen in the bottle when I got back as there was when I left. I had made a 45 minute flight up to 41,000 ft. (cabin altitude somewhat lower) with only the oxygen in the cockpit and had gone through the motions. Truly I had a guardian angel.

There were some parts of the A4D test program that were both interesting, and with just enough inherent risk to make them – well, fun. Such a program was the Army A4D. An *Army* A4D? That's right! For a time in the early '60s, it seemed that the USAF was going to build only space ships and supersonic fighters. Close air support? What's that? Well, an enterprising agency at Ft. Rucker, Alabama, approached Douglas, Northrop and Fiat, with the idea that the Army might assume its own close air support role and would need large numbers of aircraft capable of operating from short and unprepared fields.

The Army set a time for an on-site competition of the Northrop N-156, the Fiat G-91 and a modified Douglas A4D. The N-156, predecessor of the F-5, and the G-91 came as they were, but the A4D

what a dedicated and unrestrained skunk works can do.

So off we went, all three of us to a small dirt strip near Pensacola, Fla. The strip was about 3,000 ft. as I remember it, and there wasn't a square foot of concrete anywhere. When I first saw it, I considered that this airplane had never been on anything but thick, long concrete runways or very hard ship decks and, very much like landing on the old straight carrier decks, once the throttle goes to idle you are committed!

With my competitors, I circled the field and drug my little airplane in as slow as it would go, chopped the throttle short of the runway so as to fall on the end, and popped the big A3D drag chute. The result was anticlimactic. The little airplane



The first Skyhawk flight testing – XA4D-1 137812.

pilot of the G-91, Ricardo Bignamini, returned to Italy and was killed shortly thereafter in the crash of a G-91.

I did not receive a copy of the final report, but it was moot anyway. Perhaps it did some good by awakening the USAF to the fact that the Army was seriously in need for close air support, for shortly after that an agreement between the services led the Air Force to start fulfilling that obligation. The Douglas part of the program was a vivid demonstration of what a team can do when inspired and with a goal in sight. I give full credit to the engineers, mechanics and workers who made such major changes in a short period of time resulting in every part functioning flawlessly.

It was customary for Douglas to pay its test pilots a salary for "routine" test flights. (I had more heart stoppers on "routine" flight than I did on what were considered "risk" flights.) If the flight or program was to be risky, then a bonus was debated. In this case, the program was entirely company funded and a "bonus" was not even mentioned by management. When I mentioned it, I was given a banana by the project engineer, who said that only a chimpanzee would do what I did without static tests, build-ups and no precautions - just do it! I'm glad that the whole project went so smoothly, because the banana had brown spots on it.

Ed. Note: Following WWII service as a Marine Corps aviator in the Pacific flying F4U Corsairs from USS Bennington, and Korean War service with VMF-225, Drury Wood had tours at TPS and NATC Tactical Test, before resigning from the Marine Corps in 1955 to work for Douglas Aircraft where he tested the A3D, A4D and F4D.

"I did not receive a copy of the final report, but it was moot anyway. Perhaps it did some good by awakening the USAF to the fact that the Army was seriously in need for close air support, for shortly after that an agreement between the services led the Air Force to start fulfilling that obligation."

was built for an aircraft carrier and had small, high pressure tires. On dirt it would probably sink.

Douglas borrowed two A4Ds from the Navy and began to modify them at company expense. Talk about your skunk works! In less than a month the company had designed, ground tested and installed double wheels on one of the *Skyhawks*, modified the wings to take the larger gear, and installed an A3D drag chute. Now, this chute was designed to stop a 70,000 lb. airplane. The A4D gross weight for the tests was less than a third of that figure.

I first flew the dual-wheeled A4D-2N 148483 27 April 1961, and was the only pilot to fly it. Surprise, everything worked! The gear went up and down, and the chute came out. I did a cursory and un-instrumented high *Mach* and *Vn* envelope check - no problems. Proves again

was stopped with a strong gentle tug less than 500 ft. from touchdown. The other two aircraft could not match that performance because the N-156 had no drag chute, and the G-91, as I remember, had a very small one. There was no clear winner in the takeoff distance competition except perhaps a slight edge to the N-156 with its afterburners.

