

THE A4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL Vol 20-2



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Skyhawk Association Annual Meeting

September 5, 2014

Sparks, NV



THE PREZ SEZ

By Dave "Hide" Dollarhide

THE SCOOTER TURNS 60!

On June 22, 1954, the XA-4D-1 prototype took to the air on its first test flight with Douglas Aircraft test pilot Bob Rahn at the controls. Twenty-five years later, the last A-4 rolled off the assembly line for a total production of 2,960 airplanes, and today, SIXTY years later, Todd "Hun" Frommelt, our "Keeper of the Count," tells us that 98 A-4s are still flying around the world. We'll be celebrating this milestone at Hook 14 in Reno. I hope you can join us.

NEW SDOS

We wish to thank the recent volunteers who have taken on SDO jobs. We appreciate their willingness to be a part of the team as a point of contact for their units.

- SDO Change of Command: **Dick Twilde** relieved by **Larry Decker**... "I except the passing of the SDO responsibility for VA-112 and will do my best with the position. You are duly relieved."
- SDO **Larry Lassise** has taken on two more squadrons... VA-164 & VA-192.
- **Jerry Geer** takes on the SDO job for VSF-76 and VA-64. "Let me know what my duties are, and I will see if I can make a contribution to the Association."
- **Pete "Pedro" Dodge** here. "...as our most recent SDO Tom Wondergem has recently Flown West, I am volunteering my services to be the VA-93 Blue Blazer (Ravens) SDO."

SQUADRON LINEAGE SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION VIEW

How is a US Navy squadron's lineage determined? The Naval Historical Center says the key words in the change of status of squadrons are "established," "redesignated," or "disestablished." If a unit is redesignated (given a new name), the lineage continues; however, once a squadron is disestablished, the lineage ends. That's the official process. (Though often used, the terms "com-

missioned" and "decommissioned" don't apply to squadrons, only ships.)

Squadronmates love to trace their roots back to some historical point of origin and identify with those "like-minded" people who preceded them, who flew and maintained earlier airplanes, who wore the same patch and had a hand in building the legacy handed down through sea stories. For those who served together experiencing both the good and difficult times, it's not about squadrons really. It's about the people and experiences.

That's how we see it at the Skyhawk Association, so that's how we keep the records. It's our focus in determining "lineage." It's not so important to us that a squadron is disestablished instead of re-designated. If the same people put on a different ball cap and continued doing the same thing, or if a new squadron is given the same name, nickname and patch from a unit of the past, those people don't disown the legacy. They live it.

As you look through our website pages of squadrons and other A-4 units, you'll see what I mean. The 1969 shutdown of VA-106 at Cecil Field is an unusual case, as the squadron was disestablished, then fifteen years later, VFA-106 (FA-18 RAG) was established and approved to use the same unit insignia. Though not in keeping with the Historical Center's rules, those in VFA-106 proudly tout their lineage from the '40s, the same as VA-106. They even have a VA-106 A-4 painted on the walls of their spaces at NAS Oceana. As with VFA-106, our website shows that same connection.

There have been numerous cases in which the same people from a disestablished squadron suddenly found themselves assigned to a newly established squadron, often in the same location. So why was the squadron not simply redesignated? I don't know the answer to that, but it does seem there is a lack of appreciation for the value of protecting a unit's heritage in the U.S. Navy. The



Dave "Hide" Dollarhide

Marines seem to do a much better job of maintaining unit integrity over the years.

From personal experience, I saw this happen in the Navy Reserves. There was a reorganization following a mostly unsuccessful activation of squadrons as a result of the USS Pueblo incident in 1968. Squadrons were redesignated, changing their names. In 1970, another reorganization plan was implemented, but that time they disestablished squadrons, then established new ones the next day with different names. Though the command structure had been modified, the new squadrons were in the same location, flying and maintaining the same type airplanes, with the same people.

