



THE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION

Journal



Royal Australian Navy A-4G

THE A-4 EVER

Spring 2008

Skyhawk Association

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Contents:

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Prez Sez • Early Skyhawk Flame-out Problems • Bagging • TINS • Take No Prisoners
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★ Skyhawk Association ★
Annual Meeting
5 September '08
Reno, NV



www.skyhawk.org



THE PREZ SEZ

• Raven's Report •

By Bob "Raven" Hickerson

I just returned from our mid-winter board meeting in Pensacola. As always, visiting the "Cradle of Naval Aviation" was a bitter-sweet experience. I can't travel there without remembering vividly the weird combination of anticipation and anxiety I felt as a green 2nd lieutenant checking into Preflight.

Pensacola is no longer the starting point for naval aviators. To improve efficiency, Aviation Officer Candidate School has combined with OCS school in Newport, RI. Nothing against Newport--I spent one of the best years of my life attending the Naval War College there--but I think an important tradition will be lost in this transition. Pensacola seems to be growing constantly, the National Museum of Naval Aviation gets better every visit and McGuire's Restaurant is always a great place to spend a Saturday evening (if you can get in!).

Speaking of the board meeting, we owe a great thanks to members Dick Upchurch and Dave Pia for helping arrange our visit. Dave helped with lodging and Dick made arrangements for our behind-the-scenes tour of the museum. Board Member Mike "Buick" Eberhardt was social director for our Saturday night at Maguire's. Thanks to all their efforts, the visit was great.

We were fortunate to have several *Skyhawk* Association members join us on February 2nd for the board meeting, lunch in the Cubi O'Club Café, subsequent guided tours of the museum, and dinner at Maguire's. Observing the proceedings at Maguire's and mellowed out somewhat by their excellent Irish red ale, I realized I was participating in the best that our association can offer. We had started out as strangers; but an hour into dinner, the sea stories started flowing and they were amazing. There were no strangers, as accounts of prior cruises and harrowing



Skyhawk board hard at work listening, in Radford Conference Room, National Museum of Naval Aviation, L-R: John Gabbard, Larry Hudson, Mike Green, Mike Eberhardt, Paul Taylor, Art Padios, Chuck Glasmire, Bob Hickerson, and Joe Turpen's hands.

flights unfolded; and I realized once again that an important part of our mission is to provide opportunities for members to meet and mingle on occasions like that. No fancy programs or entertaining guest speakers are required.

We provide similar opportunities a couple of times per year (fall annual meeting and winter board meeting), and over the years we've considered the establishment of regional "dets" or squadrons to provide more opportunities. However, all of those ideas have failed due to lack of volunteers. The board still sees this as a critical mission and is ready to help anyone who wants to organize a regional gathering. We can perhaps provide a little financial support; but more importantly, we can advertise gatherings in the Journal, online and through direct-mail post cards. If you'd like to organize such an event, send an email to me at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.

Headed West ~

During the last few months, we've lost some legends of the *Skyhawk* community.

Gordo Gray, who was the test pilot on the speed record flight on October 15, 1955, succumbed to cancer on December 2, 2007, at Brooks, GA. Gordo was Charter Member #77 of *Skyhawk* Association, having gone on to a successful Navy career, commanding VF-2 and retiring as a captain. His speed record of 695.163 mph achieved on a 500-kilometer closed course in specially-prepared A4D-1 137820 shattered the previous record set by an F-86 *Sabre*.

LtGen Tom Miller, USMC (Ret), wasn't known as a *Skyhawk* pilot in the Marine Corps, but he had the distinction of delivering the first operational *Sky-*

hawk, A4D-1 Bureau Number 139920, to an operational Marine squadron. Then-Maj Miller headed the operational evaluation of the aircraft prior to ferrying WK-1 to VMA-224 at MCAS El Toro on 13 September, 1956. Those of you who attended the 2006 Annual Meeting held in Washington, D.C., will remember him as one of our guest speakers. He also succumbed to cancer, on November 27, 2007.

Many in the association are already aware that Whizzer White, founder and first president of *Skyhawk* Association, passed away on December 11, 2007, at his home town of Bossier City, Louisiana. I didn't have the chance to get to know him well, but I was privileged to have had the opportunity to follow him as president (the second or third time he held that position, I believe).

I won't try to repeat Whizzer's list of accomplishments that Puresome has so ably recounted in this issue. Over the 14 years since *Skyhawk* Association was founded, many others have contributed time and talent to making the association a success; but there's no doubt that Whizzer was the heart and soul of the organization. Like our other shipmates, he left us much too soon and we will miss his enthusiasm and sense of purpose. If there's any cosmic justice, Heaven will have at least one *Skyhawk* squadron with all assigned aircraft full mission capable – and Whizzer will be assigned as a JG squadron pilot who never stands the duty. *God speed, buddy. You will be missed.*

*A-4s forever,
Raven*



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

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Spring 2008 •



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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 sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org or mailed to Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624.

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SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION BOARD MEETING SUMMARY: WINTER 2008

Board of Directors met on February 2, 2008, at the National Museum of Naval Aviation, Pensacola, FL. Meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m.

Present were officers Hickerson (President), Eberhardt (Vice President - Navy), Cooney (Secretary) and Williams (Treasurer). Absent was Jobin (Vice President - Marines).

Directors present were: Eberhardt, Cooney, Gabbard, Green, Hickerson, Turpen and Williams, constituting a quorum. Directors absent were Gilchrist, Jobin, Langworthy, Powell, Southworth, and Weber. Guests were: Hal Brewer, Dave Dollarhide, Chuck Glasmire, Jack Harper, Larry Hudson, Art Padios, Paul Taylor and Dick Upchurch.

Review of Motions Approved Since Annual Meeting 2007

The CY 2008 budget for *Skyhawk* Association was approved by electronic vote in December. The budget is available for review by members on the website (www.skyhawk.org).

Communications and Reports

Secretary Cooney presented the membership report. The association finished CY 2007 with 826 members, a net gain of 21 members for the year. During CY 2007, 104 new members joined and 83 current members elected not to renew.

Treasurer Williams presented the financial report. He reported current assets of the association were \$44,718.20 as of December 31, 2007. Revenue and expenditures were essentially balanced for the calendar year, when CY 2006 obligations which were paid in 2007 were subtracted. The report was approved, and the board requested that the treasurer investigate and recommend short-term investments for a portion of the fund balance.

Webmaster Weber submitted the website report, noting that activity on the site is still extremely high. The board once again discussed the high-priority need for additional volunteers to help manage the website.

The A-4Ever Journal report was presented by editor Hickerson. He

reported that the journal remains very popular, and that members have taken the reduction from 4 issues per year to 3 in stride. The reduction in issues allowed the association to return to a balanced budget, and the editorial committee hopes to use the website to provide extended journal content to make up for the loss of one issue per year.

A report on the use of PayPal was presented by Secretary Cooney. The PayPal site is helping to attract international members and new members who join after finding our website on the internet. Most current members who are returning still send checks or call the 800 number.

Old Business

Sale of A-4 Tailhooks. Plans to auction off two A-4 tailhooks were discussed.

New Business

Memorial for Davis "Whizzer" White, Skyhawk Association Founder. The board approved the following:

1. An appropriate notation will be included in all future issues of *The A-4Ever*.
2. A memorial site on the *Skyhawk* Association website will be expanded.
3. The annual luncheon during the association annual meeting will be named for Whizzer White, and a suitable banner will be purchased.
4. The board will explore an endowed scholarship in conjunction with Tailhook Association. If feasible, a campaign for donations will be conducted.

History Program/Receipt of Artifacts

The board discussed guidelines for the receipt and disposition of artifacts and memorabilia. The policy will be established and published on the *Skyhawk* Association website.



Looking like extras in the movie Millennium, board members and guests listen to brief by Steve Heffernan on artifacts contained in the National Museum of Naval Aviation's Bldg. 649. T-1A fuselage in rear. Pictured L-R, front row: Larry Hudson, Dick Upchurch, Paul Taylor, Dave Dollarhide, Joe Turpen, Pat Cooney, Ellen Waggener, and Chris Waggener. L-R, rear: Mike Eberhardt and Terry Cooney (standing), Chuck Glasmire, Mike Green, Bob Hickerson, John Gabbard, Hal Brewer, and Mark Williams.

Nominating Committee for CY 2008

President Hickerson discussed appointment of the Nominating Committee for 2008. The terms of Directors Jobin, Southworth, Cooney and Green expire in this calendar year. A Nominating Committee will be appointed per the bylaws to recommend a slate to the annual meeting in September 2008. The committee will also recommend a slate of officers for CY 2009 to the Board of Directors.

Requests for Funds

The board approved a donation of \$1,000 to the USS *Midway* Museum, Ready Room 3 Project.

Future Meetings

The *Skyhawk* Association Annual Meeting for 2008 will be held in Reno, NV, in conjunction with Hook '08 on September 5, 2008. Assignments are:

1. Pre-event coordination - Williams
 2. Luncheon - Eberhardt
 3. Speaker/program - Hickerson/Eberhardt
 4. Booth operation - Cooney
 5. Hospitality Suite coordination - TBA
- The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Note: copies of reports and minutes are available to members on the website at www.skyhawk.org.



ADIOS, WHIZ

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul



M. DAVIS "WHIZZER" WHITE

1939 - 2007

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION FOUNDER

Whizzer White, founder and spiritual leader of the *Skyhawk* Association, climbed out into the setting sun on 11 December, 2007 and went west. Some of us may choose to believe that, like French ace, Georges Guynemer of the Great War, he flew so high that he could not come down. But Whiz, who was firmly into what he called "the God thing," had no doubt where he was going; and so knowing, went with the all the joyous energy of his great heart.

For those of us greybeards that survived the great witch-hunts and purges after Tailhook '91 and gathered at a motel in San Diego that served as headquarters for the reconstituted 1993 "Tailhook Symposium," Whiz's yellow legal sign-up pad for folks interested in getting *Scooter* drivers together sounded like both a good idea and a way to affirm Tailhookery in the face of the PC Media Gestapo and Militant Mullet Hairdo Persons carrying protesting signs outside.

The original 136 names on that pad contained some hard-hitting true believers; and in 1994, a slate of officers was organized with Whiz as president. Many hard-working folks were responsible for the *Skyhawk* Association growing, incorporating, and producing a first-rate newsletter and website; and Whiz was always there to moderate some of the inevitable knife fights between strong personalities with different ideas on how things should be done. None of us who ever attended a board meeting or



Shy and retiring Whiz White at Jack Stone's barn with Bernadine Schwartz at LVAR '07 (Lemoore Vietnam Aviators Reunion).

the annual membership luncheon with Whiz at the helm were ever unaffected by his tremendous smiling good will; and we all were willing to try harder to work together because of it.

puter, and it was impossible not to grin as his words-per-minute and gestures reached red-line in an effort to catch up.