All three of our craft performed creditably in a qualitative, but practical test of taxiing through a part of the field that had been turned to mud by a water tanker. We all blasted our way through with no trouble and left behind what looked like an artillery practice area

The return of the participants to their home ports was not as smooth as the program. The N-156 with Hank Choteau bellied in after takeoff from El Paso with a sink rate that broke Hank's back. The

PURESOME UNPLUGGED

BOCK!

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

BOCK!

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul

BOCKEDY!
BOCK!

BOCK!

BOCK!

SEAGULL-0-RAMA

BOCK!

From the Naval Aviator's Dictionary:
Seagull: He who hates to fly and squawks like hell when he has to, especially at night.

The only thing the R.J.O.A. (Reserve Junior Officers Association) enjoyed more than a really good bolter, seen from the vantage point of the P.L.A.T. in the ready room, was to have some poor soul down an airplane before a launch without a really good reason, i.e., aircraft suffered unexplainable thermal melt-down right there on the flight deck before the preflight... Since everybody knew that all an A-4 needed to launch was a motor, a wing, and some wheels, anybody actually downing a plane was tried and convicted of *Seagullismo*.

Especially on your dark and stormy nights, those R.J.O.A. safely in the ready room saw to it that some sort of cartoon questioning the downer's masculinity graced the blackboard. When the downer either slunk or blustered in, he was pelted with popcorn kernels from the fifty pound bag by the movie projector and assailed with "Bock! Bock! Bock!"-- *the cry of the seagull*. Of course, if it was someone who could really have your ass like the skipper or XO, the R.J.O.A. was usually less overt.

So it was that on this cruise, the airwing was joined with a squadron of Jarheads so top-heavy in rank that their skipper was actually senior to the Cag. Their heavies-- the colonel, his XO and the ops officer, Major Mother-- were showing the way to rest of the squadron, who were just shinier versions of the Navy junior officers, before they mucked off to Chu Ly or some other garden spot.

So it was that Puresome was not on the night schedule, but his pals Weed and Worm were. That suited Puresome because it was not nice out, and because Ready Six was supposed to be screening "Bike Dykes from Hell," one of his sentimental favorites. Thus was he spared.

Aircraft had been manned for the

launch and had turned up. In the red gloom, aviators ran through their post-start checks. As they finished, they checked in to Pri-Fly with their status:

"Sidewinder 411, on deck and up."
"Jolly Roger 203, on deck and up."
"Sidewinder 409, on deck and up."
And so on. Then, "Guntrain, Jarboon 301, I think I'm gonna be down..."
"Roger, Jarboon 301, keep us advised."
"Guntrain, Jarboon 301, probably maybe gonna be down, bubbles in the wet compass...."
"Roger, Jarboon."
"Guntrain, Jarboon 301 is definitely down."
"Roger, Jarboon 301, understand...."
"Bock!...Bock! Bock!...Bock!" interrupted the radio.
"...You're ("Bock! Bock! Bockedy Bock!") down," Guntrain doggedly replied through the bocks.
"Bockedy Bock Bock Bock!"
"Who said that? Whooo said that," came the colonel's voice from Jarboon 301, "I want to know who said that right now!"
"Bock!" came out of the ether.

And so the launch launched without Jarboon 301, and the colonel bee-lined it to the Cag office and YOU WILL'ED the Cag that he: (a) find; (b) eviscerate; and (c) descrote the phantom Bocker to restore the honor of the Corps. The Cag had been a *Phantom* puke in his previous life, and all those hours squinting at his scope had given him a devious slant on situational awareness. Looking at the squadrons involved in the launch, he quickly eliminated everyone except the Sidewinders, who were known to have an unruly element. It was child's play to see which Sidewinders were flying, and he quickly settled on either Worm or Weed.

Both Worm and Weed, it turns out, were Bockers. Secure in the anonymity

BOCK!

BOCK!

of the airwaves, their strength was as the strength of ten as they successfully completed their practice CCA's and trapped back aboard.

Weed repaired to the dirty shirt ward-room, downed four or five Sliders and a quart or so of bug juice, and so repaired to the rack. Worm, however, was a restless night stalker, and being an LSO with Cag office privileges, was there reading messages when Cag walked in. Military courtesies were rendered. Cag acted if nothing was amiss and started doing Cag stuff, though actually positioning himself for a down-the-throat Fox-one. Worm however, with ex-Navcad cunning, realized he was being stalked and was ready when the shot came.