We respect the official meaning of the word disestablished, but believe we document lineage in a more meaningful manner for the people involved. Did the same squadron members continue on? Did they have a personal connection to the past? Was a squadron name and insignia brought back to life years later and the legacy continued? Those are the questions we consider. So, if you have a concern that the Skyhawk Association is not showing the correct lineage of your squadron, remember that our focus is more on people than the official disposition of their squadrons.

CHANGE OF COMMAND

My two-year term as President of the A-4 Skyhawk Association is coming to a close. At our September Board of Directors meeting at Hook 14 in Reno, a new President will be elected. My replacement will be a Marine, as it's our policy to alternate between the two services every two years.

It's been my pleasure to have served, as I highly respect the fraternal bond among our membership. *continued on page 5...*



IN MEMORY OF
M. DAVIS "WHIZZER" WHITE, D.D.S.
(1939-2007)
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BOMBS AWAY!

• Summer 2014 •

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THE A-4 EVER

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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 Journal 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.

On the Cover:

1984 Blues solos, #5 LCDR Chris Ives and #6 LT Andy Caputi, at the merge. USN photo..

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org

■ To the Editor:

I'm 1st Lt Pablo "Kiwi" Keilis from the Argentinian Air Force. I want to send to you the link of the ceremony of my first solo flight in an A4-AR last May 8th. I think this is a very interesting data because most of the members of the association are former Scooters drivers, and I enjoy reading old combat stories in the journal. But this is the proof that, after decades, the Scooter is still flying, allowing young pilots like me to grow up as a professional. We are three Argentinian students and an exchange Spanish F-18 pilot at V Brigada Aerea, Villa Reynolds, San Luis, Argentina.

Congrats!

Kiwi

[kiwi@nismo.org]



L-R: Capt Alvaro GARCIA GALAN (Spanish Air Force), 1st Lt Gustavo HAPLCE, 1st Lt Juan GUINLE and 1st Lt Pablo KEILIS.

■ To the Editor:

First, I enjoyed this latest "A4 Forever" immensely (Vol 20-1), but it was with much regret that I read we'll have no more Youthful Puresome articles. Jack Woodul has to be the most imaginative and entertaining writer I've come across, and I never tire of his articles. So it's with much gratitude that I say "Thank you, YP, for many years of grins and chuckles!" I look forward to the recycling of his previous writings, and I hope they come frequently.

Next, it's my sad duty to report that

Bob Polhamus, my former squadron mate in VMA-311, died in Feb 2014 from cancer. Bob and I were among the very first cadre of lieutenants into Chu Lai, RVN in 1965. We both ended up as Captains at Northwest Airlines, with Bob being much senior to me due to my reluctance to leave the USMC for 2 1/2 more years while I instructed in VT-21 at Kingsville, TX.

Bob was a delightful, enthusiastic, entertaining comrade whose stories and adventures at NWA became legendary. He will be sorely missed by the rest of us from 311 who have continued our biennial reunions since 1986. Bob was always a stalwart at those events.

Blue skies,

Lyle Prouse

[lprouse@bellsouth.net]

■ To the Editor:

On the second Med. cruise of CVA-60 USS *Saratoga* in 1959, I was a plane captain with VA-34 out of Cecil Field (part of CAG-3). I believe the squadron side number was 309 on LT Jackson's aircraft. I prepared the aircraft and helped LT Jackson mount and strap in. It was a unusual night operation as we normally did not fly at night at that time. After launch I returned to the line shack, which was behind the island near the starboard catwalk, to await his return. About 9 p.m. I left the shack and walked on the catwalk a short distance to a spot near the island to get out to the plane on landing. The night was pitch black, and the seas were moderate. Observing the approach area, I noticed that an approaching aircraft was showing reversed lights. I remarked to the others with me that "that aircraft is flying away or is upside down." I could see only lights and the red - green was reversed for an approaching plane. Seconds after that I observed an inverted A-4 fly into the sea, even with the island and about 100 yards out. Nothing was recovered by the