But I think that Bossier City, Louisiana, had a pretty good idea of what a treasure they had in Dr. Morris Davis White, DDS. Reports from his memorial service say that children didn't even mind going to the dentist

because it was him. Whiz always ended our annual membership meetings with a moment of silence and bowed heads for shipmates that had passed, ringing them out on a water glass as ship's bell, and calling out "*Shipmates, Departing!*"

He never forgot them,
nor shall we him.

--so sez Puresome.

"But Whiz, who was firmly into what he called 'the God thing,' had no doubt where he was going; and so knowing, went with the all the joyous energy of his great heart."

Whiz loved naval aviation. He loved the *Skyhawk* and had a special bond with his two WESTPAC cruise shipmates in VA-94. Since he seemed to know everybody in the entire universe, he worked tirelessly to promote our beloved *Scooter*, its history and artifacts. He was a constant mini-cyclone of ideas and projects, that somehow always managed to get lost on his laptop com-

TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •



sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Send your letters to
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

Please note new email address!

To the Editor:

Dear Bob,

Hi, I am the author of the USS *Ke-arsarge* crossdeck story. Had I known it might end up on your site, I would have added more detail for the edification of potential readers; however, I was aware only after Phil Thompson sent the piece to you. Never mind, no problem.

I have lots of ex-RAN mates including Bill Hayward, who was an Armourer, although I can't be certain he was ever attached to an A-4 squadron. In any case, he is in contact with many others who may be interested in becoming members of your venerable organization. Rather than leave you the task of contacting him, I will send him your e-mail address which he may pass on to any persons of interest.

My history with the A-4 began in '67, and I last left an A-4 squadron in October '78, having served in the RAN from '64 to '88 as an airframes and engines mechanic and qualified on the UH1B, MB326H and T/A4G. I qualified as an artisan (mechanician) in '76 and went on to manage the NAS Nowra Machine Shop ('78/9), MB326H 'D' and 'E' Servicing Unit ('79-'82), A/C Fuel and Hydraulic Component Overhaul Facility ('82/3), Aircraft Maintenance Engineering School ('83/6) and, in my final posting, the Navy's Aircraft Maintenance Examination Board ('87/8).

Thank you for including my humble story in your publication.

Best Regards,
Ray (Dutchy) Brauer
[rrbrauer@hotmail.com]

Letter to the Editor/Webmaster

Webmaster,

I've just looked at the VA-23 photo album on your site and I have just realized that one of the pictures is of an aircraft I was flying when it was hit by an SA-2 missile. The aircraft was barely flyable, but too badly damaged to land on the ship. I landed at Danang where that picture was taken.

The incident took place on January

2, 1967. I was on a shrike mission and three SA-2s were fired at my flight in quick succession. We dodged the first two, but the third exploded behind my aircraft at close range. All hydraulics were lost, the rudder cables were cut and all elevator control was lost. The stick would not move fore and aft at all. I had manual control of the ailerons and horizontal trim only. I was lucky to make it to Danang. I've checked my logbook and that's the aircraft. The picture was probably taken shortly afterward. The March date is probably when the film was developed. I was shot down and captured on the 13 January, 1967, and spent the next six years as a POW.

Is there any way I can download those pictures? I wasn't able to download them from the site. Can you send me the photos by email?

Thanks much,
Mike Cronin
mike@cronins.net

(Ed. Note: Our webmaster gets requests like this frequently, and the association makes every effort to comply, depending on restrictions imposed by the donor of the image(s). If you aren't visiting our website (www.skyhawk.org) frequently, you're missing out on a major benefit of membership.)

Letter to the Editor

Skyhawks Translant Redux: History indeed has a way of repeating itself, and it has in the Fall 2007 issue of the *Journal* with the hair-razing article by Mike Larson entitled "Bad Luck & Trouble: The Translant from Hell." I had read about this venture from another source years ago, but I can't remember which one and am glad that it has been re-written in the *Journal* for posterity's sake.

Anyway, with this latest article concerning the pitfalls of crossing the Atlantic from MCAS Cherry Point to Norway in A4Ms in 1986, by VMA-223 "Bulldogs," one can only re-read the Fall 2005 issue of *Journal* with the similar article written by yours truly and Col Herb "Yogi Bear" Fix, USMC (Ret), entitled "First Skyhawk Atlantic

Crossing By Buddy Store." The VMA-332 "Polka Dots" also departed MCAS Cherry Point attempting to translant for NAS Rota, Spain, via NAS Argentina, Newfoundland, with eight A4D2s (A4B) using ten other A4s with Buddy Store Refueling Systems.

Well, to make this letter as brief as I can, it took nearly two weeks to complete this mission with only two of the eight planes making it to Rota! Although no mishaps occurred, one plane had to land enroute at Lages, Azores; one aborted to return to Argentina with the weather below minimums, and five of the tankers had to divert to Torbay. The other flight of four with their tankers never got airborne due to the weather being WOXOF for several days, and eventually the mission was aborted and re-routed back to Cherry Point. Two tankers remained at Argentina to await the three A-4s that were in Rota and Lages, respectfully. However, those three didn't come back via Argentina, but returned through Bermuda, unbeknownst to the two left in reserve at Argentina. The two left at Argentina finally got the word and did eventually return home to roost at Cherry Point days later.

That mission was in 1959 without any KC-135/KC-10s support, but faced the same bad weather and other similarities such as fuel, oil and oxygen limitations. "Flying is hours of boredom interrupted by moments of sheer terror!" Or words to that effect, right? Maj Joe "Toad" Homer, USMC (Ret.) [jttoad1@cox.net]

PS: The accompanying article, "The Ghost rider's Smiling Giant," by Peter Mersky, was also very interesting and featured a former 34-55 NAVAD classmate of mine, Denny Weichman, surely one of the greatest naval aviators of our time.

(Ed. Note: Joe Homer sent this link to an excellent slide show depicting Skyhawks in action during Vietnam.)

<http://images.military.com/slideshows/skyhawk-units-of-vietnam.htm?ESRC=dod.nl>

Letter to the Editor

Good morning Sir and or Ma'am,

My name is Mark Kreeger. I am sending you some pictures from when I was stationed with VT-25 NAS Chase Field, Beeville, Texas. I was there from 75-79. I am not sure if there is any particular type of picture you would like to see more than others. I have sent some already, but I re-scanned some of them so maybe they will be better to put in the newsletter. I hope everyone enjoys them. Some of them are just of people and planes on the flight line. Some are from when I got to go flying in the back seat. Some are of the base itself. One is of a couple of pilots resting before a hard flight. Any questions, please feel free to ask

Mark Kreeger

MAK1100F@aol.com

(Ed. Note: Mark, we appreciate the images and will post them to the VT-25 pages on the website.)

◆ ◆ ◆

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

Enjoyed both "Hosing Santini" and "Project Rainhat." I am interested in contacting a contributor to the former (Col Mel Sautter) to discuss details of VMF-333, and VMA-331 deployment to Gitmo during Cuban crisis for a long term project. Please forward my email to him.

Incidentally, I have acquired some strike plans (OPLAN 312) from the Air Force Historical Research Center on microfiche largely declassified but unpublished, which includes operational plans for everything under AF control from Cuba which includes three Marine and two Navy A-4 squadrons in Florida during the crisis.

Jason Martin

jrmartin70@hotmail.com

◆ ◆ ◆

Letter to the Editor:

Bob, Denny Sapp just emailed me about RG Smith's painting of an A-3 "wet winging" an A-4. Terry Wolf emailed Denny asking if the pilot of the A-4 was known, mainly because the A-4 is showing NP and a black or green chevron on the tail, which would make it a VA-55 bird. As it is also "humped," it would be a Foxtrot. All of this places the painting in the 1971-2 period,

when Wolf and Sapp were aboard the *Hancock*, as were you. Frankly, I had always thought that RG had painted such a picture earlier in the war. But I have a small copy of the painting in Zip Rausa's bio on Smith. Wolf has been in touch with Shar, RG's daughter, but apparently she can't answer his question.

Is there any way we can find out the identity of the A-4 pilot, if it is known? It's a specific incident.

Thanks,

Peter Mersky

Ed. Note: If anyone has knowledge of the specific details of this incident, including pilot's name and time frame, please inform us at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.



This R.G. Smith painting taken from *R.G. Smith, the Man and His Art, an Autobiography* (edited by Rosario Rausa, Schiffer Publishing Limited, 1999, 112 pages), page 58. I highly recommend this book to *Skyhawk* enthusiasts, or anyone who admires R.G. Smith art. The book caption reads: *One of the most dramatic Yankee Station events was "wet-winging." In this case, a Skyhawk makes it home, thanks to a Skywarrior tanker. Millions of dollars in aircraft costs were saved with this technique.*

◆ ◆ ◆

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

Thank you so much for the photo of VMA-324. This was one of the best years of a twenty-year career. I will never forget that first day when Col Ertlmeier took command. We were all in front of the hanger--the entire squadron. He told us he had some good news and bad news. It was going to be a long, cold winter--that was the bad news.

All we had to eat were buffalo chips. The good news was that we had plenty of buffalo chips. This was atmosphere at VMA-324. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Chapman, came down to see us. There was a photo taken of the enlisted men in the squadron taken--anyone know how I can get a copy?

Bill Voight

wvoight@bellsouth.net

(Ed. Note: Bill, lot's of us felt that way about -324 in those days. Our high point was when he called us into the ready room to break the news that VMA-324 would be the first A-4M squadron. It only got better from there. I searched my files and can't find such a picture. Anyone out there have one?)

◆ ◆ ◆

Letter to the Editor

To the editor:

A photo of my late father-in-law, CAPT. James Emory Walker, USNR, callsign "Snoopy," is attached. We don't know any info about his flying history and I am trying to discover the squadron, etc., during Vietnam and post war in the A-4. We know he flew over 100 missions in the A-4

over Vietnam, but have no leads on the squadron. Photo is post-Nam and cold



war reserves, I believe Floyd Bennett A-4 because of tail ID 7R.

Any assistance would help. Thank you for your time and attention regarding this matter.

Regards,

Steve Moore

dahkodah@yahoo.com

◆ ◆ ◆



ATTIC ATTACKS

• Mailbag •

Share your photos ~



Two photos of RAN A-4G 155051 during launch and recovery aboard HMAS *Melbourne* while operating in Jervis Bay near NAS Nowra. Photos by former RAN A-4 pilot and QANTAS Captain John Bartels, data provided by Phil Thompson.



FCLP mirror: John Bartels captured unknown A-4G reflected in a portable mirror during Field Carrier Landing Practice on Runway 26, NAS Nowra. Data via Phil Thompson.