"Nossir, I don't know anything about any Bocks. That's my story, and I'm sticking to it," Worm smoothly lied through his even, white teeth. Though physical torture wasn't out of the question, Cag tabled that for later, since he still had one suspect to go. He resolved that since direct frontal assault hadn't worked, to sneak in from six o'clock.

Came the dawn, and Weed was up and at 'em only in name. Being only truly happy in the air or in the rack, Weed was in neither state since he had to wave an early launch. So it was that his mind was clouded when he wandered into the Cag office. Nothing seemed amiss. Yeo-persons scuttled about, staff pukes were doing staff puke stuff, and Cag was administering. Weed bumbled about looking for the LSO book.

"You were pretty funny with them Bocks last night," Cag slyly addressed Weed from over the tops of his granny glasses. "Yup, I sure was," absently replied Weed, whose considerable intelligence was temporarily on sabbatical to the University of Mars. "Gotcha!" exclaimed Cag, as his missile tracked and flew up Weed's tailpipe and exploded.

It may not have been darkness, decay, and the Red Death that descended on Weed's dominion, but it was close. It was junior officer FU. But as usually happens in such cases, in the ages since, the legend has been passed on by the R.J.O.A. that the phantom Bocker did not die, but escaped into the voids of the ship, to await dark and stormy nights as the Seagull's worst nightmare.

YP

ATTIC ATTACKS

• Sent in by Members •



Photo commemorating the 5000th RVN combat sortie by the Bulldogs of VMA-223 taken during 1966-67 timeframe. Contributed by GySgt. Bob Neely, shown at left in Mickey Mouse ears. If anyone knows the names of the other Marines pictured, please let us know.

VMA-223

VMA-123

VMA-223

VMA-123



A-4B of VMA-123 joins on KC-130 tanker during transcontinental flight from Los Alamitos to Cherry Point, on July 4, 1964.



Scenic downtown Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam, 1966-67. Shown is VMA-223 area of MAG-12. Photos from GySgt. Bob Neely, USMC (ret).



Newspaper clipping from Cherry Point Windsock July 17, 1964, shows LtCol John Johnson, CO of VMA-123, after leading flight of 12 A-4Bs on a 4.5 hour nonstop transcontinental flight from Los Alamitos, CA, to Cherry Point, NC, on July 4, 1964. John claims this event as first non-stop, coast-to-coast flight of a reserve A-4 squadron. Anyone out there think otherwise?

This photograph from Shang's 1966 Med deployment: 62 on ball cap, assume VF-62? Divining rod and jug indicate search for water. Water hours typical of the time. From Charlie Waring's (CO of VSF-1) collection. Anyone know what's going on? No, he doesn't remember either...

VF-62



READ? YOU THINK WE READ?

Shadows of War

By Robert Gandt. New York: Signet
November 2004. 352 pp. \$7.99

Bob Gandt is still having fun. A former Naval Aviator and carrier aviator, he has accumulated more than 30,000 hours in military, commercial and general aviation aircraft. In the early 1960s he was an A4 Skyhawk driver and logged more than 300 arrested landings. High on his list now is flying his Siai-Marchetti 260. He keeps his hand in air show aerobatics with neighborhood buddies in the "Marchetti Mavericks". (visit: www.gandt.com)

Gandt has been flying and writing about flying for about 50 years, and it shows. He has graduated through the apprentice and journeyman phases of the writing craft to become a "storyteller extraordinaire". His latest novel, Shadows of War, the fourth in a series following the career of Gandt's heroic Brick Maxwell, Commander, USN, authenticates this conclusion. While Shadows of War will provide reading pleasure for the newcomer to Gandt and Brick Maxwell, I believe

the better course is to read the first three novels in the series—Acts of Vengeance, With Hostile Intent, and Black Star. The series is so good, taking it from the top is the preferred way to go.

Gandt is a master of the short sentence and every word is a dart. There is no fat. The result is a lean, mean, rapid-fire delivery of a well devised tale that holds attention from beginning to end. Characters are believable and well developed. The storylines are a blend of actual fact, geography, history and Gandt's imagination and superb creativity. Where fact and fiction begin and end only the author might know.