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

Please note email address!

destroyer escort. It was the LT's aircraft. I suspected vertigo, but no explanation was ever given. After joining the A-4 association, I was contacted by another VA-34 member who was next to me at the time. I did not know him, but he was in the shop when I was on the line. He saw the same as I had and remembered that a F-8 was ahead of LT Jackson and took a wave off. At the wave off the F-8 hit afterburner, and in his opinion, the resulting bright flame destroyed LT Jackson's night vision, causing vertigo. I believe that he knew he was going into the ship and was able to veer off to starboard, but did not recover. When he went in he was inverted, with the wing next to the ship at about a 45 degree angle to the water. I believe if he did not veer off he would have hit the stern at deck level or about right where I was. Glad to help. Any other questions, feel free. Ed. Wilburn discharged from VA-34 Jan 61 as AD-J 2.

P.S. On page 2 of latest eJournal (Ed. note: Winter 2013-2014, Vol. 19-4) there is a picture of me refueling an A-4 at Guantanamo bay Cuba in 59. If I remember right the squadron was bomb qualifying for the 59 cruise. LT Jackson was with us at the time and qualified with the rest of the pilots there.

Ed Wilburn

[shopteacher26@gmail.com]

From the Research Team (Gary Verver): I've replied to Ed and the loss was in '58 and also sent him a copy of the deck log.

■ To the Editor:

My name is Chad Williams, and I am trying to help my dad (Robin L.F. Williams) research an A-4 that crashed near his battalion HQ in May of 1966. As he told me, he arrived in country in the first week of May 1966 and was immediately sent to his battalion (USMC 1/3) in Chu Lai. Within the first couple of days he witnessed an A4 falling out of the sky

(like a falling leaf he described it). It impacted on its belly a little ways off near another platoon's tents. A corpsman from that unit jumped up onto the burning aircraft to get the crewman out, only to find that he was long gone and must have ejected. I have done some research, but can't seem to pinpoint an A-4 on the BuNo listing that I have that would be the aircraft we are looking for. I was wondering if you could possibly help with any aircraft that may have crashed in or around Chu Lai in the month of May 1966. I am trying to locate the BuNo so that he can research the pilot

and his status, as well as the mission this aircraft was on when it crashed.

Thank you in advance for your help

Chad Williams

[darksidephoto@yahoo.com]

From the Research Team (Bill Egen): Chad, based on MAG-12 Command Chronologies and VMA-311, VMA-211, VMA-214 and VMA-223 Command Chronologies for Chu Lai around May '66, the loss was probably an A-4C, BuNo 147808, belonging to VMA-311. It was being "externaled" back to Chu Lai for repairs by an Army helo, probably a



CH-54 Flying Crane. The external load became unstable, and the aircraft had to be jettisoned, explaining the falling leaf effect. This account is documented in Vietnam Air Losses by Chris Hobson. We have a photo of a jettisoned A-4 close to Chu Lai (probably 147808).

The only other loss for MAG-12 that month was in Laos and the pilot was lost.

THE PREZ SEZ continued...

It's that little Scooter we love so much that brought us together both then and now. Meanwhile, in the years ahead, I look forward to contributing in other ways.

NAS JAX A-4C RESTORATION

Restoration of the A-4C on display at NAS Jacksonville, FL, has finally been completed. I have been personally involved with this project and after a year of working through many issues, the sheet metal dings are repaired, the drop tanks have been removed to show the bomb load and the VA-106 colors are once again loud and clear. The name on the side of the cockpit is CDR Newton Foss, who was the first A-4 CO of the squadron.

This project was a joint effort of the Skyhawk Association and the Association of Naval Aviation (ANA). However, were it not for the dedicated volunteer efforts of PO1 Michael Bean, an active duty sailor, the project would have floundered. The Skyhawk Association applauded PO Bean at a recent ANA luncheon with a framed photo of his fine work and provided his Commanding Officer, CAPT Roy Undersander, with a letter of appreciation that has been included in his service record.