A ground-level view of the Chu Lai runway, 1968, courtesy of Robert Bensle.



VT-25 TA-4J image supplied by Mark Kreeger.

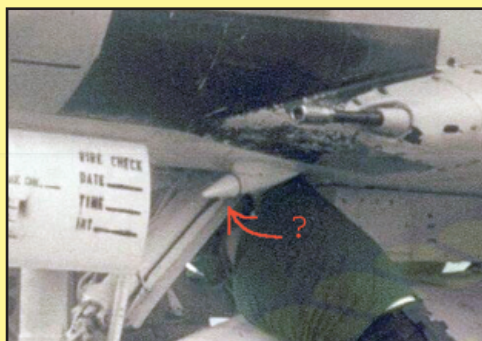


VMA-134 A-4F BuNo 154204 was restored for the ceremony at which VMFA-134 (successor to VMA-134) was deactivated. The ceremony commenced at 1:34 p.m. on 11 August, 2007, on the flightline side of Hangar Two at MCAS Miramar, San Diego, CA.

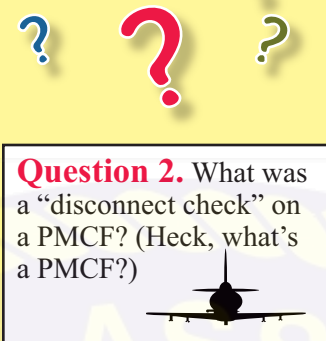
? BOOM-BOOM ROOM

• Puzzlers from Boom Powell •

Here are some puzzlin' yet probin' photos and questions from the Boomster, see if you can go 3-for-3 with him. This is the honor system, of course...



Question 1. What is the small cone-shaped thing in this picture?



Question 2. What was a "disconnect check" on a PMCF? (Heck, what's a PMCF?)



Question 3. What was the standard ammunition load for each 20mm cannon?

See Answers on Page 21.

Responses to Boom-Boom Room – Fall 2007

Read 'em and weep —

The Boom-Boom Room's Puzzlers, Fall 2007, asked readers to identify the A-4 model from which this throttle quadrant was taken. Well, the big boys really stepped up on this one from the files of Boom Powell, and one of you actually nailed it. To refresh the memory of those whose memories may need refreshing, here is the photo and question that elicited such a landslide response:

★ **From Meredith "Pat" Patrick, CAPT, USN (Ret.)** (mpatrick1@cox.net)

Hey all, regarding the picture of the throttle quadrant on page 16 of the Fall 2007 magazine, I can't be 100 percent sure because I can't read some of the labels in the photo, but I am betting with 0.9 probable confidence that it is the A4D-1 or A4A throttle in the photo. I checked with my copy of the A4D-1 handbook and all parts are there in the same order as the photo. One problem in completing the ID is that the illustration of the left console in the handbook is not very well pictured and the throttle lever blocks the view of the items to the left of the throttle handle. I flew the A4A in 1958 and am quite sure that the picture is an A4A throttle quadrant.

PS: I also really enjoyed the article about Denny Weichman. I relieved him

as the Light Attack and Vigilante Placement Officer in Bupers in early 1970. When we shook hands he had one of those little buzzers that vibrated hard in your hand. He never missed an opportunity for a practical joke or humor in any form. Denny, Jim Busy, and Bud Edney were three of my most admired heroes of the Vietnam War, and I knew a lot of them.

★ **From Speed Shea** (sjshea3@cox.net)
Howdy:

The throttle quadrant has Jato and a Spoiler controls, so it's a Mike, not a Bravo. Also, the "158430" on the throttle mount is a Mike BuNo. I flew BuNo 158429 with the Blacksheep VMA-214 at NYL (Yuma) back in November, 1977. Really enjoy your magazine!! A-4's Forever and *Semper Fi*, Speed

★ **From Dave Collier** (collier0176@comcast.net)

If one of the numbers stamped on the throttle quadrant is a Bureau Number, there is a Douglas A-4M *Skyhawk* Bureau Number 158430 on display at NAS JRB Fort Worth, TX.

Re the Douglas ad on page 7 (Fall 2007), in those early years the jet mechanics were trying to find enough room in the A4D to get their hands and tools into places

where they needed to work. Now the red shirted ordinance men, especially those that had previously worked on the AD, were all grins with a plane that normally only had one Aero 7A centerline bomb rack available, along with only two 20MM cannons. The days before the MCBR were heaven on earth to ordinance men in *Skyhawk* squadrons. The artwork and the ad copy did not match, but it sure looked good. Dave



And The Winner is:

★ **From Bob Schneider** (snackbar@suddenlink.net)

This throttle quadrant is a modified C model quadrant made for the L model conversion. Note the spoiler arming switch on the lower left hand corner and other wording. I guess I am at an advantage because I traded Tony Jaeger for the throttle quadrant as I needed one for one of our A-4Ls that was stolen from our plane last year.

Bob Schneider (Snackbar) A-4L-LLC Hawkins, TX

PLAYBOY 11 IS DOWN

By Bob Miecznikowski (Playboy 71)



USAF A-1H "Sandy" rescap.

(Ed. Note: Buff was Playboy 30)

It's been over 35 years since this occurred and you know what they say about autobiographical stories. They may include what we wished happened, rather than what actually happened. In any case, I will relate this incident that occurred at about 12:15 PM on April 9, 1969, as I remember it.

It Started Out as a Good Day

This was my 28th Fast FAC mission as a Playboy flying out of Da Nang. Flying the A/C in the front seat was Capt Jim Buffington. I knew Buff pretty well, since we had flown together at Cherry Point. I was with VMT-203 then, and Buff had just reported in from Pensacola. He was a good stick, and I enjoyed flying with him and trusted him completely. We had just spent an hour and a half going up and down the trail with Buff flying and me looking. For those who never flew a Fast FAC mission, all I can say is that it is the best in combat flying, for an attack pilot.

I often felt sorry for the fighter jocks who had to orbit at altitude, waiting for a MiG sighting to get some action. Flying a Fast FAC mission was full of action even when no one was shooting at you, or you weren't directing missions for targets that you found scooting across the deck. I digress, but all who flew these missions knew how lucky we were to be called a Playboy, Misty, or Stormy.

Well, there we were about 50 feet off the deck, airspeed as fast as we could go without over-tempering the engine. Buff was doing a great job of keeping the A/C heading east. We were in the valley south of Highway 1 in Laos, I believe, east of one of the checkpoints we used on the trail called D45. There were karst mountains to the north, and we always got a lot of anti-aircraft fire in this area.

The flak was normally heavy stuff like 57MM or 37MM, the kind that left little puffs of stuff in the air, rather than just winks on the ground. We would normally see gun barrels with real big flashes coming out of them--many times two or four barrels on the gun mounts.

But then...

It must have been the time of day and other factors that facilitated my visual sighting, but to the north of our flight path, I caught sight of a lot of build-

to put in some smoke rockets (we had Zunis on board). I also told Misty that we were going to mark a target for him to check out. Buff pulled up and got set for a run in from south to north. He was on line and fired the rockets right on target. We pulled up on our northerly heading, and I felt something hit the A/C. It was like getting a kick in the butt.

We were pulling out and gaining altitude when the FIRE warning light came on. Buff also noticed this and didn't

argue as I took control of the A/C. My mind was really working on what we should do. I called Misty and told him that we had gotten hit on the marking run and planned to turn to the east, while climbing for altitude and keep-

ing the airspeed up. At this time the fuel gauge went to full internal. I assumed that the fuselage fuel tank was hit and leaking fuel into the rear of the A/C--therefore, the fire warning light.

"I often felt sorry for the fighter jocks who had to orbit at altitude, waiting for a MiG sighting to get some action. Flying a Fast FAC mission was full of action even when no one was shooting at you, or you weren't directing missions for targets that you found scooting across the deck."

ings that were covered by camouflage netting and jungle growth. They were big buildings, explaining why we were getting shot at when we were in this area. We had just established communications with Misty 31 (I believe), the Air Force Fast FAC who was relieving us on station.

I got pretty busy talking to both Buff and Misty, telling Buff to pull up and get set up to mark these building so that Misty could run some strike missions on them. I talked Buff to where I wanted him



Playboy TA-4 in landing pattern at Da Nang.

We were not in an area where I felt we could eject and get picked up without getting captured or losing a lot of A/C and men. I told Buff I believed we could keep the fire going out the back of the A/C as long as our airspeed was good and we kept climbing to higher altitude where the air was thinner. Misty was coming up the trail to Delta 45, had sight of our smoke and was climbing up to join up on us. I cannot remember exactly how high we got, but I know we were around 30,000 feet or above. I kept our airspeed at about 300 knots with the throttle at 100 per cent. Buff was pretty quiet and didn't offer any comments. I don't know if he also felt that we couldn't eject in that area and get picked up, or if he just trusted in my judgment in handling the situation we were in.

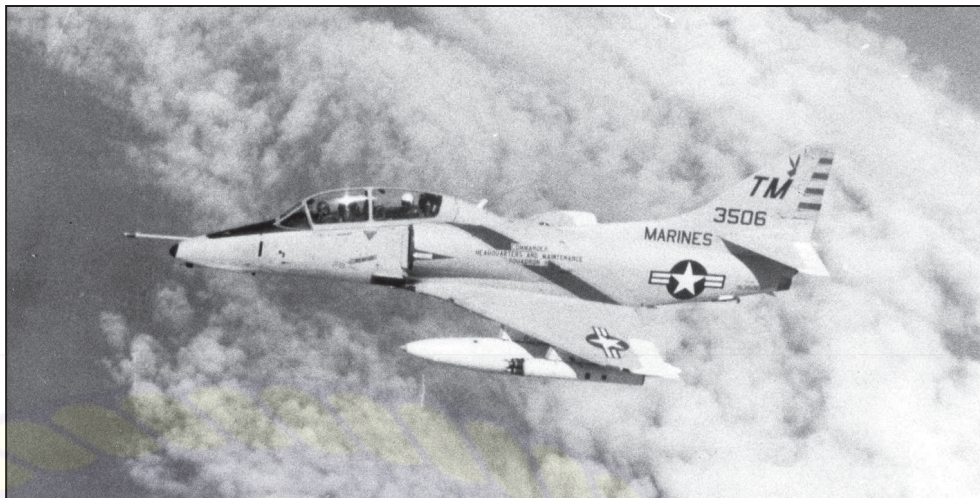
In any case, we were heading for Da Nang with Misty on our wing. I didn't want to change the throttle setting from 100% because the engine was doing good, and I remember pilots saying that when they reduced power the engine went to hell. The fuel gauge all of a sudden returned to reading all the fuel we had on board, and I think I told Buff that the fuselage tank must have sealed itself. Shortly after that, the fire warning light went out and Misty said we were no longer trailing smoke. Well, I know I felt a lot better, as we headed toward Da Nang.