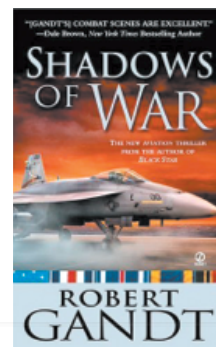
All four of the Maxwell series are set in the Persian Gulf area and involve our Navy carriers and other American forces engaged in our ongoing war on terrorists. Gandt has done his homework and produced a set of techno-thrillers of the Tom Clancy bent that I believe exceed the Clancy standard. He weaves the details of warfighting capabilities and strategies of all participants into the geography, politics, and personalities of the region

to produce very realistic situations for his characters to overcome.

In Shadows of War Gandt's storyline centers on the recovery of a downed Navy pilot who has been missing and presumed killed in action for more than a decade. There is an unmistakable similarity here to the real life mystery of Navy Lt Commander Michael Scott Speicher, the FA-18 pilot shot down over Iraq on January 19, 1991. Enter Gandt's imagination and his hero Brick Maxwell. The recovery of downed pilot Raz Rasmussen becomes a gripping episode of good prevailing over evil.

Gandt is at his best when he is in the air. He is a match for the best of the aviator-writers, guys like Stephen Coonts and Dale Brown, when it comes to taking a reader flying. As an old tailhooker, Gandt is especially comfortable spinning stories that spring from carrier operations. Shadows of War is a superb tale I most strongly recommend.

Jeremy Taylor, RADM, USN (ret)
BEARTAYLOR@worldnet.att.net



THE DUMBEST CONTEST

Duhhh...

Okay, boys--
Here's your chance
at fame and fortune...
What's the dumbest thing you
ever saw a Skyhawk pilot do?

Just jot it down quickly, don't worry about spelling or grammar, (it don't have to be perfect), and send it along by email, snail mail, or fax. Once the A-4 Ever International Editorial Staff reads through all submissions, the Dumbest will be chosen and awarded a free three-year membership to the Skyhawk Association. The Dumbest, along with the Dumber ones as well, will appear in print. Because there are so many dumb pilots, we may have to run this several times so that justice can be served.

TINS?

Send your memories to: newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org,
or mail to Bob Hickerson, P.O. Box 186, Junction, TX 76849, or fax to him at 830-990-2515.

TWIDGET GOES CYBER

• www.skyhawk.org •

By David "Twidget" Weber

THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION READY ROOM – ARE YOU A MEMBER?

Realizing what a fantastic resource *Skyhawk* members have in the website and particularly in the Association Ready Room, I'm constantly amazed how few members take advantage of it. We believe that over half of the association members have email addresses and thus have the capability to access the internet, but less than 20% have secured access to our Ready Room, where members can find a lot of great information available only to them. Would you like to find out what happened to the first A-4 you flew or maintained after you were associated with it? Would you like to join discussion groups on various topics of interest to association members? Would you like to see the most comprehensive photo gallery of *Skyhawk* images (organized by aircraft bureau number) available anywhere? Would you like to look up past issues of the *Skyhawk* News and *A-4Ever Journal*? Would you like to see the very latest version of the *Skyhawk* Association roster? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, **you need to join the *Skyhawk* Association Ready Room.**

Unfortunately, joining the Ready Room is different from joining the association, although at no additional cost to association members. It takes an extra step because the Ready Room site is hosted separately from our website by Community Zero. This arrangement ensures that some of our best assets are only available to members, and **joining the Ready Room is not difficult.** Just follow the simple instructions given below, and if you have problems, contact our Ready Room Coordinator, Mark Williams (readyroomcoor@a4skyhawk.org), for help at any time.

So, *Skyhawk* members, let's walk through the steps: Go to the home page

at www.skyhawk.org and scroll half way down the page to the link labeled "Association Members Only: for a list of recent changes/additions to this site, log into the Association Ready Room." Click on the link. If you prefer, you can go directly to the Ready Room access page by typing this URL directly into your web browser: <http://www.a4skyhawk.org/2G/ready.htm>. **FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS SHOWN ON THE PAGE EXACTLY!** When you get to the "Join this community" page, **use Option A** to create a new account. You will be granted access to the Ready Room after a check is made to ensure that you are a current member of the association.

