

THE A-4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL Vol 19-4



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www.a4skyhawk.org

Skyhawk Association Board Meeting
April 11-13, 2014
Virginia Beach, VA



THE PREZ SEZ

• From Hide •



By Dave Dollarhide



Dave "Hide" Dollarhide

ELECTRONIC ISSUE

As you all know by now, our Skyhawk Journal, *The A-4Ever*, is published four times per year, with one issue offered in digital format. It's that time of year as evidenced by this electronic winter publication.

Members highly value the "Journal" and rightfully so. Bob Hickerson, our Editor, does an excellent job of bringing the Skyhawk and its people to life from both the past and present. Many members prefer the hard copy and after all these years, I'm sure there are numerous collections of them in home offices.

So why have an electronic issue? Cost is on the top of the list, but your emailed copy is more than that. It provides an opportunity to include more content, especially photos that would be prohibitive in a hard copy version with limited space. There is more "bang for the buck" here, so we hope you'll enjoy your copy.



Dave on A-4 ladder.

NEW SDO

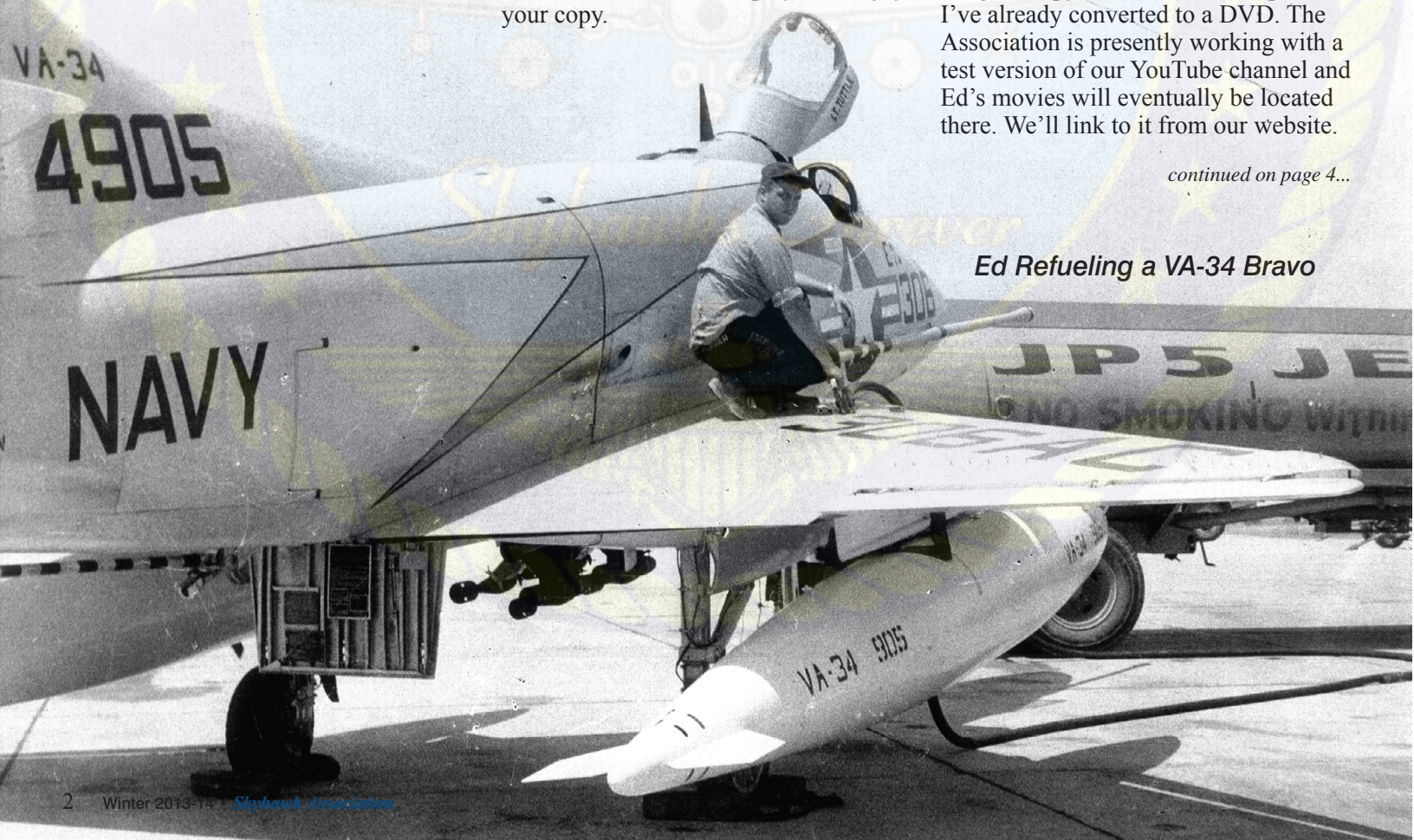
We offer our thanks to member **Larry Lassise**, who has volunteered to be the SDO for both VA-113 and VA-146. The SDO contact list is available on the public side of our website. To view it, go to "The Association" and select "Contact List."

OPERATION HOME MOVIE RESULTS

Ed Wilburn has graciously provided us with personal photos and 8mm movies from his tour with VA-34, 1958 – 1960. This is the first contribution to "Operation Home Movie" and we appreciate the response. Ed was a plane captain when the squadron was flying A-4As and A-4Bs from USS *Saratoga* and captured some historic footage. He had previously converted his home movies to a VHS tape and later made a digital copy and sent me the tape. I've already converted to a DVD. The Association is presently working with a test version of our YouTube channel and Ed's movies will eventually be located there. We'll link to it from our website.

continued on page 4...

Ed Refueling a VA-34 Bravo





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

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Winter 2013-14 •



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 Dave Dollarhide and Mark Williams - Co-Editors.
 Gene Atwell – Webmaster.
 Feature Contributors: Peter Mersky, Jack "Pursome" Woodul, Joe Turpen, Gary Verver,
 Boom Powell, and Dave Dollarhide..

Published by the Skyhawk Association © 2014

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.

Stephanie Davis, graphics, skyhawk@ncflight.com. Printed by NCCOAST Communications, Morehead City, NC.

Cover: Skyhawk Association President, Dave Dollarhide, taxis the Skyhawk Ventures A-4C for his first A-4 hop in over 40 years. Photo courtesy of Earl McCoy (Earl.MCCOY@hubbard.com). See <http://earlyb1rd.smugmug.com/Aviation> for more of Mr. McCoy's work.

Jack Waterbury also responded to the cause with some historic photos of his own. Jack and his son, Tom, both flew A-4s. Jack experienced one of the first incidents aboard the USS *Forrestal*, when the catapult bridle struck his F-9F8 Cougar in 1956. Many years later, Tom was killed in an accident while flying from *Forrestal* as noted in the ship's log below. (*Thanks to Ken Killmeyer, Forrestal Association Historian.*) Below, is a photo of Tom preflighting a specially painted VT-25 TA-4 for a trip to EAA's Air Venture at Oshkosh, WI. Thank you, Jack for sharing this touching story.

Let's continue to dig out those historic A-4 movies (and photos) and when you do, drop me a note at davedollarhide@msn.com.

USS *Forrestal* Ship's Log - 15 April 1992
Crash Death.

A T-2 Buckeye jet trainer aircraft from VT-19 crashed immediately after launch from catapult one. The two-man crew ejection was initiated and the front seat pilot was rescued. The rear seat pilot Lieutenant Thomas D. Waterbury was not located after an extensive search. His remains were later recovered still in his ejection seat.

*TA-4 painted for Oshkosh -
Tom Waterbury preflighting.*





TAKE NO PRISONERS

• Letters to the Editor •

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

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

Please note email address!

■ To the Editor:

The Illinois Aviation Museum (IAM) has joined the A4 Skyhawk Association and, I think our number is 4001 with Arzinia (Zook) Williams (IAM Treasurer) as the contact person.

Would it be possible to place an ad listing the parts we need to complete our display? If so what is the cost? Please advise.

Let me introduce myself. My name is (Bill) William R. Anderson. I am the Secretary of the Illinois Aviation Museum www.illinoisaviationmuseum.org in Bolingbrook, Illinois

I served in the U.S. Navy for six years from May 1963 to June 1969, including two years on USS *Enterprise* '65 to '67.

The Illinois Aviation Museum is in the process of restoring (for static display) an A-4C Skyhawk Bu. No. 148500. This aircraft was delivered to the Navy on 26 April 1961 and retired on 27 July 1971. During that time, she was assigned to VA-93, which was TAD to the USS *Enterprise* in 1965. (I was part of the ship's company at that same time in S1 Supply Division). We are restoring the plane in VA-93 colors to honor the pilots that flew the A-4 in combat during our engagement in Vietnam. In this regard, we need your help.

We are having a very hard time obtaining several parts to display the plane properly. I have listed the parts that we need below.

The most important parts we are missing are the leading edge SLAT for the left wing and the canopy seal to keep water and dirt out of the cockpit.

We have repainted the fuselage, cleaned and put the cockpit back together. Currently we are working on cleaning and repainting the wing. We hope to have the plane ready to be presented to the public in April or May of 2014.

I have attached several photographs of the A-4. If you could provide any assistance in obtaining these parts, it would be greatly appreciated.

William (Bill) R. Anderson

Illinois Aviation Museum

Secretary & Facility Director

130 Clow International Pkwy. Hangar Nr. 1

Bolingbrook, IL 60490

Office: 630-771-1937

Cell: 630-294-1053

Office e-mail: tours@illinoisaviationmuseum.org

Home e-mail: flying-geezer@sbcglobal.net



Qty.	Part	Part number
1	Left slat (full)	5442517-129 or 137 (unsure which is full slat)
1	Canopy gasket	3446622 or D2-4012-2
2	Drop Tank w/mounting	3662950
1	Tail Hook	
3	Hard Point mounting racks	
3	Bomb racks (6 place)	
1	Red Navigation light lens	
1	Red Beacon assembly for top of fuselage	
1	Antenna that is just behind cockpit	

ATTENTION ALL!