A few seconds later, the oil quantity light came on, the oil pressure went to zero and the J52 quit. That took all the good feelings away. Now we were gliding, and there was no way we could make the South China Sea or Da Nang. We told Misty about our engine failure and turned south to a mountainous area where we never ran any missions. The terrain was high, green and had no bomb craters. I told Buff that it looked like a good area to jettison the A/C. At least it had stayed together long enough to get us away from the bad guys.

The Ejection

As we headed down, we discussed the ejection. Not knowing the ground elevation, I made my first bad decision: I said we should eject at about 10,000 feet. Must have been something from NATOPS. As we hit that altitude, I told Buff I was going to punch out. I reached up and pulled the face curtain.

I then realized my second mistake:



A Playboy Skyhawk

I had the seat all the way up, so when I pulled the face curtain, my hand hit the canopy and then my hardhat, pushing my head down. I was looking at the aircraft deck and saw the canopy leave the A/C, the rocket seat ignite and the seat and me leaving the cockpit--it was quite the show. As I reached for the harness release, I felt myself being separated from the seat. I then reached up to pull the D-ring. I was tumbling at the time,

taintop, and there were no clearings in the area toward which I was heading, only trees.

The Landing

After seeing Buffington hit the ground, I felt good about going into the trees. I crossed my legs, just in case, as I hit the top of the trees. There I was, hanging in a tree in Laos, feeling confident that the chute was solidly hung up in the branches so I wasn't going to

"As we headed down, we discussed the ejection. Not knowing the ground elevation, I made my first bad decision: I said we should eject at about 10,000 feet."

and my head must have been pointing toward the ground when the chute opened. It straightened me up quickly and gave me one hell of a whiplash. My neck was sore, but I had a good chute and was in one piece.

I saw Buff and he had a good chute, too. It looked to me like he was coming down a lot faster than I was (everyone called me Skinny Cheeks because I must have weighed in at about 145 lbs). He sailed right past me toward the ground.

Well, there we were floating toward the ground with things looking pretty good so far. When I could tell that the ground was rapidly coming up to me, I all of a sudden remembered the chief who conducted parachute training in preflight telling us that landing with a military chute was like jumping out of a second story window. About that time, I saw Buff hit the ground hard in a clearing. I was drifting over another moun-

tain. I got out my SAR radio, and the first thing I heard was Misty saying that they had my chute in sight. That made me feel good! I always seemed to have problems with callsigns in emergencies, and that day was no different. We hadn't briefed on who would be Pilot 1 and 2, or A and B, if we had to eject and communicate with our rescuers. Buffington and I were both calling ourselves "A", which had Misty a little confused. However, we finally got it clear that I was "A" and Buffington was "B".

After that, all I had to do was get down from the trees. I asked myself why I hadn't attended those rappelling practices--then I got the rappelling line out, threaded it through the bottom seat fitting and the top hook on my harness, and let the remaining line fall to the ground.

My neck was hurting from the whiplash I got when the *continued...*

PLAYBOY 11

Continued...

chute opened. Looking down, I couldn't see the ground but thought I must be up pretty high. I then tied the rappelling line into the chute harnesses and

vest) inflated, and I became entangled in the remaining rappelling line. As I was rolling down the hill, wrapped in rappelling line and wearing a bright life vest, I thought that any VC in the area would have a good laugh before they shot me.

Coming to rest, I untangled myself from the rappelling line and decided to

I didn't have my watch on. Instead, I started counting. I must have counted slowly, since I didn't check in frequently enough. I found out from reading the Air Force SAR report that they thought my radio wasn't working. Since the radio was my only contact with the rescue force, I didn't want to run out of batteries. I did listen more, but unless I heard something that required a response, I didn't communicate with the rescuers.

During the time I was sitting on the ground, I thought I had better find out what was in the survival pack. I was really interested in finding a compass, so I could orientate myself with the aircraft above. Let me tell you, if you never went through one of those survival packs, you missed an adventure. Everything was in a separate plastic bag. I was opening bags and putting the survival gear in one pile and the plastic bags in another. I opened a lot of bags, and found a lot of stuff before coming across that compass. Wouldn't you know it, when I did get to the bag with the compass, I dropped it into the plastic bag pile and had to go back and dig it

decided that it was time to release the Koch fittings and start down to earth. Releasing the fittings was easier than I thought it would be. I had the line running from the chute harness through the two torso harness fittings across my butt and into my right hand. I started down, and initially things were going well. However, the further I went down the rappelling line, the more my speed of decent increased. It was getting very hot across my butt, and my hands were burning through my gloves. Not knowing how high I was off the ground, I held on because I decided that a few burns on the butt and hands would be better than a broken leg.

Things were really getting hot, and even though I had no idea of how high I was above the ground, I released the line and went into free fall. Luckily, it was only about 5 feet to the ground. Hitting the side of the mountain on a slope of about 45-degrees, things started happening quickly. My Mark 3C (life

deflate my yellow Mark 3C. I thought about using my knife; however, I decided that I would probably just stab myself, so I used the inflation tubes to let the air out. I removed the Mark 3C from my harness and dug a hole to bury it.

All this took some time, and I figured I'd better find a hiding place just in case some of the bad guys came up the hill. I found a neat place behind a fallen tree trunk that was on the ground

"I say a prayer every day for our young service members (and their families) who give their life and leave this world alone, often in a foreign land while defending America."

between two standing tree trunks. I dug in a bit, but didn't go too far before I ran into rock – the ground was more like the soft remains of leaves and tree branches that had decomposed into earth. I retrieved the rappelling line and took a deep breath. Hearing aircraft

above me, I thought I had better try to check in with them.

I made contact with a Sandy (Air Force A-1 Skyraider), and he told me he had my chute in sight. In order to save my batteries, I was told to come up on the SAR radio every 30 minutes. That sounded okay to me, except that

out. Once I had the compass, I stopped opening bags and went back to monitoring the radios. The other survival item I kept handy was the signaling mirror.

The Rescue

I came on the air and heard that the Jolly Greens (Air Force rescue helicopters) were inbound and would pick up Buffington first, then come for me. The *Spad* (Air Force A-1 Sandy) overhead asked me to shoot off a pencil flare, so I thought he had me in sight. I heard that they picked up Buffington and were on the way to get me. I don't know why, but I decided to put on my hardhat and wait for them to arrive. I thought they asked me to pop a smoke, so I did and listened for instructions. The next thing I knew, the jungle canopy was opening up, and the CH-53 appeared overhead. I remember them asking me if they needed to drop "Lifeboy." Not knowing what "Lifeboy" was, I said "No, just get me out of here."



USAF Jolly Green Giant Rescue helicopter.

I saw the jungle penetrator coming down and let it hit the ground before putting on the horse collar and dropping the seats. I got on, gave a thumbs-up and started to feel myself lifting off. I also started to feel much better about the day. Let me tell you, a CH-53 hovering at 4,500 feet in the jungle puts out a lot of downwash. However, I didn't mind it a bit. As I got to the top of the trees, we suddenly started to move forward. I'm glad that I put my hard hat on because the Jolly Green was trolling me through the treetops.

The next thing I remember is being pulled through the door of the helicopter and seeing several guys with armor plates on the front and rear of their bodies and gas masks on their faces. I remember sitting on the canvas seats wondering if they were going to offer me some of that armor plating to sit on. Never happened. As we were flying to Da Nang, the crew disrobed, and I asked them what "Lifeboy" was. They replied that it was tear gas, which they used it if there was a hot zone for the pickup. I had never heard of that in any of my briefings.

The flight back home to Da Nang was uneventful. After landing, the "Towering Q" (Gen Quiller) was there to meet us, with a lot of others that I cannot remember. I would definitely like to someday meet and have a drink with the crews that were involved in the rescue. Someone from our squad-

ron did remember to buy the packer of my chute and plane captain a bottle of Chivas or a case of beer for the fine job they did in keeping the survival equipment in great working condition.

After the greeting, I was taken to the hospital and checked over. While I was there, they had a Medevac come in with some soldiers who were badly hurt. One was being worked on next to me by a couple of doctors and nurses. After about half an hour, the doctors said there wasn't any hope, and they put curtains around his stretcher. I asked the nurse about him, and she said that there was nothing they could do for him. That really brought the reality of the war home to me. He looked like he was about 18 or 19, and the thought that was running through my mind was that he was there in Vietnam all alone, and that the next thing his family would hear was that he was KIA. I say a prayer every day for our young service members (and their families) who give their life and leave

this world alone, often in a foreign land while defending America.

After the Medevacs were all taken care of, a doctor saw me. He gave me a collar for my neck, put a few stitches in my butt and gave me some pills for pain. As I was leaving, he told me, "Don't drink any alcohol with these pills." Yea, right--the first place I went was the O' Club, and

UNCLASSIFIED		09 Apr 69	SECRET
09/0747/70	PLAYBOY II - CR 3, JG 79 HAS "A" IN SIGHT.		
09/0749/70	PLAYBOY II - CR 3, PENETRATOR ON WAY DOWN.		
09/0749/70	PLAYBOY II - CR 3, "A" MAN ON WAY UP.		
09/0749/70	PLAYBOY II - CR 3, "A" MAN ON BOARD JG 79		
09/0749/70	PLAYBOY II - CR 3, BOTH SURVIVORS IN GOOD SHAPE. W/11 GO TO CH 77		
09/0749/70	PLAYBOY II - ETA FOR JG's 0825Z CH 77		
09/0823/70	PLAYBOY II - CR 6 ESCORTING JG's TO CH 103.		
09/0824/70	PLAYBOY II - JG's 32+29 LANDED CH 103 ATT.		
09/0825/70	MSGT BUCKLES + SSgt CLAY ON DUTY, TEST LACEY OFF DUTY. PLAYBOY II OPEN MISSION.		
09/0826/70	PLAYBOY II - CR 3 ETA FOR CH 77 0850Z.		
09/0826/70	MAJ WHITE OFF DUTY. CAPT REED ON DUTY. PLAYBOY II OPEN MISSION.		
09/0826/70	PLAYBOY II - JG's 76+79 ETA CH 77 0855Z.		
09/0826/70	PLAYBOY II - SP 11+12 LANDED CH 77 ATT.		
09/0826/70	PLAYBOY II - JG's 76+79 LANDED CH 77 ATT.		
09/0826/70	CLOSED		
09/0826/70	MIDAIR - CR 2 REPORTED THAT SG 69 HAD BROKEN HIS REGULATING PROBE W/NO HE DISCONNECTED FROM AIR WITH HIM. SG BROKE DOWN CAUSING THE DROGE ON CROWN TO STICK IN THE EXTENDED POSITION.		
09/0826/70	MIDAIR - SG 69 ARRIVED BACK L-48. AT LEAST 4 BLADE TIPS BROKEN. THE BASKET FROM DROGE WENT THROUGH THE ROTOR.		
09/0826/70	CR 2 WILL RTB TO UDORN.		
09/0826/70	MIDAIR - CROWN 2 ATA AT CH 77		

Official SAR log, now declassified, records details of mission, including landing at Da Nang (Channel 77) at end of mission.