Once signed up in the Ready Room, you'll have access to some great items such as "special TINS", the Aircraft Image Galleries, the *Skyhawk* Histories, Documentation Library, the Association Roster, a special section on modeling, past newsletters and a list of recent additions to the public web site. In the near future, expanded Journal articles that can't be included in the printed publication will be posted there.

After obtaining your Ready Room access, you can go to the Ready Room at any time by following the links off the *Skyhawk* Association home page or going directly to the Community Zero site at <http://www.communityzero.com/skyhawks>. Once you enter the Ready Room, you'll see the menu of options available on the left hand side of the page: "Discussions", "Contributions", "Chat", "Images", etc. Note that the primary "Aircraft Image Gallery" is not accessed through the menu button "Images", but rather through the "Private Pages" link under "Contributions".

To find the Private Pages where most of the good content is archived, select "Contributions" from the left-hand menu. Then select the sub-folder "Private Web Pages" and then select "Private Web Pages" by clicking on the link so named. You now have the folder opened where the Private Pages Link is located. **Follow the instructions for creating a desktop icon that will give you direct access the next time you visit.** This step will make returning to the Private Pages much easier. Note that simply saving the link in your "favorites" list will only result in a link to the Ready Room. Another method is to copy the URL from the Ready Room page, open a new browser window and paste it into that window. You can then save it to your "favorites" from that new window.

This link gives you access to members-only pages, so **PLEASE don't share this link with non-members.** Having access to this information is a major benefit of membership that we want to restrict to current members.

If you have any questions, or problems signing up for the Ready Room through Community Zero, please contact Mark Williams, the Ready Room Coordinator, at readyroomcoor@a4skyhawk.org.

As you explore the Private Pages and spot something for which you can provide additional information, or perhaps corrections, please contact the webmaster. Additionally, if you have material you believe would add to the usefulness of these pages, such as pictures and documents, again, contact David Weber, the *Skyhawk* Association webmaster at webmaster@a4skyhawk.org for instructions on how to do so.

The website and Ready Room, including the Private Pages, are a tremendous resource. If more members will use this resource, and join the effort to improve the content, it will become the cornerstone of our effort to preserve the memory of the *Skyhawk*.

Click on these

Skyhawk Websites

<http://www.communityzero.com/skyhawks>

www.skyhawk.org

webmaster@a4skyhawk.org

<http://www.a4skyhawk.org/2G/ready.htm>

readyroomcoor@a4skyhawk.org

SCHEDULING STUFF

• Reunions & Requests •

2005 Annual Meeting of the Skyhawk Association MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!

The annual meeting and luncheon of the Skyhawk Association will be held in conjunction with Tailhook 05 on September 9, 2005, at the Nugget, Reno, NV. The luncheon speaker will be former CNO Admiral James L. Holloway III, USN (ret).

...

First public look at Collings Foundation Playboy TA-4: April 2-3, 2005 at Ellington Field, Houston. Collings Foundation West will sponsor a two-day open house/fly-in for their Houston-based aircraft, plus the Collings Foundation B-24 *Witchcraft* in new paint. See www.cfwest.net for details.

...

**Marine Corps Aviation Association
2005 Convention:** 13-16 October at the Reno Hilton, Reno NV. www.flymcaa.org

...

Rampagers Reunion: (VFA-83, VA-83, VF-916, VF-83, VBF-83) will be held April 15-16, 2005, at NAS Oceana, Virginia. You are cordially invited to join fellow Rampagers for our 55th anniversary weekend. For more information, click on www.nol.navy.mil/homepages/vfa83 or call (757) 433-9703.

...

Harrier Reunion: 17-19 June 2005. Havelock Tourist & Event Center, Havelock, NC. Visit www.harrierreunionassociation.org. POCs are John Capito and Don Swaby.



TINS

By Boom Powell

TA-4 FALLON FOLLIES

The combat use of TA-4Fs in the Winter Newsletter reminds YHS of the Fallon Scooter parts locker. How a once proud TA-4F became a derelict is a sad story of aerodynamics and habit patterns gone awry.