Illinois Aviation Museum has joined Facebook.
www.facebook.com/#!/illinoisaviationmuseum

LIKE their Facebook page and follow the restoration of BuNo 148500 that used to be assigned to VA93.

■ To the Editor:

Subject: Spring 2013 Newsletter

I really enjoyed reading this issue, especially Youthly Pure-some's adventures. However, the issue is marred by some grammatical gaffes:

(At this point Mr. Caruso listed instances of the misuse of "A4" versus "A-4" and "ordnance" versus "ordnance" and sundry others for which we promise to be more vigilant. He went on to say:)

I realize these are technical nits, but they really are annoying, at least for me.

I'll try to send some A-4 images soon once I scan my slides.

Hank Caruso

[hcaruso@md.metrocast.net]

Hank Caruso has been designated by the U.S. Navy as Honorary Naval Aviator #27. Check out Hank's new artwork @ <http://www.aerocatures.com>

■ To the Editor:

Navy/Marine Pilot Lingo: fun website – good for CRS issues. (Maybe we already have a link to this site from the SA page???)

[www.blueridgejournal.com/navy/lingo.htm#Aircraft=](http://www.blueridgejournal.com/navy/lingo.htm#Aircraft)

Bill "Jigger" Egen

[zerocep@ec.rr.com]



continued...

■ To the Editor:

Hi Guys -

These days we are marking 40 years after the Yom Kippur War [1973 War].

Attached please find a picture of American pilots (with our squadron girls) who brought Navy Skyhawks to Israel in October 1973.

Can you spread it among your colleagues to see if anyone recognizes himself?

I cc this mail to Shmulik Ben Rom, our squadron commander then.

Best Regards,

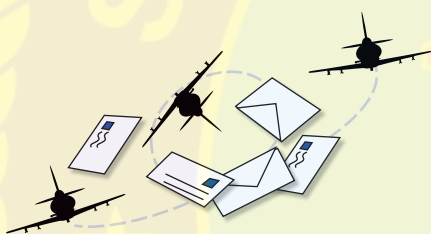
Rami Lothan

[rami@lotarc.com]



LETTERS

Continued...



■ To the Editor:

Greetings fellow Scooter drivers. Here are some pics of a different sort of control stick than most are used to. Anyone know what model this is installed on?

I count myself lucky to be still flying the A-4 after two retirements (USMC & FEDEX). The cockpit has shrunk a little after all of the years, but is still smells and feels the same.

Attached are some recent photos, and no, that Butt is not mine, I'm in the front! The other glamor shot has me contemplating an up and coming PMCF (*post maintenance check flight*). I'm trying to remember all of the scary stuff that has to be done that was no big deal when I was 30. A bit different at 61.

Semper Fi!

Chris "Stitch" Erdos, ATSI

NAS LEMOORE

Aviator Memorial Association

NAS Lemoore AMA, a Non-Profit organization has started to raise funds in order to build a memorial to all aviators stationed at NAS Lemoore whom have gone before us and have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of our Nation.

The statue will be located in a newly renovated memorial park next to Reeves Boulevard. Currently, there is a small parking lot that looks toward Runway 32L. The park will be extended to the south and the aviator memorial will look out toward the runway, constantly standing watch over those who are serving proudly at NAS Lemoore.



Gracious donors will be recognized by an engraved brick set in the memorial walk.

\$250 – Engraved Brick

\$500 – Engraved Brick with logo

\$1000 – Large Engraved brick with logo set next to Aviator statue

\$2000 – Large Granite brick on Concrete bench

Donations are gratefully accepted by:

Check – please make payable to “NAS Lemoore AMA”

PayPal – NAS Lemoore AMA business account is linked to LCDR Kenny's email address: ekenny78@gmail.com

Secure Credit Card – all major credit cards accepted in person or via phone. A receipt will be provided.

LCDR ERIK “DOOK” KENNY

erik.kenny@navy.mil • ekenny78@gmail.com • 410.499.4130

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GREAT GIFT!

Trivia Anyone?

This is a picture of Dan Carr's finger sticking through a hole in the nose-gear door of Skyhawk Ventures' A-4C. What is the purpose of the small, round, spring-loaded opening in the door?

Question and photo via Dave Dollarhide.

Send your answers to:

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org



Did we stump you?

We have not received any responses from our last Trivia Anyone challenge:

What is the purpose of the oblong hole in the fairing just aft of the port gun? Was it present on all models of the A-4? Note pilot Larry Elmore preflighting on the left-hand side of Skyhawk Ventures A-4C.

Question and photo via Dave Davenport.



READ? YOU THINK WE READ?

Before They Were the Black Sheep:

Marine Fighting Squadron VMF-214 and the Battle for the Solomon Islands

Carl O. Dunbar, edited by Peter M. Dunbar.

Gainesville, FL. University Press of Florida. 2011. 306 pp. Ill. \$32.

Reviewed by CDR Peter B. Mersky, USNR (ret).

Most everyone has heard of VMF-214 and its wartime sobriquet “the Black Sheep.” For a brief period in late 1943 and early 1944, this Marine fighter squadron became a legendary band of aggressive and successful aviators flying the Marine Corps’ powerful new fighter, the F4U Corsair. For once, the Marines got a top-of-the-line, fresh-from-production world beater, not some castoff that the Navy was done with. In fact, of course, as most historians know, the Corsair had trouble being accepted by the Navy as the next carrier fighter and was assigned to shore-based Marine squadrons in the South Pacific.

And, of course, the leader of VMF-214 at that time was one of the most flamboyant personalities of the war, Maj, Gregory “Pappy” Boyington, who today is listed as the top Marine ace, even though the “real” numbers place him squarely behind BGen Joe Foss. (The difference occurs because of Boyington’s record with the Flying Tigers in 1942, before he returned to the U.S. and the Marine Corps. His claims in China cannot be verified, but during WWII, his claims were taken at face value and the official list of Corps aces remains unchanged to this day.)

Many books, articles and even an incredibly fanciful television series have appeared over the last 50 years. Boyington’s 1958 autobiography *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, remains one of the most popular books on the subject and has seen several reprintings. Squadron biographies by aviation historians, even one from the squadron’s intelligence officer, have added to the legend over the years.

With all that paper, however, the story has been largely only half-told.

There was much more to the VMF-214 history than the most colorful phase, symbolized by Pappy Boyington and *his* squadron. Only now has this gap been filled to a large extent. Before the Black Sheep came the “Swashbucklers.” They flew several tours in the Solomons in Grumman Wildcats and then Vought Corsairs. Though not as colorful a group, their time was that of a typical frontline squadron in the Pacific, and it is this story that this new book tells.

At the heart of the text are the letters home by 1st Lt Carl Dunbar. It was only after his death in 1981 that the letters were found among his effects and read by his son Peter, like his father, a lawyer in Florida. Accompanied by historical narrative by Peter Dunbar, the letters detail Carl’s flight training and then his deployment to the Pacific. Flying Grumman’s little F4F, he saw his first action and soon began the daily routine of scouting and escorting other aircraft over the wide expanses of water. His messages to his family are full of a young man’s hope and humor, as well as a growing sense of what he was doing, how dangerous it was yet how necessary.

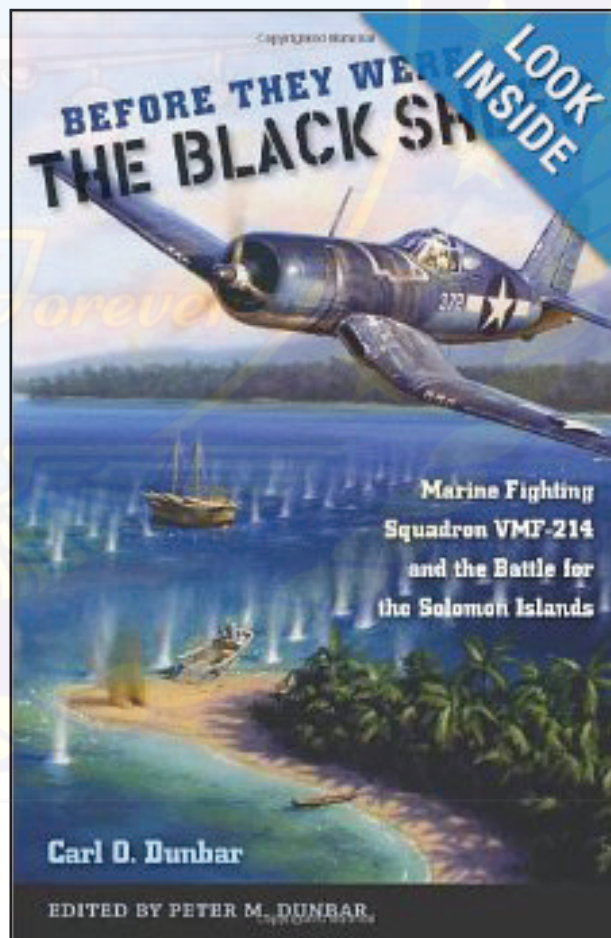
There’s very little air-to-air action. In fact, I can only find one specific instance of his encountering a Japanese aircraft, a Zero, and nothing else about his gaining any aerial kills, certainly much different from any account concerning the Black Sheep

months later. But that’s OK. Few pilots saw enemy aircraft or engaged them in such large numbers to build up the scores that characterized Boyington’s group.

There are the periods of rest and recreation in Australia, delightfully described and appreciated by the tired young aviators, who definitely needed a respite from the daily grind of flying from a dusty, ill-equipped island base for weeks on end.

The only problems I have with this book are the rather dismal selection of photos, and the author’s occasional choice of words, such as constant referral to “military DC-3s.” It should be at least C-47, or in Navy or Marine Corps parlance, R4D. Aside from an occasional photo of Carl in or by his fighter, the pictures are rather gray and not very well shown. There certainly are enough photos of this period to adequately accompany such a book.

Other than that, *Before They Were the Black Sheep* is an interesting book that certainly fills in a heretofore empty spot in the history of Marine Corps WWII aviation.