I believe I had to buy the bar since everyone told me that was the tradition. The next thing I remembered after having a tall one, was waking up in my hut with a pretty good headache.

A few years back, I got a call from Hawaii, asking if I remembered what ordnance we had onboard the aircraft that we ditched in Laos. I asked why they wanted to know and was told that a team searching for remains was going to be near our crash site and might visit it. I told him, and he was good enough to send me the SAR log of our rescue. That's something that most of us that were been picked up never got to see. It made me feel good to read the log and see how many fellow Americans were willing to put their lives on the line to get me home.

Ed. Note: For more information on the Playboy mission, see *Who Were Those Guys? The Playboys* by Larry Adkinson, *The A-4Ever*, Winter 2005, p. 4. To purchase a copy of that edition, email sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.



Homecoming at Da Nang, 9 April 1969, about 1830. 'Ski is between the guy with the Udorn hat and the major to the left of Gen Quiller.

PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Puresome" Woodul

BAGGING

Puresome blamed it all on Worm. As a powerless, frabbing new guy junior officer finally in the fleet, he was famished to fly his fanny off and astonish the squadron, air wing, and world with his skill. Unfortunately, Norman-the-Fink, the beloved schedules officer, knew which side of his fitness report got buttered and divvied out the good deals on a straight-line rocket number basis. Puresome, a boot LTJG, howled in envy as his brown-bar buddies Weed and Candy Andy sucked in the good deals as the skipper and XO's wingmen. If happiness was two day hops dropping a bunch of real bombs against some place like Vieques or Fungy Bowl, Puresome could count on being squadron duty officer or flying the night tanker.

Most of the time, Puresome could accept this as dues-paying, although Norman-the-Fink seemed to take special, perverse pleasure in denying Youthly's subtle, psychological sniveling, such as "*You couldn't give me a duck target strafe hop even if you wanted to...*" But what really made him gnash his teeth was watching Worm sniveling flight time right in front of him, because he was in the maintenance department and could fly test hops on aircraft coming out of checks. Since Puresome was stuck in the administrative division as Larry Legal Officer, First Lieutenant, Education and Information Officer, and Movie Officer-for-Life, he could only moan and plot his escape from the Empire of Paper Shufflers.

Test hops were only one part of Worm's bag of sniveling tricks. While only one cruise senior to Puresome, Worm had some kind of mysterious hold over His Finkness that allowed him to bag consistently good hops and fly with good senior sticks like Spider. Puresome tried flattery, bribery, and would have used blackmail if he could have caught the schedules officer wearing Victoria's Secret, but all he ever got

from Norman-the-Fink was a hissy fit.

Another part of Worm's success was his consistent high *mach* number, since he ricocheted around the squadron at the speed of heat and seemed to arc by the duty officer's desk when good deals were cooking. Puresome figured that all that speed took lots of fuel, since Worm's call-sign came from "Tape Worm," earned the day he ate Thanksgiving dinner at both wardroom settings, and whose favorite saying was "*Let's go take it in the mouth!*" around chow time.

"Puresome knew that it was an essential part of the Naval Aviator's Code that it wasn't enough to just be 'Ace of the Base'--you had to be able to tell anyone, 'You boot! I got more time in the Phuc Yen GCA pattern than you got in the Navy!'"

Youthly didn't want to miss a trick, so he doubled up on sliders and bug juice and sat around the ready room in a stupor. Surrounded by piles of official-looking paper, he tried to look busy, wiping his greasy mouth on his flight suit while awaiting his country's call. It was half-flaps, low-and-slow, but he was available.

It was a maddening tail-chase, especially since Worm knew that every flight he got instead of Puresome made Youthly stomp simulated bugs in anguish. Even though they were pals, Worm made sure he rubbed it in so as to watch the Rain Dance. Puresome understood perfectly that it was not enough that he succeed, but everybody else must fail in the scramble to the top of the pyramid; so he plotted and bid his time to get better than even.

But time marched on in the Tiny Tinker Terror Squadron, and Buffalo Bill became skipper, and Norman-the-Fink got orders. The new skipper had noticed and approved of Puresome's innovative use of aviator sunglasses to bribe ship's company types to weld

helmet holders and make cosmetic improvements to the ready room, instead of going through the endless paperwork process and had rewarded him with a transfer to the maintenance department. And Worm became schedules officer! *Yahoo!* Things were indeed looking up!

Though Worm made sure he stayed a couple of steps ahead, Puresome found himself available for more and more good deals, including the illusive maintenance test hops. But the best deal was the one-hour cycle two-vs-two ACM flight that Worm was able to set up against the Jolly Roger F-4s after Puresome had bad-mouthed one of their LCDR interceptor pilots at a cocktail party. The Double Demon driver had gotten huffy, flang down his gauntlet, and so it was arranged to do battle. The Tink section had a jolly time, got lots of gun shots, and Youthly graciously submitted to the Phantoomers during

the debrief that "*if he had known he was going to be camped at their six for so long, he'd brought a tent and a picnic basket.*" It was a perfect "ten" on the Arrogance Scale, and Puresome knew you got points for this in the Great Naval Aviation Pecking Order.

By the time he showed up at the Tinker Toy RAG at NAS Cecil to be a light attack instructor, Puresome had become a finely honed bagging machine. The East Coast RAG still seemed to operate on a pre-war basis; and Puresome and his buddy, Weed, were among the few camouflaged flight suits among a sea of orange ones. Most people seemed more interested in mowing their lawns than flying, and Puresome jumped on hops like a duck on June bugs. Even if he wasn't on the schedule, he could snag two hops a day by hanging around the duty officer's desk in the morning. And, following Worm's lead, he had gotten himself assigned to the maintenance department as an assistant aviation/weapons officer, whose boss was a maintenance LDO who didn't care if he flew all the time. So on a good day,

Puresome could snag two test hops as well as two hops with students.

Puresome's old squadron, the Snakes, had turned in their A-4Es and were hanging around Cecil Field with no airplanes while going through the A-7 RAG. Puresome took pity on his pals and saw to it that they occupied one of the dual seats of a TA-4 during weekend cross countries, although he possibly neglected to inform any of his squadron heavies of the arrangement. He reasoned that it was his airplane for the weekend, and it would probably enhance safety to have a spare aviator in case he encountered some of the dreaded bad ice prevalent at officers' clubs at the time. When the Snakes finally got their brand new A-7As, Puresome made it his task in life to jump them at every opportunity.

Whether it was gratitude or annoyance, the Snake skipper, Charlie Lima, Chicken of the Air, finally called Puresome over to his brand new squadron skipper office. *"Puresome, I got a deal for you. You go to NAMO, I'll let you fly my A-7s!"*

"Skipper, that's no hill for a stepper. Thank you, and I'll see you.....after school!"

Puresome had not spent all that time as an *office pinkie* in the admin. department for nothing. Picking up the phone and deftly shuffling paper from the bottom of the deck, he quickly arranged a spot in the next A-7 NAMO class, which only happened to be about a block away from his squadron spaces. It was a piece of cake to show up for morning quarters; run over for class; show up for lunch at the squadron spaces; back for class and finally, come back to the squadron after class was over and fly a hop or two. The over-worked schedules officer was so happy to have someone like Puresome around who would fly anything, anytime, that it was easy to cut a deal. Besides, like a big roll or a big fight, you couldn't get hurt in a big squadron.

Puresome finished ground school, and Charlie Lima was as good as his word. Worm had made the transition and volunteered his services as chase pilot. So Puresome snuck off to the Snake spaces, and Worm briefed him on coping with hydraulic failures, which seemed to be the emergency *du jour*.

They loaded a cut-up strip chart on to a mechanical roller for the low-level part of the hop and headed on out to the airplanes.

Yahoo! The A-7 smelled like a new car, and the shiny cockpit was huge compared to the A-4. Puresome snapped the roller map in place on the console and did his best not to look like a complete dufus during the start and post flight checks. Airborne with Worm in loose cruise formation, he turned on the radar and successfully found the St. Johns River. The flight checked into the Pinecastle target area, and Puresome did six simulated bomb runs of varying dive angles. They departed Pinecastle for the low-level route; and when Puresome flipped the switch for the roller map over the first check-point, he was astounded to see the mechanical bug on the map follow along the course line on the chart.

As he drove along, the roller map chugged away, driven by the ASN-41 navigation computer, which was a sort of divine clockwork bunch of gears grinding out a position, modified by Dr. Doppler. Puresome turned forty-five degrees away from the course line and deliberately drove off the paper. Then he turned back on an intercept course. Sure enough, the mechanical bug appeared on the edge of the strip map and crept back to the course line, right where it should be. *"Amazing!"* thought Puresome. *"A low grade ape could fly a good low-level with one of these things!"* Of course, he knew that the fancier the gadget is, the more likely it is to fail when you really need it; and you'd best have the old timey way in your back pocket.

After two hours the A-7 still had bags of gas, so Puresome dropped into Whitehouse, NAS Cecil's auxiliary field for FCLPs under the eye of the duty LSO. After deliberately flying a wide and deep pattern for the first landing, Puresome whanged in several more in acceptable fashion and felt ready to do it for score back at the Air Patch. After landing, Puresome didn't know who was happier, himself or Charlie Lima for getting his airplane back. It was Bagger's Heaven and Puresome's little secret, though the operations yeoman might have puzzled about the entry in his logbook.

It was a Golden Era of Bagging. There were students to chase out to Yuma for weapons deployments. There were piles of gas chits and aircraft for crossing the country and maintaining one's proficiency at other base's happiness hours. Puresome always ran the shore detachments for the student CARQUALs because he usually got to snivel a few traps on the *Lexington*. When he found out that the VU squadron across the hangar had a couple of F-8s in their complement of aircraft, he again did his telephone and paperwork shuffle and signed up for F-8 NAMO over at NAS Jacksonville.

Unfortunately, this time the executive officer, who was looking for a JAG investigation Puresome had done on one of the squadron's errant Snuffies, mysteriously tracked him down and rang him up to ax him where it was. While perplexed at the magnificence of the XO's Indian work, the nine-pound report was actually done and had probably clogged up the routing in the admin office. Since they both knew that Puresome was happily FIGMO (FRABB IT! GOT MY ORDERS!), the XO just crossed out the mystery on his "to-do" list and signed off. *"Besides,"* Puresome mused, *"what's he going to do? Put me on a 27-Charlie and send me to Viet Nam?"*

The bad news was that major parts of both the VU squadrons' F-8s lay scattered in pools of hydraulic fluid on the hangar deck for the rest of the time Puresome was about, so he never did get to make their burners go boom.