PHYLLIS GALANTI

Many Vietnam A-4 POWs owe their release in a very significant way to Phyllis Galanti, who recently passed away. Following her husband Paul's shoot-down and capture in North Vietnam, she launched a campaign to keep the POW story alive, readily confronting those who opposed her and pressuring politicians. She was determined, relentless and ultimately successful as a major player in the POWs final release. Paul has been a staunch supporter and volunteer with the Skyhawk Association. We offer him our sympathies and salute Phyllis for her contributions.

COL JOHN CALDAS, USMC (RET)

From Harahan, LA, flew West on June 14th. John was a 35-year Marine, entering as a private during the Korean War. He was CO of VMA-311 at Bien Hoa in January 1973, when he led the last A-4 combat mission of the Vietnam War on the 27th day of the month. He is credited by some with dropping the last bomb of the war, minutes before the official cease fire went into effect. John was member #98 of Skyhawk Association, serving both as a director and a vice-president. He also served on the Association research team for many years.



Skyhawks over Israel

Article by Marco Pennings

This article was originally published in Scramble magazine. This version was excerpted from the original with permission of the author, Marco Pennings (Asia and Middle-East Editor, Scramble). Please see the ad for Scramble magazine in this issue on page 11. To see the entire article, including exhaustive statistics pertaining to the Israeli use of the A-4 Skyhawk, refer to the Skyhawk Association website homepage, Journal Extras tab.



For some a familiar sight, for others high on a wish-list; a gaggle of four 102sq A-4N AyitMs wait for their take-off permission for yet another training sortie from one of Hatzerim's runways. (30 October 2012, Piet Luijken)

The A-4 Skyhawk in Israeli service

By Marco Pennings, Israel editor for Scramble Magazine

Israeli interest in the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk was first aroused in the early 60's when Douglas sought export customers for its lightweight attack aircraft, and IAF commander Ezer Weitzman was looking for a replacement for the IAF Ouragan and Mystere IV fighters. However, political considerations pushed back the first contract to 18 March 1966, when 48 downgraded A-4Fs were ordered. Most offensive equipment was removed, but a brake parachute and UHF antenna atop the vertical fin were added. Pilot training in the US started on 17 May 1967, but the four pilots involved were recalled to participate in the Six Day War of June 1967. Pilot training continued after the war, and 85 flight hrs were absorbed on A-4E/TA-4Fs with VA-44 and VA-45 at Cecil Field. These downgraded A-4Fs were re-designated A-4H, and the first four arrived by sea in Haifa harbour, under Operation Rugby, on 29 December 1967. Acceptance was on the next day and the first flight of an A-4H was on 1 January 1968 by 109 squadron at Ramat David. These A-4s replaced the Mystere IVAs which were transferred to 116sq. In Israeli service, the Skyhawk was named Ayit, Hebrew for Eagle. Next unit to receive the A-4H was co-located 102 squadron on 13 June 1968. Four days later, 102sq moved to its temporary home at Hatzor. Exactly one year later, on 17 June 1969, they moved into Hatzerim where they are still located today.

As always, Israeli aircraft losses are hard to trace. So far we have collected some 100 Skyhawk losses. The first reported loss was a 109sq A-4H flown by Ya'acov Agassi, on 29 January 1968. The pilot ejected and was taken prisoner of war. This again seems odd as the first reported combat mission was over two weeks later. As only four aircraft had been delivered by then (03, 05, 07, 09), #07 seems to be the only candidate because the other three appear in pictures taken in April 1968. First combat use of the Skyhawk came on 15 February 1968, when 109sq bombed Jordanian artillery and Palestinian terrorist bases along the Jordanian border. An amazing achievement considering that the A-4s had arrived only six weeks earlier. A second order for 42 additional A-4Hs and ten

TA-4H trainers/FACs was approved by US president Lyndon B. Johnson's administration on 26 February 1968. The first of these A-4Hs arrived in the port of Ashdod on 19 March 1969, and all TA-4Hs were delivered in 1969. These Skyhawks reinforced 102sq and formed newly activated **115 squadron** at Tel Nof.