R.G.'s ART

• A-4 Spotting on the waist cat •

R. G. Smith,
(1914-2001)
Named
Honorary Naval Aviator
Number 11.



One of the most popular of R.G. Smith's paintings. Image courtesy of Sharlyn Marsh [www.rgsmithart.com]

SCHEDULING STUFF

• Reunions & Requests •



PLAN AHEAD

- ★ Skyhawk Association Mid-Year Board Meeting: April 11-13, 2014, Virginia Beach, hotel TBA.
- ★ Skyhawk Association 2014 Annual Meeting and Luncheon at Tailhook: 12:00 noon, September 5, 2014, Nugget Hotel.
- ★ Tailhook Association Reunion & Symposium 2014, Nugget Hotel, Sparks, NV, September 4-7, 2014.
- ★ VA-55 Cruise Reunion: Initial planning for a 3-day cruise to Mexico in spring 2014. For information, contact Curt Lewin, a747drvr@comcast.net.

List your reunion or event with Skyhawk Association, both print journal and website. Contact the editor at sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org.



A TRIP BACK IN TIME

• To Vietnam •

Story and photos by J. T. "Birdie" Bertrand, Member of VMA 311, 1964-1966

(Ed. Note: The following are Col Bertrand's impressions of a 6-day trip back to Vietnam in 2012. This writing only covers those localities and experiences that relate to Marines: Da Nang, Marble Mountain, Chu Lai, and Ky Ha. Home base for the trip was the Sandy Beach Hotel and Resort located on the southern -most part of China Beach in Da Nang, Vietnam.)

A long time ago, I saw the WWII movie *12 O'clock High*. It begins with the actor Dean Jagger walking down the centerline of an old abandoned runway in the English countryside. Weeds were growing through the asphalt. It could have been any number of WWII military airfields before the cold war took its tight grip of the western world. For some time now, I have wanted to walk the ground at Chu Lai like Jagger did in that movie.

Today, it is 12:45 PDT, April 14, 2012, in Los Angeles. A Korean Airline's A380 has just started its takeoff roll, and soon my wife and I will be airborne on our way to Seoul, Korea, and a 1-hour stopover and connection to a Korean Airlines B-737 flight, non-stop to Da Nang, Vietnam. Total time from LAX to DAD, 19 hours and change.

My first arrival in Vietnam was by A-4 Skyhawk from Cubi Point on June 14, 1965, with an arrested landing at Chu Lai on 3,500 ft. of M-2 aluminum matting runway. The temperature was 90 degrees. This time my arrival was in Da Nang at 2200 local time, at a rather modern Da Nang airport. Getting off the airplane I was hit by a blast of hot, humid air, not unlike in 1965. The immediate observable change was the uniformed personnel cruising throughout the terminal with that yellow star on their caps. Following luggage retrieval, we met our guides just outside the baggage claim area. On the ride from the airport to our hotel, even at night, we could tell that there has been significant modernizing of the landscape and skyline of Da Nang. New buildings, some many stories tall, neon lights and well lighted streets and traffic were evident everywhere.



Evidence of modernization throughout Da Nang area.

During the day, the modernization of Da Nang is even more evident. In 1965 the tallest building was probably 3-4 stories tall. Today there are 10-12 high-rise (20-40 stories) buildings, with more being constructed. In the middle of downtown, there is a park which displays a half-dozen or more airplanes that were flown by both South and North Vietnamese Air Forces. According to our guides, modern individual family homes and apartment complexes are becoming more available to the average person, as are more household conveniences. The quality of food available to the masses is better by a quantum leap. Da Nang has grown from an estimated 125 to 150-thousand people during the war to 800-thousand today. Everyone has a cell phone, and those over 15-years of age have a motor bike. Bike riders have masks covering their faces, probably to keep bugs off their faces. We heard that today's Vietnam

has a population of 95-million people, transported by 80-million motor bikes. Da Nang is busy and on the move.

North of Da Nang, the road over Hi Van pass still exists, but most of the traffic now goes through a 6-mile long tunnel. What used to be a two or more hour trip over the pass and down the other side can now be accomplished in 15 minutes.

There are five bridges linking Da Nang proper to the China Beach area, one a suspension bridge, and two more are being built. China Beach is becoming

a tourist destination with modern hotels and gambling. The road through the beach area is 4-lanes wide and is located two or three hundred yards from the water. There is still a curious mixture of the old and the new with those typical fishing boats parked randomly on parts of the beach. The road traverses through some of the re-

mains of the Marble Mountain helicopter base. One can still see some of the concrete revetments that were in place during the war. My guess is that China Beach will become the Miami Beach of the region.

Some weeks before we arrived, we were told that a U.S. aircraft carrier and an LSD were in Da Nang's port for 5 days for some kind of joint exercise. The troops were warmly welcomed.

The 4-lane road that runs along China beach is nicely landscaped. At the northern end of China Beach, the four-lane road turns into a new two-lane road that traverses up the southeastern side of Monkey Mountain and connects to the old northern road at the top of the mountain. About half way up Monkey Mountain on the newer southern road, there is a 180-foot tall, bright white marble statue of a lady Buddha on the grounds of an extensive Pagoda. The lady Buddha reminds one of the statue



Lady Buddha near Monkey Mountain.

of Christ overlooking the city of Rio de Janeiro. The statue is so large it can be seen from about 15 miles away, and it attracts large numbers of tourists. After visiting the pagoda, we planned to continue up the road to connect with the northern road at the top of Monkey Mountain. Sadly we were unable to do that because of a mud slide. Consequently, we had to forgo seeing the extensive tunnel complexes within Monkey Mountain that the VC occupied during the war.

Continuing to the south on the four-lane, landscaped road, past the site of the Marble Mountain helicopter base and close to where the Sandy Beach Hotel is located today, the historic city of Hoi An is a 15-20 mile drive. Hoi An was not destroyed during the war, and according to our guides, a treaty was signed by all parties to keep Hoi An from being involved in the conflict. Also according to our guides, most people believe it was an important VC

arms trafficking area. The differences between Da Nang and Hoi An are remarkable. When you enter the old city of Hoi An, you set your watch back 300 years.

In between Da Nang and Hoi An there are two Greg Norman signature golf courses and one Colin Montgomery course. All three are world-class courses, located within a quarter mile of the South China Sea. Two other golf courses that are located closer to Hoi An are also world class facilities. Green fees: from Monday to Thursday at noon it costs about \$45.00 with a caddy or a cart. But on Thursday afternoon through the weekend, there is an invasion of Japanese and Korean golfers and the green fees rise to \$87.00. You can even rent clubs – just name the brand.

While at breakfast one day, a flight of 8 MiG-21 aircraft flew right by the hotel; yet another reminder of the enormous changes since I was in Vietnam some 48 years ago.

Chu Lai – Ky Ha

The small town of An Tan is 85 km south of Da Nang and is adjacent to the Chu Lai complex. From Da Nang, it takes about 2.5 hours to get there by van, traveling south on Route 1. The road was rebuilt some years ago by raising the roadbed 8-10 feet in some places in order to preclude flooding during the rainy season. None-the-less, it is still a mostly narrow, two-lane road. The traffic is impossible: buses, trucks and a plethora of motor bikes all competing for the narrow road. Although the road is sometimes marked with center lines, those markings mean nothing in terms of rules of the road. The markings seem to be “advisory only.” It was good to have a driver and travel guide. Our guide, Minh, and our driver, Vinh, were just great as we got to know them. There were rice fields on both sides of the road and people at work in the fields.

We rarely saw any of the old “black pajamas.” Today the dress is multi-colored, but the hats were still the typical straw. We traveled in a van at a speed of 30-40 km per hour, and I calculated that it would take ten days to make the trip to Saigon, given the traffic we were experiencing. Train service to Saigon takes a couple of days. We passed two check points along the way where we had to pay a fee to continue. I would not attempt to drive on my own in Vietnam without a cocktail or two to bolster my courage, as well as a third to blur my vision so I couldn’t see what was really happening around me.

Arriving in An Tan I looked at my watch ... it said 1965 – and I don’t mean the time, I mean the year. In 1965, when we first arrived at Chu Lai, the MAG-12 CO, Col. John Noble, found out that some of his Marines had been in An Tan. He immediately restricted everyone from going there, and I don’t know of anyone who ever went there again.

We were on our way to a very large monument, 100-feet tall, which was described as a war memorial. It was set on a hill a bit northwest of the Chu Lai complex. We were told that ceremonies are occasionally held there. Arriving at the monument, we had to climb 200 – 250 steps to get to the

continued...

BACK IN TIME

Continued...

base of the monument. From the base of the monument, the entire Chu Lai complex was visible. It reminded me of the security TAOR (tactical area of responsibility) the Marines controlled. From there, we could see the “newer” Chu Lai runway and a new airline terminal building. As we stood there, an Air Vietnam airplane landed. Our guide told us that there is a rumor that several US airline companies are interested in development of a new aircraft overhaul and maintenance facility at Chu Lai. Having seen a fairly good portion of the area and population by then, I wondered where they would get workers qualified to work on transport category airplanes.... and then most important, where would they find adequate housing for those technicians and families. Housing would be a big issue.

Climbing down the stairs, we went to visit the new airline terminal building. The access road to the terminal is four-lanes wide with a center lighted island. The new airline terminal building sits on the eastern side of the runway. That runway, used by the Marines after I left Vietnam, was still in the planning and clearing stages while I was in Chu Lai. The terminal is a modern building, but without jet-ways. Some concrete covered revetments and bunkers still exist at the north end of the airline terminal and ramp.

Traveling back to the primary access road, we turned right toward the beach and encountered a Vietnamese



War memorial near Chu Lai complex.

Army compound flying the familiar red flag with a yellow star. Evidently, the army guards the old Chu Lai complex, although it is difficult to figure out just what the Army is guarding. A 6-7 foot high brick and rock wall with broken glass imbedded on top is on the right and extends a couple miles to the south. The wall is obviously meant to keep people out. As I remember the terrain, this road probably runs very close to the same location where a dirt road traversed through the squadron living areas. We traveled south about 2-3 miles to where we could see to the north where the old SATS (M-2 matting) runway was probably located. I

thought that our actual position on the ground was real close to the old bomb dump and fuel farm area. There were some concrete revetments like those by the new airport terminal building, but other than that, there was nothing there – not a trace of the old base, except for some shacks and a few workers that were doing “something” and paid us no attention.