Puresome knew that it was an essential part of the Naval Aviator's Code that it wasn't enough to just be "Ace of the Base"--you had to be able to tell anyone, *"You boot! I got more time in the Phuc Yen GCA pattern than you got in the Navy!"* It was absolutely intolerable for anyone to have done more flying, shooting, trapping, or eating more nachos. The downside was that all the zooming around was taking a toll on Puresome's supply of Med. Cruise Scotch required to smooth the dints out of his body every night.

Finally, the old grey-headed skipper called Puresome in for a friendly chat and told him not to fly so much. *"But Skipper,"* Puresome howled, *"It's what I do!"*

He knew that Worm would understand.

ARMED FORCES DAY:

China Lake, 1963

By Anthony L. Tambini, II, CDR, USN (Ret)



Air shows never fail to bring out the crowds. In the high desert of China Lake, 150 miles north of Los Angeles, people would come from every direction to see the airplanes. Armed Forces Day was a cause for celebration. Almost any reason could be a cause for celebration in this place where quarter movies and the bowling alley were the major attractions, although the bars at the clubs would most likely be first on the list of things to do for a good percentage of the population.

It was a typically beautiful day in May, a perfect day for families to get together and stroll among the static displays of all of the different kinds of airplanes that we flew from the naval air facility. There would be displays, demonstrations, and a flyover of every major type of airplane in our inventory. In addition to the Projects Department, where various newly designed and developing weapons and weapon systems were in various stages of testing, other important support functions of the naval air facility were to be featured.

Our “Redbirds” would be first in the order of appearance. These were F9F-6 *Cougars* that had been

converted to “drones” or NOLO (No Live Operator) targets for the air-to-air missiles and surface-to-air missiles being developed or undergoing testing at the Naval Ordnance Test Station. Accompanied by their T-28 *Trojan* controller aircraft and a pair of FJ-3 *Fury* chase planes, this colorful group always pleased the crowds. After the drones, our collection of projects birds was scheduled for individual flybys. Later, our skydiving club would make a series of jumps for the crowd.

Sitting on the flight line was a shiny, new A4D-5, the first of a new breed of *Skyhawks* with a more powerful J-52 engine mounted behind modified intakes high on the fuselage. This airplane would later be renamed the A-4E in conformance with the Secretary Of Defense’s decree that the Air Force and Navy adapt the same nomenclature system—the Air Force’s. Fresh from the factory, it would be the last of the Projects Department airplanes to participate in our Armed Forces Day show.

Less than a week old, we had put just four flights on the new bird before scheduling it for modification to carry instrumentation and experimental systems. The new J-52 engine was causing some concern with both the manufacturer and the Navy. Burner cans, the main combustion chambers in the engine, were burning through and causing engine fires. One effort to fix the problem was to modify the fuel control, which by now had already gone through 29 changes.

The airplane itself handled like no other *Skyhawk* I’d flown. Peppy and responsive,

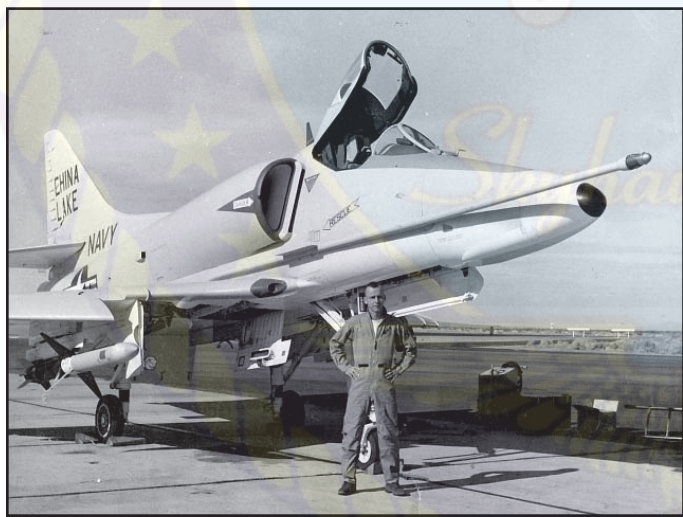
it was fun to fly. There were other concerns about this airplane, but none we considered serious. The Attack Weapons Projects Officer and I had both found that the airplane flamed out (the engine quit) every time that we put the airplane into a spin. Restarting the engine proved to be easy and fast; but still, it was a concern. Spinning was not a maneuver purposely performed in the fleet, but it was a necessary part of structural flight-testing of external stores (weapons) and aircraft performance/recovery under conditions involving new configurations. This airplane had been sent to the naval air facility in support of Shrike missile system development, and it would become another in the growing stable of aircraft assigned to Attack Systems.

Saturday, the day of the show, dawned bright and beautiful, as did most days in the Mojave Desert. There was a bit of a kicker though: the wind was blowing at close to the limits set for safe flight operations. When the wind was above 40 knots, the chance of a safe landing was minimal, as was the chance of a safe ejection, if that became necessary. A pilot would probably be dragged in his parachute and badly injured or killed on the rocks and rough terrain before he could release himself from the harness and get free of the parachute.

The combination of sun and wind made the air above the desert floor rough and bumpy, not the kind of ride that is comfortable at 500 knots (and low altitude). If the wind got any stronger, we would have to cancel flight operations. We were even more concerned about our Skydiving Club. They were scheduled to finish the aerial part of the show with individual and team jumps over the facility.

The first events in our program got airborne and confirmed the weather folks’ assessment: we were right on the edge. The operations officer gave the go-ahead so as not to disappoint the crowd; but he cautioned that if conditions worsened, the show would have to be suspended. The FJs, *Cougars*, *Crusaders* and a lone *Phantom* all found the air to be turbulent and jolting. All participating aircraft slowed down dramatically; the bumpy ride was making it uncomfortable to go at the higher speeds planned.

While orbiting north of the field and waiting my turn, the air *continued...* ➔



Then-LT Tony Tambini poses with A-4E #149969 at China Lake shortly after the Armed Forces Day Air Show, June 1963.

EARLY SKYHAWK FLAME-OUT PROBLEMS

By Pat Patrick, CAPT, USN (Ret)



The ill-fated flight of 16 December 1958, was my sixth hop in the A4D-1 (A-4A BuNo 142172, side number 325--the older designation was current in 1958.) The aircraft was still very new and had the familiar new-car smell when I manned it. All of our A4D-1s in VA-44 were fresh out of the Douglas factory within the past several months. On familiarization hop number five, we had dropped six Mk-76 practice bombs and fired four 2.75" folding fin aircraft rockets on "Switzerland Target" just south of NAS Jacksonville, across the St. Johns River from the small town of Green Cove Springs, Florida. Consequently this was my second bomb and rocket hop in the A-4.

We took off mid-morning, rendezvoused a four-plane formation led by the executive officer (XO) of VA-44 (the East Coast A-4 RAG at that time) and proceeded to the same target. We made a low-altitude, 500-knot pass over the target to set the trim tabs for release conditions and broke up the formation to establish a safe interval between aircraft. As the junior ensign, I flew the number four position. We fired

the rockets first with a release from a 30-degree dive angle at about 1,200 feet above ground level and 500 knots true air speed.

On my third firing pass, I pulled up in a four-*G* climb and pushed the throttle forward. Instead of the usual acceleration, I felt the aircraft decelerate rapidly. My body leaned forward into the shoulder straps, and I heard the engine begin to unwind. I glanced at the engine gauge and saw the RPM and tail pipe temperature (TPT) falling rapidly. The oil pressure and fuel boost flip-flop gauges went to OFF. I said the usual "OH, NO," with "no" as a four-letter word, then keyed the mike and broadcast, "Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! Baker Boy 325, flamed out, pulling off the target." I then told the XO, our flight leader, that I would trade airspeed for altitude and try a relight going over the top when I reached the optimum relight speed of 220 knots. He "rogered," and told me he had me in sight.

As I went over the top of the arc at 5,500 feet and 210 knots, I pushed the nose over slightly and adjusted airspeed to 220 knots indicated air speed (IAS).

I went through the relight procedure and waited for the TPT to start to rise. It never did. We had no fuel flow gage in the A-4A; nor did we have any other diagnostic instruments like those available in current Navy jets. So I held the airspeed at 220 and tried one more relight procedure. As I completed each of the four simple steps for a re-light, I read it off to the flight leader and asked him if I was forgetting anything. He told me, "No, you're doing all you can."

I really didn't want to eject and explain why I had just destroyed a \$425,000 aircraft. During the second attempt, I saw the altimeter descend through 3,000 feet and heard the XO say, "Quit fooling with it and get out. Eject now." I glanced up and saw that I was headed toward a small cross-roads village, so I turned right toward a swampy area. I had been holding the nose up to stop the descent because the ejection seat was only good to altitudes above 1,000 feet and 125 knots IAS, straight and level. When I pulled the face curtain, the airspeed was 125, altitude 1,800 feet and rate of descent about 2,000 feet per minute. When I pulled the face curtain, the canopy separated and I was blasted out of the aircraft.

So far so good, but I quickly found out that I was still in real trouble. Flashback: *In between my sophomore and junior years at the University of Florida, I had spent three years in the Army, during the Korean War. I had gone through parachute* continued...

ARMED FORCES continued

seemed to be smoothing out a bit. The *Skyhawk* was taking the rough air in stride, and conditions improved vastly as I began a slow descent toward the airfield. This was going to be fun after all. I saw the airspeed pass 550 knots with the airplane still accelerating. Dropping to eyeball level, I passed the end of the north-south runway and saw, for the first time, the crowd lining the ramp and adjacent taxiway. They were a blur as I flashed past.

At midfield, I pulled up into a vertical climb and initiated a series of "Victory Rolls" for the crowd. On about the third rotation, the cockpit lit up like a pinball machine with the fire warning

light flashing, "Tilt!" Smoke filled the cockpit and when I looked in the rear view mirrors, I could see flames erupting through the side of the fuselage. Back around the horn came the throttle, and out went the ram-air turbine. I called the tower, dropped the landing gear and flaps, and executed a wingover maneuver to land on the same runway that I had just flown down. Speed and altitude bled off fast. I touched down on the end of the runway and fire trucks chased behind as I rolled out and stopped the airplane. It's amazing how quickly the airplane decelerated with the engine stopped. It was frozen—not the slightest rotation—a very different sensation

from the flameout approaches that we used to practice to simulate a landing with a failed engine.