In 1968-69, Navy VA squadrons were assigned TA-4s to supplement their single-seaters during the training and turnaround period. One such fleet squadron (which has been forgotten, but some member will certainly remember, perhaps with a red glow of embarrassment), took their two-seat *Skyhawk(s)* with them while working-up in the high desert of NAS Fallon. A typical day at Fallon included three flights with no external fuel tanks, a half dozen small rockets and practice bombs (usually the potent 25 pound blue Mk76). No problem to get airborne, even at Fallon's nearly mile-high



Hangar of a hangar queen.

elevation and summer heat. Flight of four, hop less than an hour, and tactics, tactics, tactics. Great fun.

TINS: A logistics run back to Lemoore was needed, and LTJG Dilbert (not his real name) either raised his hand or was volunteered. His chariot was a TA-4F with a blivet on the centerline and two full 300 gallon drop tanks. Since there was an empty seat, the squadron intel officer was going along for his first ride in a Scooter. Dilbert had flown two single-seat missions earlier.

In the TA-4F, he runs the J-52 up and rolls merrily down the runway. At about the time that he usually does, he snatches the nose up for takeoff. Ooops. The poor *Skyhawk* wallows and bumps along. Dilbert thinks he has a major control malfunction and screams "*Eject, eject!*" The canopy comes off, both seats arc high in the air, chutes blossom open, and the unfortunate jet swerves off the runway and comes to

a stop with its nose in the sand. The crash crew reaches into the cockpit and shuts down a perfectly good engine in what had been a perfectly good, albeit heavier than expected, *Skyhawk*.

Understand the AI never flew again, and the pilot who had forgotten about such little things as density altitude and takeoff computations probably did not either. The errant squadron went to sea, and the TA-4F was left at Fallon where passing squadron maintenance departments found her a source of parts--authorized and not. In time, the aircraft was transferred to the A-4 RAG, VA-125, to get back in the air. The needed parts list included 1 canopy; 2 Escapac ejection seats; a J-52 engine; an aileron; a nose strut, wheels and many assorted black-boxes and other removable bits. The TA-4 did fly again.



The sad tail of a hangar queen.

UPDATE UPDATED

Restoration of TA-4 153524

by Collings Foundation of Stow, Massachusetts.



THE COLLINGS FOUNDATION
STOW, MASSACHUSETTS

*From Rick Harris
TA-4 Coordinator
The Collings Foundation*

This picture was taken at Ellington Field Houston, as BuNo153524 taxied out to go to AvSource West in Midland, Texas, for paint. The brown components are from BuNo153526. Shown on the right-hand, outboard station is a baggage pod.

Collings Foundation has its own pilots, all high time former or current VT-7 pilots.

In the front seat is LCDR (ret) Jimmy (Swampy) Marshall, and in the back is CAPT Bert Zeller, USNR. The other pilot is CDR Eric (Gordo) Gerdes, USNR. Eric and Bert are still instructing in T-45s at Meridian. Jimmy flies for American Airlines. Jimmy was the TA-4 Demonstration pilot for CNTRA at the end of the TA-4 era in the training command.

TA-4 153524 will be on display, showing the new Playboy paint scheme at Collings Foundation West open house/ fly in on April 2-3, 2005, at Ellington Field, Houston (EFD). All of the CFWest aircraft will be on display, as well as the Foundation's B-24 (in new paint, first public showing) and B17. For information, see the Foundation website at www.cfwest.net.

*First Upgraded
Israel Air Force A-4 Skyhawk*

NETANYA, Israel, December 8 /PRNewswire-FirstCall. RADA Electronic Industries Ltd. announced that the first upgraded Israel Air Force (IAF) A-4 Skyhawk has completed its inaugural flight. This milestone of the program was accomplished within a tightly planned schedule of only 11 months following the program initiation. The A-4 Skyhawk is the IAF's advanced trainer used in the flight academy and as a lead-in fighter trainer for both the modern fighters (F-15 and F-16).

The program, activated on January 1, 2004, includes replacements of out-dated avionic units onboard the aircraft with newly designed equipment. The modernization aims at improving the training environment of air cadets flying the aircraft, enables a complete debrief of each flight using 3 dimensional graphic displays synchronized with video and audio recordings, while significantly reducing the aircraft's cost of ownership.

The flight testing phase is scheduled to be completed within 3 months; with serial production and installation continuing until the third quarter of 2005.