I wasn't satisfied with what I had seen, so we headed back to the north retracing where we had been. There were some breaks in the previously described wall, and I really wanted to see where the old runway was located. Inside the wall was a large sand dune



Chu Lai Airport.



Vietnamese Army compound.



MAG-12 maintenance area in 1965, with sand dunes in background.



Sand dunes between maintenance area and living areas today.

that in my time at Chu Lai separated the living areas from the working areas and overlooked the old Chu Lai runway/working area complex. The sand dune was probably 25-35 feet higher than the road and much like I remembered it. I told the guide and driver to stop at one of the breaks in the wall and told them I was going through to the top of the sand dune. With the Vietnamese Army outpost in mind, Vinh said, "I going with you," and added, "If we are caught, we will probably both end up in prison, or I will be held, and you will be put on an airplane in Da Nang for the USA."

With that warning I told the guide, "I may look old but I can run faster than you think." We both laughed a bit, then went through the opening, the first of three times through three different holes in the wall. I suspect that some others who came before us took a sledge hammer and beat holes in the wall. Once through the wall, I could make out what I believed to be the location of the junior officer living areas. But, after 45 years things had changed. The Vietnamese had evidently rearranged some of the terrain and planted lots of scrubby trees along the beach area. Actually, I think that the Vietnamese were restoring the area to a more natural state which was lost in 1965 when the Sea Bees and Marines arrived at Chu Lai and "graded" the landscape to accommodate tent villages to house the troops.

Looking west from the top of the dune, I one could see approximately

where the runway was once located, but there was really nothing to see except sand and vegetation. The old dirt road that ran the length of the runway and provided access to the working areas was still slightly visible. It was partially paved, and blowing sand had covered up much of it. However, throughout the process of climbing through the breaks in the walls and trekking to the top of the dune, I never saw solid evidence that a major Marine air base had once been there.

Chu Lai as I knew it, has been physically removed from the landscape. On the eastern, China Sea side of the dune and road, the beach is still beautiful and inviting. There are two medium-sized resort hotels and a museum right on the beach. I hope that some of what once was there has been preserved in the museum, but unfortunately, I didn't get to see it because it was closed. The two resorts were also closed because, according to the guide, it was "getting into the hot season." Hell, my body told me that the hot season had already arrived, although the sea breeze I remembered was still softly blowing, making the temperature milder and less humid.

We drove back to the north and stopped so our driver and guide could have lunch. Loretta and I had Tiger beers. Loretta had her first experience with a Vietnamese rural (natural) bathroom. It was just a hole in the ground, and the flushing mechanism was a small bucket that you filled with water and

threw down the hole. She had a sheepish grin on her face when she returned and wondered if she did it right. I said "If you didn't get any on yourself, you did just fine." She also said, "It was real dark in there. I couldn't see, and I was afraid of falling in." Falling in would not be good!

Continuing north we arrived in the Ky Ha area. From the cliffs at Ky Ha, I could barely see the island of Cu Lao Re quite a distance off shore, and looking back to the south I could see Chu Lai. I remember that during "Operation Starlite" one of our pre-flight intelligence briefers said that the island was a suspected VC arms trafficking port. Our guide confirmed that intelligence briefing. I also remember flying very, very low over that island at close to Warp 9 speed. Now that was fun!

Ky Ha, where the helicopters were based in 1965, is now completely overgrown, although you can tell where the land was graded and the helo parking ramp, pads and housing areas were once located. Today, at the little village of Ky Ha fishing boats occupy the small docks, which have some good sized cranes. The guide said the cranes worked and the fisherman still provide fish for the local population.

After touring the Chu Lai area for over four hours, I realized that after 45 years, there was little evidence that four to five thousand U.S. Marines had been based in and around Chu Lai and Ky Ha.

continued...

BACK IN TIME

Continued...

It was getting late and time to leave. I gotten to see most of what I came to see. I would have really liked to have walked out to where the runway was once located, but our guide advised against it. The trip back to Da Nang was pretty much the same except we saw 2 traffic accidents. I'm surprised there were only two.

While in Vietnam we also visited Phu Bai and Hue, which were nice to see. The old runway at Phu Bai is abandoned, but there are plans to recondition it and put in a new airport. The old walled city of Hue is remarkable. While in Hue, I saw a chart that was about 24 inches long and marked with the various dynasties and wars in Vietnam. Our Vietnam war was on the chart, represented by a line a quarter-inch long. Our war was almost a footnote in the history.

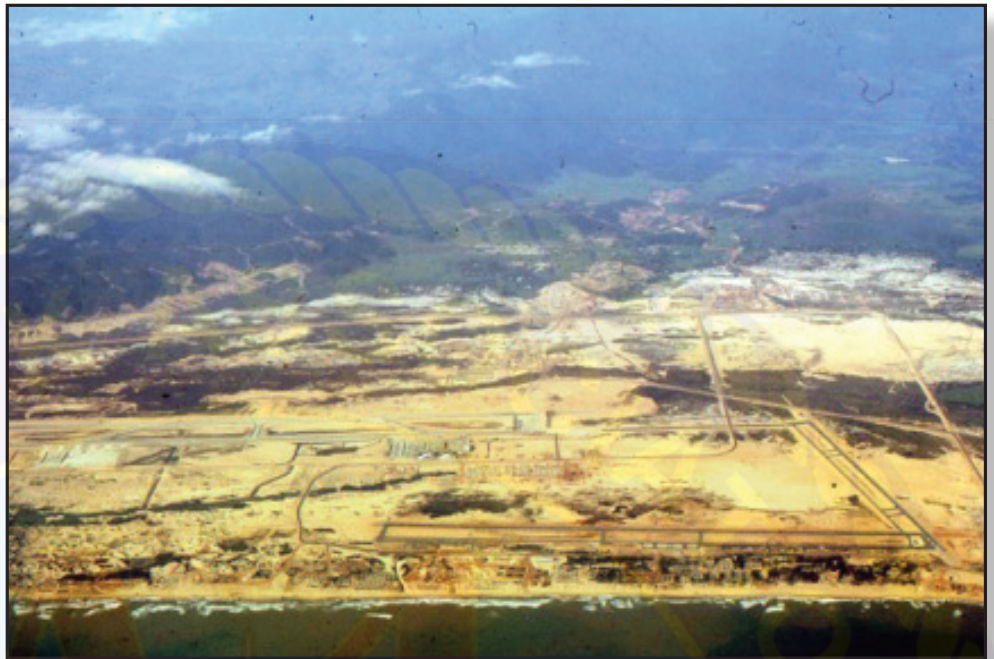
If I had known what I now know, I would have planned to lengthen the trip for another two days. It is only forty miles from Hue to Dong Ha and the approaches to the former demilitarized zone. That is where highway Route 9 intersects with Route 1, and Route 9 takes you by Khe San, the Ashau Valley, Tchepone and on to Savannakhet, Laos, through the heart of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. A trip to the Ashau Valley and Tchepone would have been incredible. If I had realized that Route 9 was "open," I would have spent another day or two just to see those areas where we spent a lot of time night bombing.

Was the trip worth it? Absolutely! However, I'm aware that there are those who have no desire to revisit Vietnam. That said, I had hoped that some others in my squadron (who had expressed a desire to go) would have gone with Loretta and me. It would have made the trip more interesting, fun and a better experience overall. Just seeing the Chu Lai area again would have sparked many stories, and those stories would have brought back many great memories.

But sadly, in the end it was not to be, but for Loretta and me, it was a great trip.

A final note: if there is a "next time," I'll be taking the golf clubs! **JTB**

(Ed. note: Col Bertrand joined VMA-311 as a 2nd Lt. After his tour in Chu Lai, he became a pilot for Continental Airlines and flew the A-4 with the reserves in Southern California. He retired after 31 years of service, having flown almost every model of the A-4. His comprehensive history of VMA-311 during the years 1964-1966 was published in The A-4Ever in 2007, the Summer and Winter editions.)



Chu Lai complex in 1965.



Birdie Bertrand at Hue City.

FLYING THE F4U CORSAIR

• A TINS tale to end all •

by Mike Penketh

After reading “Flying the Marine Icons” in the *Flight Journal* and “Flying the A-4 Skyhawk” in the *Skyhawk Association Journal*, I thought it might be time to tell my own TINS tale. It begins in 1950 when my father, a WWII Marine, was recalled for active duty with VMF-214 in the Korean War. I still remember that day, but most of all, I valued the daily letters he wrote me.

Soon I knew more about the USMC, the *Black Sheep*, F4U *Corsairs*, Pappy Boyington and Jimmy Thatch (skipper of the USS *Sicily*) than anyone else in school. Upon returning from Korea, my Dad took me to MCAS El Toro to see a real *Corsair*. It was enormous. Sitting in the cockpit, I was scared to death. It was huge and high off the ground. I cried and yelled until Dad put me back on the ground.

My first experience with the *Corsair* was a failure.

Several years later, things began to heat up in Southeast Asia. Wanting to finish college, I found myself as a weekend warrior/plane captain with VMA-241 and 134 at NAS Los Alamitos working on A-4As, Bs and Cs. Moving the calendar ahead a few years, I found myself a pilot at MCAS El Toro checking into VMA-214 (my dad’s old squadron) flying A-4Fs and Ms.

My USMC career was not very distinguished, but I can honestly say I had more fun for the next five years than any other man alive! Imagine a 24-year old kid, a government gas credit card and a single-seat jet ... If ya know what I mean!

Released from active duty in 1975, I spent the next few years “playing” in aviation. I also found the fantastic world

of fire bombers, PBYs, C-119s, GS2s, B-17s, PB4Y-2s and the vanishing world of radial engines. I even spent an entire winter flying the only four-engine PBY in the world through Mexico, Central and South America, the Galapagos and the Cocos Islands.