I brought the airplane to a halt at midfield—right in front of the spectators who thought it was all part of the show. As I unstrapped and dove over the side, there in the front row, cheering and waving wildly, were my wife and sons.

Ed. Note: All Skyhawk pilots subscribed to the theory that it was better to be lucky than good. The aircraft described in this story was A-4E 149969, later flown by author Tony Tambini in Project Rainhat, which was described in his story printed in the Fall 2007 edition of The A-4Ever.

EARLY SKYHAWK FLAME-OUTS

Continued...

training as an enlisted troop in December 1952, and had 22 static-line parachute jumps while serving with the 10th Special Forces Group in 1953 and 1954. In the early stages of training, we had to climb up into a tower about 20--30 feet high, wearing a parachute harness; hook up to a cable that descended at about a 10--15 degree angle, jump out and slide down to the ground. The training taught us to exit the airplane in the right position and then to make a proper parachute-landing fall when we contacted the ground. There was always a grizzled old sergeant at the bottom of the slide. (He was probably about 30 years old.) As soon as you jumped out of the tower, he would scream at you, "You had betta open yo' eyes, look around, and see what you can do fo yo' sef." (All paratrooper sergeants had southern accents.) That translated to: "Don't expect everything to work as advertised; as soon as you clear the aircraft, open your eyes and take care of any malfunctions."

I reached up, grasped the face curtain firmly and pulled hard with both hands. When the curtain pulled

out most of the way, I heard a loud, "BOOM," felt a sharp pain in the small of my back, and was blown clear of the aircraft. As soon as I was out in the air-stream, I could picture my instructor at the bottom of the cable slide training device. I could hear him shouting in that pronounced southern accent, "You had betta open yo' eyes, look around, and see what you can do fo yo' sef." Consequently, as I cleared the aircraft I threw the face curtain back out of the way and looked around to see what I could do for myself. It made the life or death difference, because I was still attached to the seat by the para-raft lanyard. The lanyard was a yellow nylon ribbon that connected the survival raft located under the aircraft seat to the pilot's flotation gear.

"My first thought was, 'You are a dead man.' I tilted my head back, looked toward the ground, and saw a huge dark red-to-orange fireball exploding out from among the trees, as the aircraft hit the ground near the edge of the swamp."

The bright yellow-colored lanyard was wrapped around the shoulder harness locking handle on the left side of the ejection seat, holding the seat snug up against my right hip. I quickly reached out with my right hand and pulled the seat in toward me to get some

slack. I then unwrapped the para-raft lanyard with my left hand, and threw the seat forcefully away from me.

Next, I felt for and found the D-ring for manually opening the parachute. I pulled it hard to try and beat the automatic actuator. It was like pulling on a well-anchored cable; it would not budge. I was plunging, head first, toward the tops of pine trees near the edge of the swamp at which I had aimed the aircraft. My first thought was, "You are a dead man." I tilted my head back, looked toward the ground, and saw a huge dark red-to-orange fireball exploding out from among the trees, as the aircraft hit the ground near the edge of the swamp. I then looked down at the nearest pine tree and could see individual pine needles. My heart nearly

stopped, because I knew that if the parachute were not on its way out by now, I really was dead. Normally, it's eerily quiet when you are falling through the air, and I could hear a whirring noise. It was the familiar sound of rubber bands popping as the parachute was deploying. Rubber bands are used to hold the shroud lines, risers and panels in place when the parachute is packed. They make a whirring sound when they pop in sequence as the parachute opens.

The automatic actuator had fired when I threw the seat away. It had kinked the steel cable leading to the D-ring, which was why I could not pull it. My heart started to race again, as I looked at the pine needles and tried to tell whether the chute was going to open in time. I shifted away from the thought that I was a dead man, and said to myself, "Oh, shit, man this is going to be close, this is really going to be close." I then felt a hard jerk at my shoulders when the chute opened with me falling headfirst, face down toward the trees. The hard jerk swung my feet and legs down toward the ground and straightened me out. I had no time to enjoy the feeling, because I was probably less



VA-44 A4D-1 in flight.

than a hundred feet off the ground. I could see to my right front a Y-shaped intersection where three dirt roads joined. I grabbed the two risers in that direction and pulled down hard on them to start a slip toward the little opening formed by that Y intersection. I had to lift my legs up to clear the last pine tree, but I made it into the small clearing and smashed into the Florida sand. I tried to do a parachute-landing fall to cushion the impact, but my timing was a little off and the impact stunned my whole body.

There was almost no wind, so the parachute just collapsed around me. It was a good thing, because all I could do was lie there for a few seconds. Almost immediately, however, I could feel a big grin growing inside my oxygen mask as a tremendous sense of elation welled up inside me. I stood up, popped the oxygen mask off, took my helmet off and looked up at the beautiful blue sky with puffy white, fair weather cumulus clouds drifting by. *Life was good.* The pine needles smelled like expensive perfume and my whole body unwound as I looked up at that beautiful sky and shed a few tears of elation and relief. I hurt all over, but it didn't matter. I was alive with no broken bones or other serious injury.

The A-4A parachute was only 26 feet in diameter and was designed for survival, not for a comfortable landing. My back hurt like hell from the ejection, because the older seats were fired by a 37-millimeter cannon shell and were not as friendly as the rocket motors used today. The hard impact with the ground didn't help. (Many of my contemporary pilot friends have had serious, long-term, back problems stemming from their ejections. I have been extremely fortunate and have had no long term effect at all.) We had no survival radios, so I popped an orange smoke signaling device in the intersection of the dirt roads where I had landed. I then spread my chute out, and stood in the middle of it to make myself more visible for rescue.

In less than ten minutes, a reconnaissance version of the F9F-8 flew overhead and rocked his wings to let me know he had me in sight. He circled my position and guided the helicopter in. Roughly ten minutes later, I could

hear the helicopter approaching and popped another orange smoke. I rolled up the parachute, held on to it to prevent it from getting sucked up into the blades and got out of the way. The helicopter landed in my little clearing, and we exchanged big smiles and enthusiastic thumbs-up signals. They loaded my parachute and me aboard and flew me over to the helicopter pad next to the hospital at NAS Jacksonville. The flight surgeons checked me over, gave me three fingers of rot-gut brandy and a bottle of aspirin, and then released me in time for happy hour.

The Accident Investigation

The mishap board had asked me for a detailed statement of what happened, and I gave them probably more detail than they wanted. They did not let me read their draft report, however, until it was essentially complete. At that time, the Operations Officer, CDR Jim Homyak, called me in and let me read the almost smooth, draft. The story the report told was that the aircraft, BuNo.142172, side number 325, had flown a field carrier landing practice hop the night before, and when it was returned to the line, the ground crew failed to refuel it. I manned the aircraft the next morning and failed to complete the checklist, including the push-to-test of the fuel gauge and check of fuel quantity. The aircraft would have had only about 2,500 pounds of fuel on-board, which was exactly the amount that I would have needed to take off, rendezvous, get to the target and make three rocket passes. Consequently, I had run the aircraft out of fuel and would have had no symptoms prior to flame-out. We had no low-fuel warning light in the A4D-1. The mishap board said it was 100 percent pilot error.

While I was reading this report, I was picturing the huge orange-red fireball I saw while falling, face down toward the pine trees, waiting for the

In typical Navy fashion, the aircraft history card wasn't updated to reflect the accident cause.

Official USN history card for BuNo142172

22 Mar 1957 - BAR FA - El Segundo, CA
 01 May 1957 - VA-83 - NAS Oceana, VA
 23 Dec 1958 - VA-172 - Aboard USS *Saratoga*
 28 Feb 1958 - VA-172 - NAS Cecil Field, FL
 06 Sep 1958 - VA-44 - NAS Jacksonville, FL
 16 Dec 1958 - Accident - NAS Jacksonville, FL
 16 Dec 1958 - Striken - 1AA1
 16 Dec 1958 - (VA-44 AD-325) engine flamed out due to fuel exhaustion near NAS Jacksonville, FL
 Ens. Pat Patrick ejected safely.

parachute to open.

I thought, "No way!" I described the fireball to CDR Homyak, and he agreed to go back out in the helicopter and take another look. He found that the swampy area where the aircraft impacted had been severely burned for 25 yards around the impact point and agreed that the aircraft was clearly not out of fuel at impact. He also noted that there was a substantial amount of JP-4 still floating on the water in the hole formed by the crash. The cause was changed to "undetermined." I have been very suspicious of mishap boards ever since.

After four working days and a weekend off, recovering from the soreness, I was back in the cockpit.

This was one of about nine aircraft that the A-4 community lost during the fall and winter of 1958-1959. The flame-outs were occurring without any warning symptoms; and we lost about four pilots because several of the flame-outs were at an altitude too low to eject. We would learn on 21 February 1959, the probable cause of the majority of the flameouts we experienced.
(Ed Note: That story will be recounted in Part II, next issue of the A-4Ever.)



VA-44 patch

TINSx2

Where Do We Get Such Men!

By Col Duke Stanton, USMC (Ret)

The year was 1976, and it was the last deployment for VMA-211 from Iwakuni, Japan, prior to TRANSPACing back to El Toro. Our mission was to fly the squadron to Cubi Point for live weapons because dropping bombs in Japan was a “no--no.” LtCol. Bill Smith had the squadron and deployed with them for the first week. As the XO, I was to come down for the second week, while LtCol Smith returned to Iwakuni to complete planning for the TRANSPAC.

“If those guys had to go to the bomb dump to build up the bombs and then transport them all the way over here, hang them and run checks, I’ll bet they went straight from the club to the bomb dump, so look things over very, very, carefully!”

Toward the end of the second week on Saturday morning, we were due to hit the ranges with everything we had left, and then hit the tankers for our trip back to Iwakuni. Naturally there had to be an end of deployment party in Olongapo before we departed. That party was set for Friday night and had been in planning long before I arrived on the scene.

As all good Marines know, at that time in Olongapo, the clubs in town catered to either the enlisted, the staff NCOs or the officers; and seldom did the lines get crossed. For the post-deployment party, the staff NCOs had arranged for the use of one of their clubs, and it was closed to everyone except members of the squadron.

Being a good XO, I showed up a little late to watch the action (I don’t need to spell out what kind of action took place in those years in Olongapo) and left early.

Our takeoff time the next morning was 0800, which meant that our briefing time was at 0630. That meant that our wake-up was at 0530 to enable us to shower, have breakfast and get down to the ready room.

The pilots arrived for the briefings, dragging a little, but none the worse for

wear. The briefing went as usual. As we ventured out to our aircraft, the sun was poking over the mountains to the east; and the humidity was starting its long climb to the uncomfortable zone. The ordnance crews were still in the process of hanging bombs and running checks. I was thinking, “If those guys had to go to the bomb dump to build up the bombs and then transport them all the way over here, hang them and run checks, I’ll bet they went straight from the club to the bomb dump, so look things over very, very, carefully!”