RADA's President, Brig. Gen (Res.) Herzle Bodinger, a former IAF Com-

mander and former IAF Flight Academy Commander, commented on the successful flight: "We have justified the confidence the IAF and Ministry of Defense have put in RADA, by selecting and trusting us to perform this task. We thank the IAF and Ministry of Defense for their cooperation and salute our partners in this venture: Israel Aircraft Industries, Vectop and Nir Or for their outstanding performance."

This upgrade to the Israeli A-4 fleet will apply to both the A-4N Ahit and TA-4H/J models, although a high percentage of the Israeli A-4s currently in operation are two-seat models. The first flight of the upgraded aircraft on December 8th was by A-4N AhitM (M for Meshopar or Modernized) number 342. The IDF had planned to phase out the A-4 aircraft in 2005 – this modification will keep them operational until 2015-2020. The IDF's Flying Tiger Squadron, which began operating the A-4H in June 1967, may well fly the modernized Skyhawk past the 50-year mark before the venerable aircraft is finally decommissioned.

For more information, see A-4 Ahit, A hit in Israel, by Shlomo Aloni, Airforces Monthly March 2005 (www.airforcesmonthly.co.)

BuNo 153524



THE COLLINGS FOUNDATION
STOW, MASSACHUSETTS



BuNo 153524 in the paint shop.



SKYHAWK

Contacts & Information Resources

Need

Skyhawk Association Website

For General Information
(Check this page first)

Membership Information

Newsletter Submissions

Research Skyhawk Information

To Locate a Squadron SDO
(complete list of SDOs)

To Access the Ready Room
(Members Only)

Information on Corporate Affiliations
And Memberships

Information on Advertising in the Journal

Skyhawk Modeling Contact

Financial Information

Order Skyhawk Association Patches

Contact

www.skyhawk.org

webmaster@a4skyhawk.org

www.a4skyhawk.org/2F/research.htm

skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com

newsletter-editor@a4skyhawk.org

sa-research@a4skyhawk.org

sdo-coordinator@a4skyhawk.org

<http://www.a4skyhawk.org/2A/sdo.htm>

readyroomcoor@a4skyhawk.org

dnbrannon@firstcommand.com

mbone@ec.rr.com

forrestal@fewpb.net

serichmond@sbcglobal.net

sa-patch@a4skyhawk.org

Name

David "Twidget" Weber, Association Webmaster

David "Twidget" Weber

Terry Cooney, Skyhawk Association Secretary

R.R. "Boom" Powell/Bob Hickerson

David "Twidget" Weber + SA research team

Stan Martin

Mark Williams, Skyhawk Association Director

Dan Brannon, Skyhawk Association Director

Margaret Bone, Managing Editor

Joe Turpin

Steve Richmond, Skyhawk Association Treasurer

Tom "Auggie" Wondergem

Visualize your business card here, like John's — Support the Skyhawk Association —

Send two business cards and a check for \$100.00
made out to "Skyhawk Association" and send to:

For advertising
in the A-4 Ever,
contact:
mbone@ec.rr.com
for details.

M. Bone
216 Carefree Lane,
Morehead City, NC 28557





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Long-Range Schedule of Events



Mark Your Long-Range Calendar

The Board of Directors has approved:

- ☐ 2005 Annual Meeting of Members and Skyhawk Association Luncheon –
September 9, 2005, Reno, in conjunction with Tailhook 05.
Note: luncheon speaker will be Admiral James L. Holloway III, USN (ret), CNO 1974-1978.
- ☐ Skyhawk Association Regional Symposium & regular meeting of the Board of Directors –
February 2006, Dallas-Ft. Worth.
- ☐ All-Marine Skyhawk Reunion – Spring 2006, Beaufort, SC (tentative).
- ☐ 2006 Annual Meeting of Members – October 2006, Washington, DC, in conjunction with
MCAA Symposium 2006.
- ☐ Skyhawk Association Regional Symposium & regular meeting of the Board of Directors –
February 2007, location TBA.

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION SURVEY

Please help us plan for the future of the *Skyhawk* Association by completing and returning this survey. Members who respond will be entered into a drawing to win a three-year membership renewal. See www.skyhawk.org for a longer version.