One winter evening in 1979 my phone rang. It was my good friend Bob Forbes, asking if I could file flight plans in Spanish? Could I speak the language? I guess being able to buy avgas, oil, beer and find the bathrooms in Spanish was good enough as Bob said “got a sweet flying deal in Honduras, good money, wanna go?” The following week we met in LAX en route to Tegucigalpa, Honduras, via New Orleans. Our last leg was on a Shasa B737.

While in LAX, I finally asked Bob “what’s going on?” He smiled and said “we’ll just fly around Tegus for a couple weeks, then ferry some ole’ airplanes back to Long Beach.” Bob smiles, I frown. He says “it’s legal, no drugs, nothing to worry about. Honduras just sold their entire inventory of F4U *Corsairs* to a dealer in Long Beach.” *Corsairs* needless to say I was speechless!

continued...



F4U-5 in Guatemala City for RON and fuel. All images via author.

FLYING CORSAIRS

Continued...



Mike Penketh on left. To right is Howard Pardue. He and a partner purchased the entire Corsair inventory from the Honduran Air Force (8 flyable -4s and -5s), including a boneyard with enough parts to assemble another two aircraft.



Volcano just southwest of Guatemala City airport.



3 aircraft of a flight of six over the Gulf of Mexico.

We were told not to say much about our reasons for visiting Honduras – nothing illegal or clandestine, but just keep to ourselves. Thinking back I have to laugh: 6 guys, t-shirts and Levis, sun glasses and carrying helmet bags ... off on a fishing and bird watching vacation ... yeah, right. About halfway to Tegus the Shasa Captain comes back to visit, telling us of the good fishing hot spots. After a few minutes he turns to leave saying have fun fishing. Then with a smile he said “you will enjoy the *Corsair*.” I noticed that his name tag said Captain Fernando Soto.

We arrived in Tegus, and there they were: eight F4U-4/5 *Corsairs* in knee high grass. It took a couple days of red tape before we finally got to the planes. Outside base ops there was a single F4U-5 on a pedestal dedicated to the only ace in South/Central American history. Beneath the cockpit were the aerial victory markings and the name Captain Fernando Soto!

These were the real deal, in no way restored Reno racers. Armor plating, gun sights, rocket racks, armament switches, drop tanks; the four 20mm cannons had been removed the day prior.

A brief cockpit fam with a Spanish-

speaking plane captain soon followed. Gear/flap speeds, drop tank jettison, emergency gear extension, fuel management, tail-wheel lock ... we were ready. I have to tell you our checkout was minimal, but we all were highly-experienced pilots with lots of heavy time behind round motors in turbulent fire-fighting conditions. All of us were fully aware of and appreciated p-factor and torque. The *Corsair* was just another airplane, albeit a special airplane. This was a chance of a life time, a chance to fly the last combat *Corsairs* in the world!

The initial flights were pure fun. The auto blower on the -5s was a surprise, a pleasant airplane to fly. With proper respect, the *Corsair* became a very docile airplane. Think about it: the cockpit is about 10 feet off the ground and looking forward you are blind as a bat. The huge fuselage, fixed cowl flaps and P&W R2800 are all the pilot sees, and in your left hand is 2000+ horsepower with nobody to say NO.

I had a special advantage no one else had: I had a co-pilot. I believe my Dad was with me on every flight, and I imagined I was flying his *Corsair*.

Semper Fi ... life gets better every day.

(Ed.note: besides flying low-level from Honduras to California in a gaggle of 40-year old Corsairs, Mike Penketh won aerobatic contests in airplanes he built, won the Bi-plane Silver Class at the Reno air races and drove a race car at 300 miles per hour. In addition to the fire-fighting described, he flew for Air Cal and American Airlines.

A race-car crash at Bonneville Salt Flats left him a bilateral, below the elbow amputee. Regaining his 3rd Class FAA medical and private pilot's license, he continued to perform in air shows and aerobatic contests. He is the only person in the world certified to fly with two myo-electric prosthetic devices.

Since 1997, he has given over 1500 disability awareness presentations (see www.touchofunderstanding.org) to more than 45,000 kids, many with his faithful service dog Magy by his side.

His story is told in the book Within My Grasp, available on Amazon (http://www.amazon.com/Within-My-Grasp-Double-Amputees-ebook/dp/B00CLDQQCU/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1385333365&sr=1-1&keywords=mike+penketh). He can be reached at pittss1@aol.com.)

continued...

FLYING CORSAIRS

Continued...



Howard Pardue and partner pose with aircraft in Tegucigalpa.



F4U-4 over the Gulf of Mexico.



Ferry pilot Bob Forbes performing cockpit checkout and first start at Tegucigalpa, Honduras.



Corsairs lined up for gas in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Surely a sight that will never be seen again.

NEW BEGINNINGS FOR PROUD WARRIORS

by Bob Paul

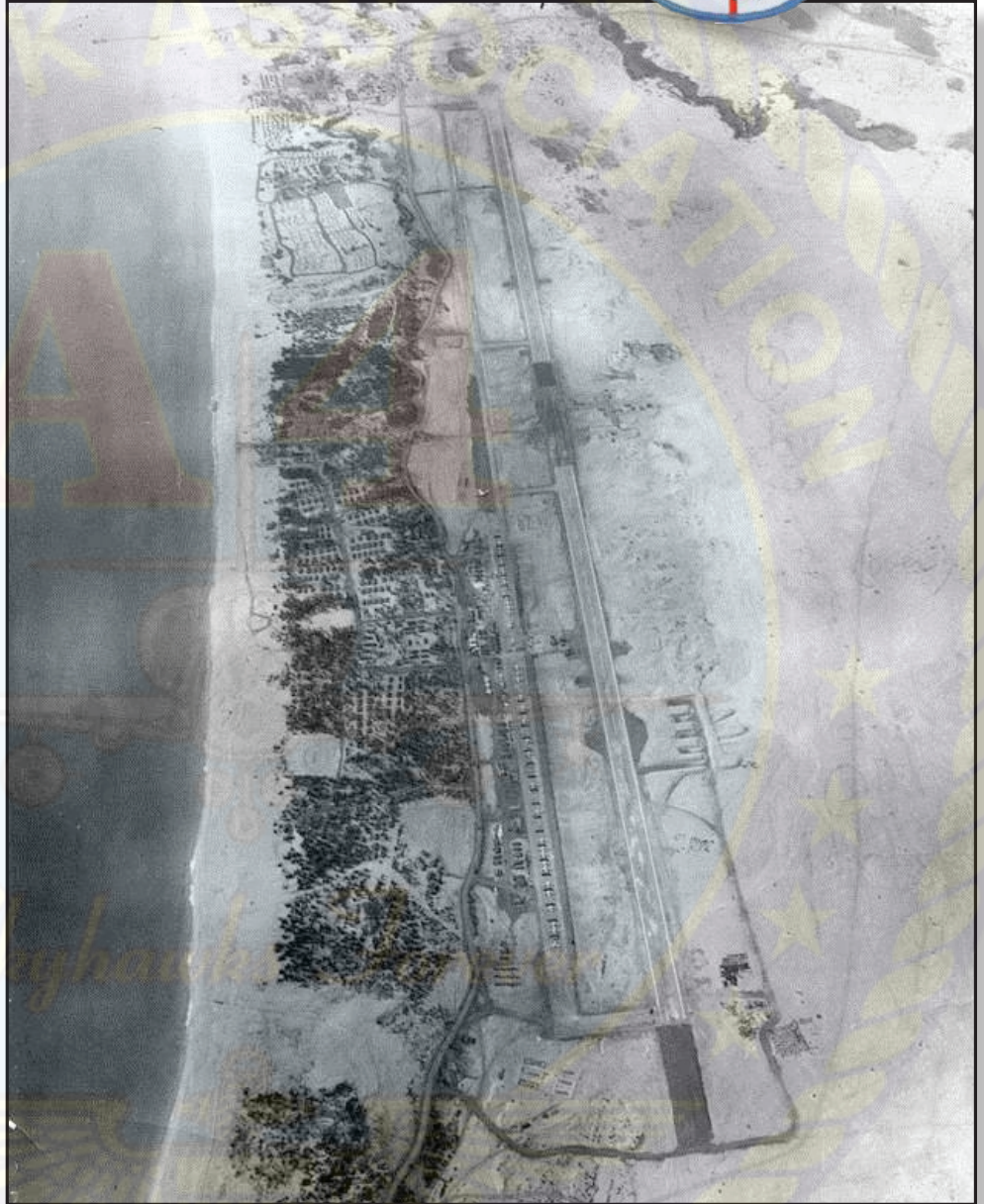


As I was reading the Winter 2012 issue of the Skyhawk Association Journal (Vol. 18, No. 4), I noticed a photo of a Marine A-4 on page 6. From the markings, I saw that it was 147767, one of the A-4Cs that belonged to VMA-225 in the mid-60s. I did a quick check of my bureau number listings for VMA-225 and saw that 147767 matched the squadron's CE-3 during the 1965 timeframe.

Much has been written about the *Skyhawk* and its involvement in Vietnam. This is the story of an expeditionary Marine air base and some of the missions involving two *Skyhawks* of VMA-225. I was associated with both of these aircraft, CE-3 (147767) and CE-17 (148538), during my 22-month tour of duty with VMA-225, and some 48 years later, I was amazed to find these two aircraft serving as static displays.

The VMA-225 *Vagabonds* arrived at MCAS Iwakuni, JP, in October 1964 for what was expected to be a standard peacetime overseas tour of duty. However, in February of 1965 orders were issued directing deployment of the squadron to Vietnam during March to support the landing of the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade at Da Nang. A few weeks later, as other Marine squadrons flowed into Vietnam, VMA-225 was re-assigned to a new air base to be built 52 miles south of Da Nang.