During the 1968-1970 War of Attrition the IAF lost eight A-4s, increasingly to new Egyptian SAM-2/3 sites constructed along the Suez Canal. However, not all was bad. On 12 May 1970, 109sq CO Ezra Dotan flying A-4H #03, achieved a remarkable success by shooting down two Syrian MiG-17s over Lebanon, making him an ace. The first MiG was shot down with a salvo of unguided rockets, the second using the recently installed 30 mm cannons (replacing the unreliable 20 mm guns). These kills remain the only IAF Skyhawk air-to-air victories to date.

To counter the new Egyptian SAM-sites, Israel appealed the US for help, and US president Richard M. Nixon approved the transfer of sixty USN/USMC surplus A-4Es together with AGM-45 Shrike radar homing air-to-ground missiles and AGM-62 Walleye optically guided glide bombs. The first of these A-4Es arrived in the port of Ashdod on 18 February 1971. **116 squadron** at Tel Nof was the first to receive these aircraft, and 25 Skyhawks replaced their ageing Mystere IVAs. **110 squadron**, flying the mighty Vautour from Ramat David, started training on the Skyhawk when four A-4Hs were loaned from neighbouring 109sq in March 1971. In July 1971, 110sq received its first shipment of A-4Es.

When the number of Skyhawks in service topped the 100-mark, squadrons added a third identity cipher in front of the double-digit serials:

102sq	7xx serials
109sq	1xx serials
110sq	2xx serials
115sq	3xx serials
116sq	2xx serials
FSATS	5xx serials (TA-4F), 4xx serials (TA-4J)

The actual 1971 A-4E delivery schedule remains somewhat of a mystery: Reports from Israel suggest that *Operation Rugby D*

covered three deliveries; 25 A-4Es to 116sq in February 1971, a similar number to 110sq in July 1971 and the remaining to 102sq in late 1971. However, US sources give a different schedule; ca 30 delivered in 1971 and a similar number in 1972. In addition, four ex-US TA-4Fs were received in 1972-1973, and six new TA-4Js arrived between October 1972 and February 1973. The TA-4Js (with TA-4H, A-4E and A-4H) formed the nucleus of the **Flight School Advanced Training Squadron** (FSATS) which was formed as a dedicated pilot training squadron at Hatzerim on 8 October 1972.

On 4 March 1971, the Nixon administration approved the sale of a much-improved A-4 version; the A-4N. The A-4N was a baseline A-4M airframe and engine (the A-4M was an improved A-4F), fitted with Israeli avionics, HUD and 30 mm DEFA type 552 cannons. First flight of the A-4N was on 8 June 1972 and deliveries started late November 1972. Total orders placed must have been for 110 aircraft, as seven attrition replacements were added after the Yom Kippur war. 115sq at Tel Nof was the first unit to receive the ultimate Skyhawk model, replacing the A-4H. To start its conversion process, 116sq received four A-4Ns on loan from co-located 115sq on 10 January 1973. With the influx of new airframes and reshuffling of the A-4 fleet, a new squadron was formed at Etzion in the Sinai on 1 August 1973: **140 squadron** had received eight A-4Es on loan from 116sq in January 1973, and was to receive the remainder as 116sq received more A-4Ns. As of 6 October 1973, Skyhawk deliveries totalled at least 190 aircraft, with total losses until then reported as ten aircraft.