1. How long have you been a member of the Skyhawk Association?

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1 – 5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years

2. The most important functions of the Skyhawk Association are (check all that apply):

- ☐ To publish an informative journal (newsletter)
- ☐ To plan reunions/meetings of Skyhawk enthusiasts
- ☐ To maintain an informative, dynamic website
- ☐ To sell Skyhawk-related merchandise
- ☐ To document the history of the A-4 and A-4 squadrons
- ☐ To provide a means of finding former squadron-mates and ship-mates
- ☐ Other _____

3. I would like to see the following in future issues of the journal (newsletter) (check all that apply):

- ☐ More articles on maintenance/ordnance subjects
- ☐ More articles on technical aspects of the A-4 and associated equipment
- ☐ More first-hand historical accounts of Skyhawk-related subjects
- ☐ More pictures
- ☐ More information on Skyhawk modeling
- ☐ More book reviews
- ☐ More articles about reunions/gatherings
- ☐ Other (fill in) _____

4. Would you read an electronic version of the journal (newsletter) if we sent you an email with a link to the online version?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

5. How often do you visit the Skyhawk Association website (www.skyhawk.org)?

- ☐ Once or more per week
- ☐ Once per month
- ☐ Less than once per month
- ☐ Never

6. What website features do you find valuable?

- ☐ Photo gallery
- ☐ Technical data on the A-4 models
- ☐ History of the A-4 and squadrons
- ☐ Links to commercial businesses and their products
- ☐ Private web pages data on specific A-4 bureau numbers
- ☐ Association Ready Room Contributions section
- ☐ Association Ready Room Discussion section
- ☐ Association Ready Room Chat feature
- ☐ I never use the web site

7. If the Skyhawk Association organized chapters at various locations around the country, would you:

Attend social gatherings if they were within 100 miles of your home? (circle one) Yes No

Volunteer to help organize chapter events? (circle one) Yes No

8. Concerning the Skyhawk Association's annual meeting, should it be held in conjunction with (check only one response):

- ☐ Tailhook Association annual symposium?
- ☐ The Marine Corps Aviation Association annual symposium?
- ☐ Alternating between these two events each year (Tailhook one year, MCAA the next?)
- ☐ Not held in conjunction with any other event.

Clip Survey and return to: **Bob Hickerson**
1222 Balcones Drive
Fredericksburg, TX 78624

Or fax to 325-446-4011. To register for the drawing, please provide:

Name _____ Email _____



More is Better—the Membership Contest.

In a startling burst of brilliance, your Board has come up with a win-win scheme to increase our membership by offering certain inducements calculated to get members-in-good-standing, motivated. Here are the rules, and remember, *real men* will step up...

Membership Contest - January to July 2005

Any member that recruits **5** new members gets a **one-year** renewal free.

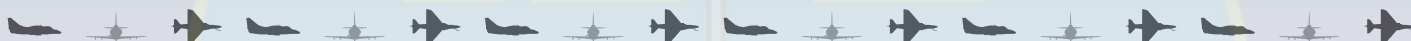
Any member that recruits **10** new members gets a **three-year** renewal free.

Any member that recruits **30** new members gets a **life** renewal free.

(Are you getting the drift here?)

The member that recruits the most new members over 30 (we're talking numbers here as well as age, I suppose...) wins—are you sitting down?—*not only* the R.G. Smith print *and* a coveted **Life Membership** in the Skyhawk Association, but also--a free lunch at the Fall AOM in Reno! (Is this a class group or what?)
Note: All members who recruit more than 5 new members will receive public recognition in the A-4 Ever, suitable for framing...

And the Powerball: (Attention, SDOs) The squadron whose members recruit the most new members (over 100 total) wins a free two-night admin suite at the Reno Nugget for the Fall 2005 Skyhawk Association AOM! Organize and Strategize!



Order additional patches

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

Skyhawk Patch
6213 Glen Abbey Ln
Bradenton, FL 34202-9265

Join the Skyhawk Association and get a free patch

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

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

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

☐ New _____ Years

☐ Renewal \$ _____ Total Enclosed

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

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

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

Skyhawk Squadrons: _____

Referred By _____

Credit Card Payments may be made by calling toll-free **877-944-4295** from 8 am to 4 pm Pacific time. (This number is for dues payments only and cannot accept patch orders or other Association messages.)

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