On 8 May 1965, Marines [*Marine Air Base Squadron 12*], Navy Seabees [*Naval Mobile Construction BN 10*] and a contingent of VMA-225 personnel landed at the site of the new base only to find a pristine beach of soft sand that stretched for several miles inland. Living quarters, hangars, runways, tarmac and other facilities were nowhere to be found. The order of the day was to commence building a short airfield



"Be it ever so humble" – the early Chu Lai Air Base from the air.

for tactical support, or SATS. The Seabees, 3,000 in all, estimated it would take three weeks to have the required 4,000 foot runway and tarmac completed so aircraft could begin takeoffs and landings. The airfield would also feature a mobile arresting gear system, similar to that used on aircraft carriers, to bring the aircraft to a halt on the short

landing space. In the fierce heat and humidity, Seabees commenced to clear away the sand down to the red clay base for the construction of the runway. All other Marines commenced building the perimeter around the base and erecting tents for officer and enlisted berthing, squadron maintenance and flight operations (squadron operations, tower,



*Marines and Seabees lay the Marston matting for the SATS runway.
All photos via author.*

radar, etc.), mess hall, post office and all other ancillary structures needed to run a combat airbase efficiently.

The new base was named Chu Lai, which was the Mandarin pronunciation of the name of LtGen Charles Krulak, then-Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force Pacific. The base was deemed operational on 31 May, 65, and this was the first time that a Marine air base was ready to accept combat aircraft in such a short time.

On 1 June 1965, three VMA-225 A-4s trapped on the new SATS strip, and the *Vagabonds* gained bragging rights as the first Marine A-4 squadron in-country. Col John Noble, Commanding Officer of MAG-12, led the flight which included Lt-Col R. W. Baker, and Major D. E. Gillum, CO & XO respectively of VMA-225. Within four hours after landing, LtCol Baker led the first close air support (CAS) mission in support of Marine ground force operations just six miles north of the new airstrip. In subsequent days, additional A-4s from VMA-225, VMA-311 (*Tomcats*) and VMA-214 (*Blacksheep*) arrived to complete MAG-12's complement of three A-4 squadrons.

Combat operations for VMA-225 during this time frame were predominantly close air support, and during a typical month the squadron flew 450 combat sorties. CE-3 147767 and CE-17 148538 were two of the twenty-one A4's assigned to VMA-225, and during *continued...*



Vagabonds welcome Colonel John Noble, CO MAG-12, after first squadron aircraft arrive at Chu Lai, 1 June 1965.

NEW BEGINNINGS

Continued...

the first four months 225 was in-country, they were flown often in support of Marine ground operations in the Chu Lai, Da Nang, Hue and Phu Bai coastal strip areas known as I CORPS in South Vietnam. Of note, these operations included close air support missions flown August 18-21 during "Operation Starlite," the first major Marine offense of the Vietnam War. Without question, these missions helped thwart a major attack against Chu Lai.



CE-3 performs JATO takeoff.

The missions flown by VMA-225 pilots were typical of Marine close air support and deep air support missions flown during the Vietnam War. These missions illustrate those operations, given the constraints of operating from a SATS field still under development. Some typical missions were:

29 June 1965 – CE-3

Pilot: Capt. Don Jacobsen

Target: VC troop concentrations 50 miles west of Chu Lai

Armament: 2.75" rockets & 20 MM cannon

JATO takeoff and arrested landing

Mission length: 1.5 hrs.

2 August 1965 – CE-3

Pilot: Capt. Don Jacobsen

Target: Ammo dump 50 miles west of Chu Lai

Armament: 2 x Zuni 5" rockets & 20 MM cannon

Conventional takeoff and landing

Mission length: 1.3 hrs.

21 June 1965 – CE-17

Pilot: 1stLt Ralph Stewart

Target: night ground alert, scramble to CAS mission

Armament: 2.75" rockets & 20 MM cannon

JATO takeoff and arrested landing

Mission length: 1.4 hrs.

2 July 1965 – CE-3

Pilot: 1stLt Conrad Hamilton

Mission: helicopter escort

Armament: 2.75" rockets & 20 MM cannon

Conventional takeoff and landing

Mission length: 1.5 hrs.

VMA-225 left Chu Lai in October 1965, having flown approximately 1,750 sorties and 2,426 combat hours between 1 June and 30 Sept 1965. The hundreds of missions flown by the pilots in VMA-225 were similar to those listed for CE-3 and CE-17.

Today an A-4 painted to look like CE-3 147767 is on display at the Inde Motorsports Ranch in Willcox, AZ, and the actual CE-17 148538 is on display at the Hickory Air Museum, Hickory, NC (Note 1). While these static displays are nice, they don't tell the full story of the hard work and sacrifice of the men assigned to the squadron. Those were tough days in near-impossible conditions when the 250 men of the squadron worked long and hard to get the job done. I tell these and other stories of what we accomplished together during those intense months to my friends, and I know they find it hard to believe that men could keep themselves working at such a rapid pace for so long in such primitive living and working conditions.

VMA-225, and the other A-4 squadrons assigned to MAG-12 at Chu Lai, exhibited the finest traits of the Marine Corps and proved beyond a doubt the expeditionary



CE-3 taxis in front of VMA-225 flight line.



CE-17 performs standard takeoff.

nature of Marine aviation. Prior to the Chu Lai landings, USAF planners had estimated that construction of an airfield south of Da Nang would take several months. Few believed the Marine Corps' claim that a SATS strip could be operational in three weeks, especially considering that Chu Lai would be the first attempt to construct such a field under combat conditions. While the Seabees and Marines missed their deadline of three weeks (taking 23 days rather than 21), the Marine Corps' claim of being the "Force in Readiness" was certainly validated.

The SATS field at Chu Lai was operated by the Marine Corps until September 1970, although a new, 10,000 ft. concrete runway was built in the fall of 1966 west of the original SATS strip. Today, that concrete runway serves commercial aviation as Chu Lai International Airport (VCL).

VMA-225 was a squadron rich in tradition and esprit de corps that played an important role at the beginning of the Vietnam War. It's fitting that two of its assigned aircraft are serving today as memorials to the sacrifice and dedication displayed by all members of the squadron during those difficult months on the beach at Chu Lai. They are certainly worthy guardians of the *Vagabond* legacy and "Proud Warriors of the Sky."

Note 1: Initially, I believed that the A-4 on display at Inde Motor Sports Ranch was 147767; however, I later discovered that the aircraft, although painted to mimic CE-3 during the '65 – '66 timeframe, was not the actual 147767 after all. The aircraft was one of the lot of thirteen aircraft sold out of Marana Airport, Tucson, AZ. Graham Dorland, owner of Inde Motor Sports Ranch, bought the aircraft and restored it for display. The paint scheme of VMA-225, CE-3, was selected by him after researching the history of Skyhawks on the web. Skyhawk Association has attempted, without success, to determine the actual bureau number of the aircraft on display at Inde.

(Ed. note: Bob Paul was a member of VMA-225 from Dec '63 to Oct '65, serving as a plane captain on the flight line. His aircraft was CE-8 147808, an A-4C which served in several Skyhawk squadrons at Chu Lai before being stricken due to damage on 5 May 1966. Paul serves the Skyhawk Association as SDO of VMA-225.

VMA-225 has done a great job of documenting the squadron's service in Vietnam. If you Google VMA-225 on YouTube, you'll find many movie clips – a sample is at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGAk-XuLIOW>.)

RESTORATION CORNER

• Aging A-4s Achilles' Heel •

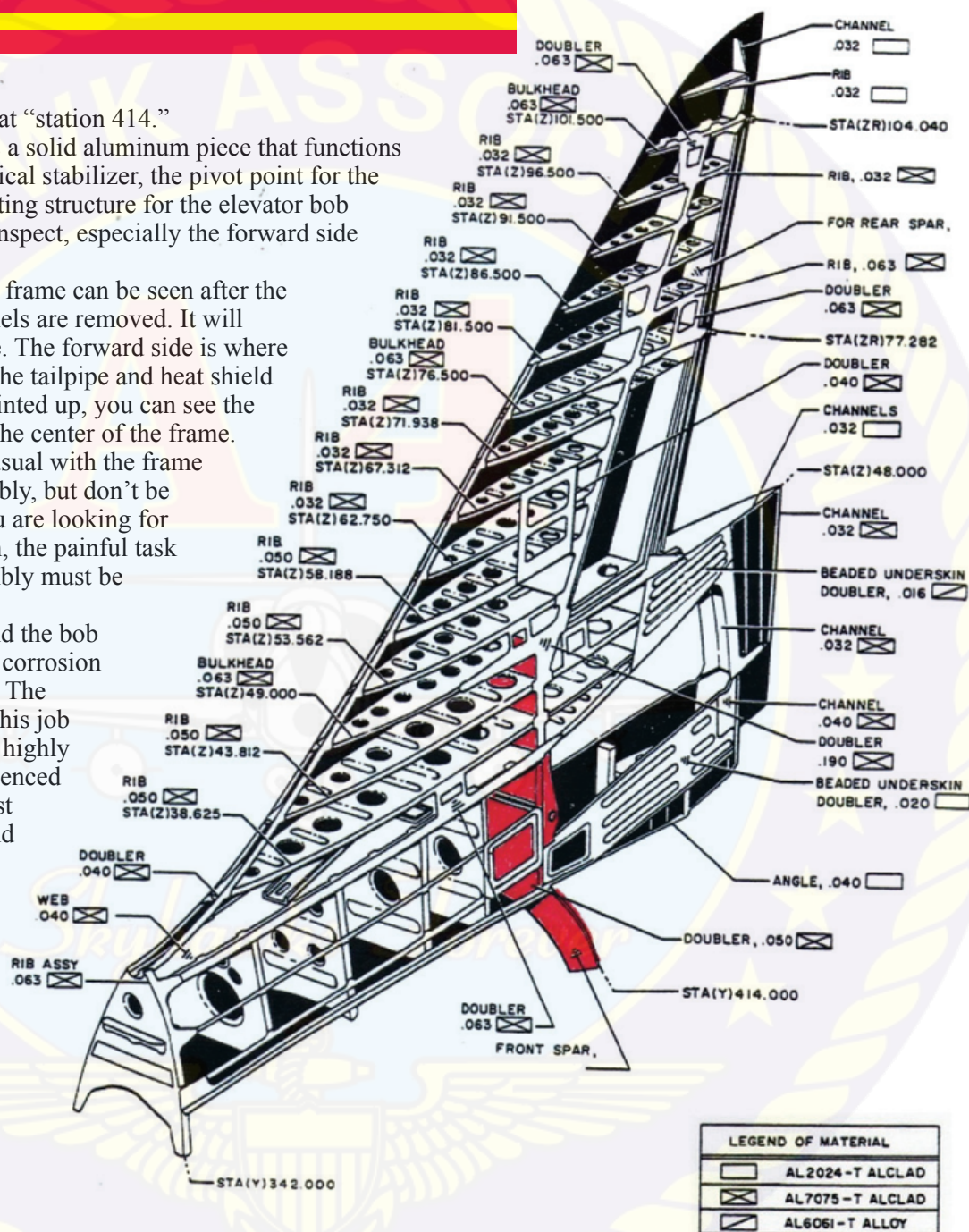
By Dave Dollarhide

Are you restoring an A-4? You may want to check the frame at "station 414."