After all the preflight checks were run and the ordnance looked over, I climbed into the cockpit and got strapped in with the help of the ever-faithful plane captain. He looked a little under the weather; however, youth does have its advantages. The aircraft were fired up in turn, and I was the last plane on the left and we were taxiing out to the right. I was able to look down

the line of aircraft to see when they were all ready.

When I received the thumbs-up that was passed up the line, I signaled for chocks to be pulled. As I made my turn in front of the other aircraft and began to lead the bunch to the arming area, I noticed that the ordnance crew was forming up in a line just beyond the last aircraft to pull it out of its position. As I approached where they were standing, the ordnance officer turned his head and yelled a command.

Every member of the ordnance platoon stood tall and rendered a salute. Needless to say, I was impressed and returned the salute with gusto. At that, the ordnance officer turned his head and yelled another command. The men did an about face, dropped trousers, and we were “moonied” by some of the best men in the Corps! I was laughing so hard that I could barely keep the A-4 on the centerline. Where do we get such spirit? Where do we get such men? God bless them all!

(Ed. Note: No photos have been included so that we can maintain our PG-13 rating!)

Carrier Quals

by Art Padios

In the fall of ’64, VMA-225 had a requirement for all its special weapons delivery pilots to refresh their carrier qualification records with two traps and two cats.

We were flying out of either Naha or Kadena on Okinawa and caught the *Connie* in transit back to the states. I’m sure the last thing those “black-shoes” wanted to see was a herd of Jarheads coming to their boat and smashing into the deck, especially since it delayed transit to CONUS.

I was flying #2 in the first flight. With our Marine LSO aboard the ship, I picked up the ball on my first pass. With a center-ball, I remarked to the LSO that I felt “flat.” “Oh, yeah,” he said, “I forgot to tell you guys, that’s a *Spad* ball on the mirror--it’s a 3 degree slope and only gives you about five feet hook-to-ramp clearance.” I immediately adjusted my pass to accept a slightly high ball. No big deal.

After trapping, I cleared the gear and was directed to the starboard cat with my flight lead on the port.

As I approached the cat, a “Grape” held up the blackboard with “Fuel” printed on it. I replied with my actual fuel state of about 1,800 pounds. Lead and I both cranked up to 100% with tension on both cats. He fired first and appeared to just “stagger” into the air.

At this point, I’d already saluted the cat officer when lead came up and told Pri-Fly that he only had 100 knots over the bow. Pri-Fly casually answered, “You had sufficient end speed.”

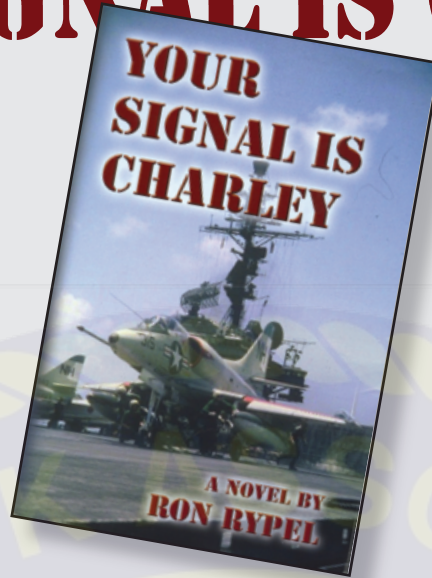
Whammo, off I went, same thing, about 105 knots. The valiant little A-4C struggled into the air, accelerated and was climbing. I came around for my second trap, cleared the gear, saw the same “Grape” with his little blackboard, and promptly indicated my fuel weight was now 4,500 pounds.

He held up the board with 4,500? Yes, I indicated, 4,500! Nice smooth, comfortable cat shot with an end speed of about 125 knots.

God, Naval Aviation is a joy, isn’t it?

YOUR SIGNAL IS CHARLEY

"I can't say enough about the book. Every chapter is a story. If you ever wanted to experience what it is like to strap on a Navy attack jet and grab some high pressure steam to catapult off the pointy end of an aircraft carrier, Ryp has the book for you. Add in his adventures as an airline captain in a start-up airline based in the Med, and you have a page turner. For aviation aficionados, this is the ideal gift."
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Signed copies are available from the author at ronrypel@sbcglobal.net. Cost is \$22 plus \$2.50 shipping. Checks only, made to Ron Rypel and mailed to Ron Rypel c/o Mike Heck, 2034 N. 90th St. Wauwatosa, WI 53226. Tel (414) 453-7446.

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John Paisley Cdr, USN(Ret)

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? Puzzle Answers: Boom-Boom Room ?

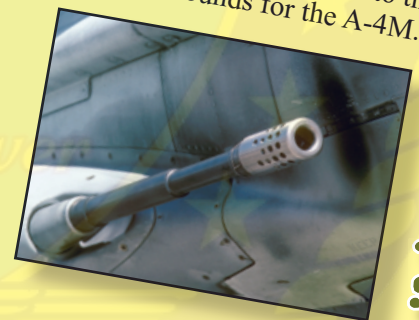
(See page 9 for questions)

Answer 1. One of the antennas for the electronic counter-measures system, "Shoehorn."



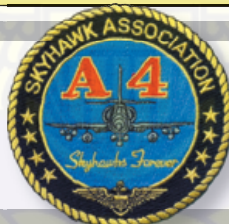
Answer 2. The A-4 had a direct mechanical linkage to the flight controls in the event of a hydraulic system failing (only one system--another Heineman weight-saver). The ailerons had an over-size hole in the mechanism to allow the hydraulics to operate. When the disconnect handle was pulled, there was some "slop" in the stick before the roll began. The ailerons had to be properly rigged for this condition, and it was tested on PMCFs (Post Maintenance Check Flights).

Answer 3. 100 rounds prior to the A-4M; 200 rounds for the A-4M.



Membership

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✓ Contact the webmaster and help.
Organize a local Skyhawk Det.
Submit an article for publication.



SIZE DOES MATTER

• Great New Skyhawk Models •

By Joe Turpen



A great looking *Scooter* model by Andrew Abshier of Alton, Illinois. Andrew used the *Skyhawk* Association web pages extensively to research these and other *Skyhawks* he has modeled.



This A-4C BuNu 148609 is displayed as NP 685 of VA-76, the aircraft flown by LCDR T.R. Swartz on the day he shot down a MiG-17. The model was made from the Hasegawa 1/48 scale kit with decals and Zuni rocket pods from the Hobbycraft A-4C kit.

More examples of Andrew's work can be found on the *Skyhawk* Association website, Modeler's Hangar Bay at <http://www.a4model.a4skyhawk.org/models/modelers.htm>.



Visit www.a4model.a4skyhawk.org/models/modelers.htm

TWIDGET GOES CYBER

• www.skyhawk.org •

By David "Twidget" Weber, *Skyhawk* Association Webmaster

Attention Again : The *Skyhawk* Association is STILL looking for a few good men (or women) to help with the website. The association website is growing by leaps and bounds, and we've reached the point where a single webmaster cannot keep up with the tremendous volume of new material. Step up!

Volunteer to be an associate webmaster in charge of maintaining one section or function of the website. We are in dire need of some enthusiasts who can:

❖ Serve as associate webmaster for our modeling section (<http://www.a4model.a4skyhawk.org/>). The ideal person would be a *Skyhawk* modeler with solid computer skills who could as-

sume responsibility for maintaining and expanding our modeling section of the public website. Duties would involve searching for and selecting content, uploading images and text, updating the modeling bulletin board and working with Director Joe Turpen to expand our outreach to modeling enthusiasts.

❖ Scan photos, manipulate images and upload images and text to the photo

**WE ARE DESPERATE
FOR VOLUNTEERS TO HELP
WITH THE WEBSITE!**

gallery and squadron history sections of the website. This work would be performed in collaboration with the squadron duty officer for the squadron.

These associates would work under the overall direction of Webmaster David Weber and have full access to edit and update the sections for which they are given responsibility. Training will be provided.

Remember, if everyone helps some, we all benefit. If you are interested in helping with this important aspect of the association's business, please email David at webmaster@a4skyhawk.org.

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skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com or at
2421 Clubside Dr., Beavercreek, OH 45431.

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TAPS

For TAPS lists,
members may access these links:
www.a4skyhawk.org/2D/KIA.htm
www.a4skyhawk.org/2E/ops_losses.htm

- ★ Gordon L. "Gordo" Gray, CAPT, USN (Ret), Brooks, GA. December 2, 2007
- ★ Thomas H. Miller, LtGen, USMC (Ret), Arlington, VA. November 27, 2007
- ★ M. Davis "Whizzer" White, D.D.S., Bossier City, LA. December 11, 2007

TAPS notices may be sent to Bob Hickerson, Newsletter Editor at
sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org or mail to
Bob Hickerson, 1222 Balcones Drive, Fredericksburg, TX 78624.

SCHEDULING STUFF

• Reunions & Requests •



PLAN AHEAD



USS Hancock CV/CVA-19 Association Reunion: May 5-10, 2008, Crowne Plaza, San Diego, CA.

I would like to contact all the A-4 squadrons that were on board at one time or another. Register online at www.armedforcesreunions.com/hancock and pay by credit card. POC is Wayne Erven, Pleasanton, CA. oldsalt2@comcast.net (925-462-6877)



Skyhawk Association: Annual Meeting and Luncheon: September 5, 2008, 11:30 a.m., Nugget, Reno, NV.



Marine Corps Aviation Association Convention/Symposium: 16-18 October, 2008. Sheraton Myrtle Beach Convention Center Hotel, SC.



Go Ahead, Give A Guy A Gift

Got a buddy who tries to leave with your copy of the A-4Ever? Got a pal who flew the Scooter but never reads about its illustrious history? Got women around you that think you're making up all those war stories and flying tales? Got kids who ask what you did in the war, daddy?

Well, help is at hand--it's called the Gift Membership Subscription for the Skyhawk Association's favorite publication, the A-4Ever. For less than half a tank of gas, you get a full year's worth of Skyhawkabilia in print and not only that, it has become a collector's item as well. Three times a year our members rejoice when finding the A-4Ever in the mailbox, and you can share in that love by giving a gift membership to those in need. A card will be sent to the lucky recipient naming you as the donor, or not.

Join or renew at \$30 or \$75, and give a one-year gift membership to someone for \$20 at the same time. Contact Terry Cooney at skyhawkasn@woh.rr.com for your gift membership(s), or at 2421 Clubside Dr., Beavercreek, OH 45431.



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 _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

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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.)

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Beavercreek, OH 45431-2503