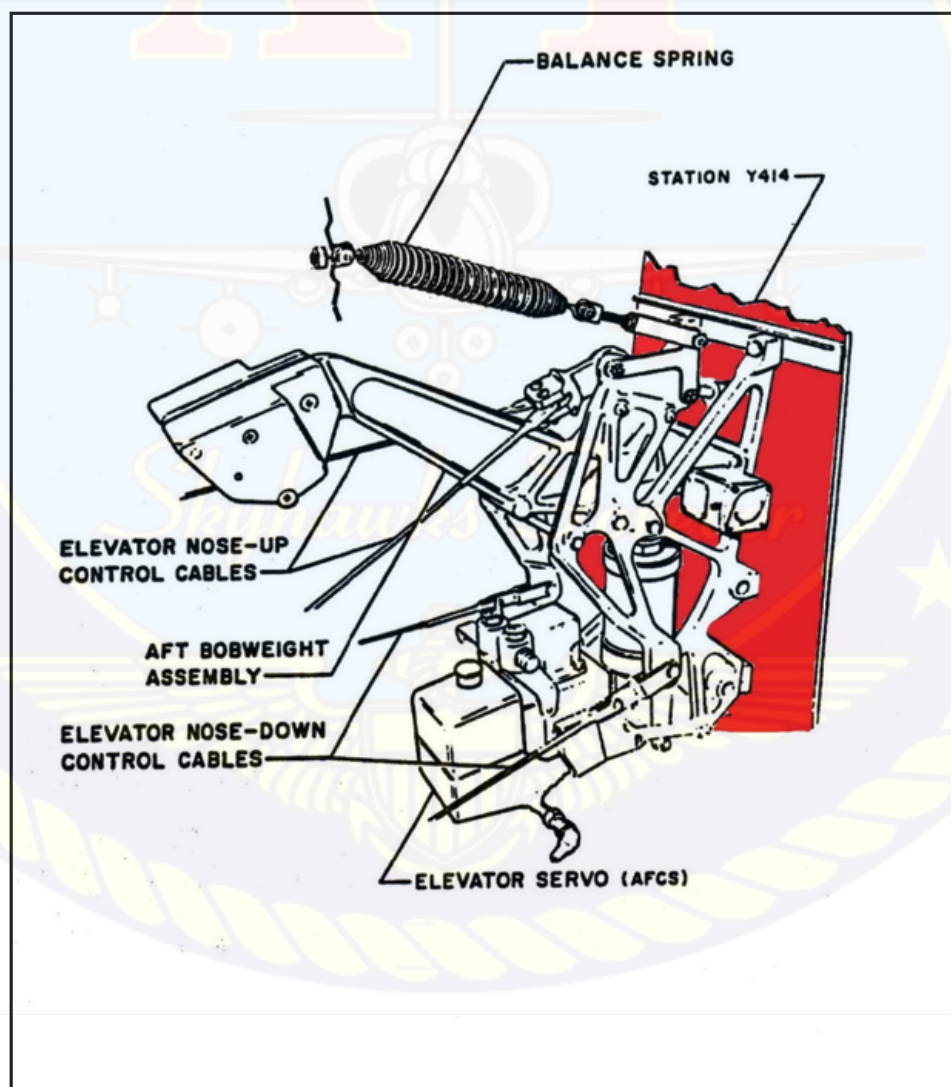
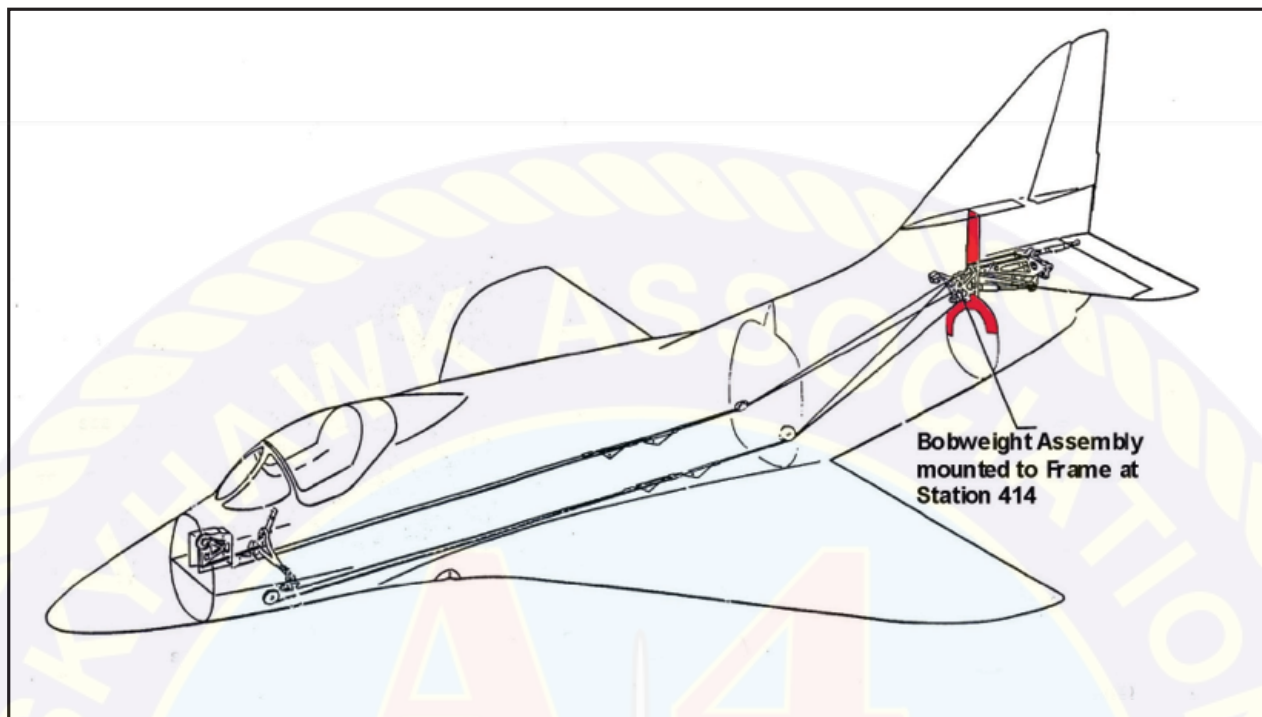
The cast frame at station 414 is a solid aluminum piece that functions as the lower main spar for the vertical stabilizer, the pivot point for the horizontal stabilizer and the mounting structure for the elevator bob weight assembly. It is difficult to inspect, especially the forward side of the frame.

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

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



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

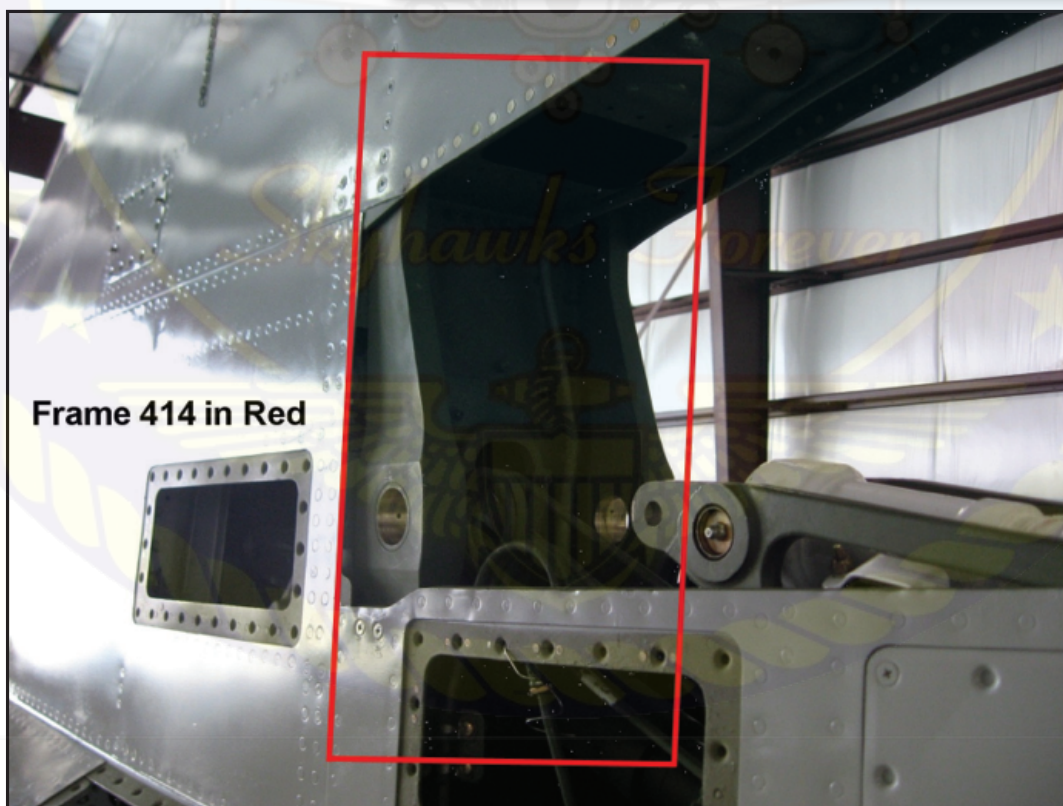


RESTORATION

Continued...



Red Line
Frame 414 Location



Frame 414 in Red



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



SKYHAWK RESEARCH

• August 2012 •

From the Skyhawk Association Research Team

(Ed. Note: one of the main functions of the Skyhawk Association is to preserve the stories, documents and data associated with the aircraft, and the volunteers of the association research team get a lot of questions from members and other enthusiasts. By researching documents available on the website and tapping the experience of our directors and members, some interesting exchanges occur. The following thread is an example of that.)

On Aug 8, 2012, at 3:04 PM, Brandon Caplan [brandon.caplan@gmail.com] wrote:
To Whom It May Concern,

I'm an aviation buff (particularly military aviation), and I had a few questions about some technical details regarding the A-4:

- Could the hump on later models of the A-4 be removed and reinstalled quickly, or would removing it require putting more metal over the area where the hump was (i.e. would removing the hump expose a large area of open wiring)?
- How many of the A-4B aircraft were modified to accept Sidewinder missiles?
- Did any of the A-4Bs or Cs get the two extra hard-points like the later models?
- Were any of the A-4Ls and A-4Ms able to carry Sidewinders?
- Were any Skyhawks in U.S. service able to hold Sidewinders on all four of the under-wing hard-points, or was this only a feature on the aircraft used by Australia?

Thank you so much for any help!
Sincerely, Brandon Caplan

On Aug 8, 2012, at 8:49 PM, Dave Dollarhide wrote:

Brandon, the hump was for the installation of ECM gear and not designed to be removed. That said, it was simply fitted over the existing fuselage skin. It was an add on feature. I flew the B, C, E and L models and don't recall any of them being wired for AIM-9 and have never seen one carried. Later US models were probably configured for Sidewinder. ...would've been carried on the outboard stations...most certainly not on the centerline.

The A, B, C and L (upgraded C) only had three wing stations. All other single seat A-4s had five.

Hope this helps.
Dave Dollarhide

CC: sa-a4-research@a4skyhawk.org
From: zerocep@ec.rr.com
To: davedollarhide@msn.com; brandon.caplan@gmail.com
Subject: Re: Skyhawk-related Questions
Date: Wed, 8 Aug 2012 22:55:47 -0400
Good stuff Hide.

Regarding the A-4B/C and Sidewinder, in the early 60's A-4s assigned to ASW carriers provided air defense and were modified for Sidewinder carry. Just about every US version had provisions for or an airframe change for 2 missile

carry on the outboard wing stations if the use could be justified. Almost all export versions had at least 2 missile carry options. The only 4 missile carry configurations other than Australia were for New Zealand (A-4K), Israel (A-4E/H/N and TA-4H) and Kuwait (A-4KU and TA-4KU).

Jigger

On 24 August 2012 at 8:57 AM, Bill Egen, [zerocep@ec.rr.com] wrote:

Just for fun (useless info?), the differences chart from Douglas (circa 1977) has the following about Sidewinder:

A-4B: 2 stations by AFC 203
A-4Q: provisions
A-4S/K: 2 stations
A-4C/L: 2 stations by AFC 203A
A-4E/F/F(super): 2 stations by AFC 431
A-4G/H, TA-4G/H: 4 stations
A-4M: 2 stations by AFC 509
A-4N/A-4E (Israel): 4 stations
A-4KU/TA-4KU: 4 stations
TA-4F TACA (OA-4M?): 2 stations

The A-4M Tactical Manual Pocket Guide has 3 pages on Sidewinder procedures for ECP 1120 and ECP 1185 birds. The control panel entry code for ARBs birds is 488 (nobody would guess that!). It also has a page for the ACMR pod (now called TCTS pods). They put bombs on all the "F" birds, why not Winders on the "A" birds!

Jigger

PS: My only chance to shoot a Winder was in 1971 at Light Attack Weapons School in Lemoore and it got cnx'd for wx!!! We were after the communist gomer flares! Later in the mid-70s, my compatriot at MAWTULant (he was F-4, and I was A-4) was the OCE (Officer Conducting the Exercise) for a missile shoot out of MCAS Beaufort. The F-4 bagged the Navy A-4 tow plane. Pilot was rescued, but it bad shape - cold water! The OCE, who was on the radio the whole time at Cherry Point, got a letter of reprimand and Beaufort got a kill!

(Ed. Note: Keep those questions coming!)

The A-4Ever Index

Summer 2004 to Fall 2013

This index is sorted by Issue beginning with Summer 2004. Additional indices sorted by Author and Category (such as Skyhawk History or Skyhawk Operations), can be found on the Skyhawk website at www.skyhawk.org. We hope that this index will be useful to our members by providing a means to quickly locate articles and other items of interest.

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Flying Brothers Navy – Marine
Team, at Subic Bay, 1960.
Photo via Bill Ravgiala.



LCpls Coker (cockpit),
Row standing by a/c,
and Wolf and Ravgiala
at radio on VMA-121
flight line, Iwakuni, JP
fall 1960.
Photo via Bill Ravgiala.

LtCol T.J. Saxton,
CO VMA-121, examines
VK 1/2 at Cubi Point, RP,
circa 1958.
Photo via Bill Ravgiala.



VA-76 demonstrating Newton's law of universal gravitation, as well as a variation of Murphy's Law: when the CO screws up, some JO is always there to record it.

Photo via Paul Hollandsworth.



PURESOME UNPLUGGED

• YP's Excellent Adventures •

By Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

The Early "Worm" A Personal Recollection

Hardly anyone actually knew who Lawrence Leroy Elmore might be, but at least a couple of generations of tactical Naval Aviators and insane formation skydivers include "Worm" Elmore in their oral tradition of legends. Worm flew west in May of 2013 while doing one of the things he loved doing, which was leaping out of perfectly good airplanes for fun.

Why, Worm? He earned this enduring call sign early on with the Snakes of VA-86, when he availed himself of Thanksgiving Dinner at both Napkin Ring Wardroom One with the Big Dogs and Dirty Shirt Wardroom Two with us great unwashed. This might have gone unnoticed but for the fact that he was astounded not to have any fellow takers. So Worm, short for "Tapeworm" it was.

As a powerless FNG LTJG in my first fleet squadron, I watched and learned from slightly senior Worm as he consistently managed to bag good deal flights. Since I occupied numerous SLDO positions, the first thing I learned from him was to get into the Maintenance Department and the test hop business. I couldn't do anything about not being a fellow hyperthyroid, but I did learn to camp around the Squadron Duty Officer as much as possible for pop up bagging possibilities. Still, I always seemed to camp at Worm's six in the flight time and trap races, which were the only times he would admit to seeing me there. Since he ended up as youngest member of the Grand Club of thousand trap aviators as an LCDR, I concede defeat.

But just being around Worm was good for bagging. When I insulted a VF-41 LCDR Double Demon fighter pilot at a cocktail party, Worm arranged a special two versus two ACM hop off the ship that included the insulter

and himself. And when VA-86 turned in our perfectly good A-4Es and went across the hall to attend A-7A NAMO, I stayed in VA-44 as an instructor. Since the Snakes were without airplanes and void for this period, I transported Worm and fellow Snakes around in the TA-4. When their new A-7As showed up, I bounced them unmercifully. When I was offered the chance to fly with them, it was Worm, naturally, that I flew with.

Worm was a legendary Landing Signal Officer. Besides flying two full cruises with Worm, I spent many hours back on the platform with him and fellow squadron LSO, Weed, watching them wave. Later on, when I would pop into NAS Cecil on cross countries in my Reserve Crusader, I got to bag time in VA-45's TA-4s with Worm. On one occasion, we popped into the pattern at Whitehouse, Cecil's outlying bounce field. After four passes, I was on final when Worm shook the stick and took the airplane. Down the glide path we came until we were in close. Then, Worm dropped the left wing and headed directly at the LSO cart. At the last moment, he clobbered the power and we proceeded to clean up and leave the pattern. After a very long minute, the LSO's squeaky voice came up and axed it we knew what heart tasted like...

No matter what Worm seemed to do, he managed to bounce into cockpits. He left the Navy for a stint with TWA, where he managed to get furloughed. Somehow, he found a job as OINC of a VSF detachment flying A-4s back in the Navy, where he stayed until TWA had the good graces to call him back to driving many motors.

And so it went. Others can better tell about flying Marchetti two-seaters for fighter pilot wannabees at Air Combat USA. And Worm naturally ended up



***Worm really loved his
Skyhawk Ventures A-4C.***

Photo via Dave Dollarhide.

being the main pilot for the A-4C immaculately restored by a fellow Snake's company.

Worm did everything with a maximum of joy and enthusiasm. At airshows with the A-4C, he was known as the Eternal Teenager. I am quite sure that his fellow insane skydiving pals remain in awe at his some 7,000 parachute jumps, which included 72 jumps on his 70th birthday.



Worm was also the glue that held us VA-86 squadron mates together through the years. He was always in the middle of organizing our frequent reunions. He did special things like bringing us all together for a surprise birthday party for a squadron wife who was dying of cancer. He made sure that the squadron widows and many of their children were included in the squadron. Worm

was always just a phone call away from anyone he felt needed it. We Snake vets will miss him.

Worm's memorial service would have suited him. His friends from every venue got to tell Worm stories. There was a spot parachutist and a missing man flyover by the Dreamland Squadron. Near teetotaler Worm wouldn't have minded the bottle that got passed

around the circle. And, for the record, Tunita and I tossed our nickels on the grass.

Worm will always be around as long as people tell Worm stories. I think that will be a long time. Certainly as long as we have Blue Skies.

YP



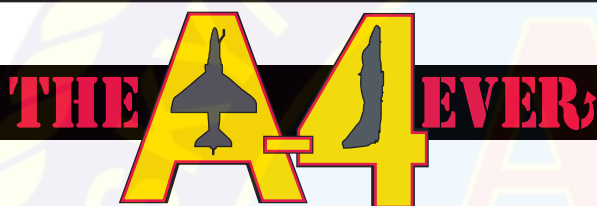
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