Deliveries by 6 October 1973:

A-4H	90	102sq, 109sq, 115sq, FSATS
TA-4H	10	102sq, FSATS
A-4E	60	102sq, 110sq, 116sq, 140sq
TA-4F	4	109sq
TA-4J	6	FSATS
A-4N	>18	115sq, 116sq

This means that ca 180 aircraft were available on 6 October 1973, the start of the Yom Kippur war. Israeli sources report 162 A-4E/H/N and TA-4F/H/J in service at the start of the war. It could be that these are only the serviceable aircraft.

At the start of the war, 116sq returned its A-4Ns to 115sq and reclaimed its A-4Es from 140sq. 140sq also gave some A-4Es to 110sq. It is safe to assume that the FSATS distributed all its combat-ready A-4H aircraft to the fighter squadrons, leaving the new TA-4Js out of the conflict. With the simultaneous attacks of Egypt and Syria at 14:00 hrs on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, Skyhawks were again thrust into battle. 115sq was fully mission capable with its new A-4Ns, and was tasked with air base strikes and Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD). The A-4E squadrons were primarily tasked with Close Air Support (CAS). The A-4H units were in trouble because their aircraft were being upgraded with the Crystal weapons delivery and navigation system. Some had completed the upgrade, others were in progress and more were still unmodified and deemed unserviceable. However, five 24-aircraft squadrons were fully operational with sufficient reserves.

6-24 October 1973 Yom Kippur war Skyhawk OrBat and combat statistics:

109sq	Ramat David	A-4H/TA-4F	994 sorties	13 lost
110sq	Ramat David	A-4E	1136 sorties	11 lost
115sq	Tel Nof	A-4N	750 sorties	7 lost
116sq	Tel Nof	A-4E	823 sorties	5 lost
102sq	Hatzerim	A-4H/TA-4H	992 sorties	17 lost
FSATS	Hatzerim	TA-4J	did not participate	0 lost
Totals:			4695 sorties	53 lost

During the first days of the war, confusion and mission ineffectiveness reigned as air-superiority had not yet been established and targets were unclear. This resulted in heavy losses, with ten Skyhawks shot down on the first full day of the war (7 October). This was also the blackest day of the war with 23 fast-jet losses...a full squadron! A total of 107 aircraft and helicopters were lost during the war. 50% of these were Skyhawks, as a total of 53 aircraft were lost over the Egyptian (32) and Syrian (21) fronts in sixteen days of combat (last loss was on 21 October). 27 pilots were killed in action. Emergency aid from the US started arriving on 17 October. A total of 46 A-4E/Fs is reported to have been received; thirty arrived by air and were used in the war flying some 85 operational sorties. Sixteen arrived by sea, on board the USS *Independence*.



A-4s at Hatzerim are generally seen flying in a clean configuration. However, sometimes you can catch them fully loaded like 102sq A-4N AyitM 309 returning from a training mission with two drop tanks and some rocket pods. (Hatzerim, 6 May 2008, Marco Pennings)



The second Skyhawk type used in numbers by 102sq at Hatzerim is the TA-4J AyitM, and 40-year old 703 sporting a TA-4H-style fin still looks like it can go on forever. (Hatzerim, 30 October 2012, Piet Luijken)

ence, and arrived in nov/dec1973. A total of seven attrition replacement A-4Ns were added to the aircraft already on order. The final days of the war generated maybe the best-known Skyhawk modification; the extended tailpipe, or ‘Barrel’ modification to minimize damage done by an IR-missile hit. The emergency aid was distributed over the badly affected squadrons. It is unlikely that 109sq operated any of these aircraft as it was an A-4H unit. Also 115sq is not known as an A-4E/F user:

Emergency aid:			
110sq	Ramat David	A-4E	21oct1973
116sq	Tel Nof	A-4E	25oct1973
102sq	Hatzerim	A-4F	possibly 17oct1973

Post October 1973, fifteen new TA-4J(H) models were received. These are TA-4Js modified with TA-4H features such as the square fin-tip, but are called TA-4J in IAF service. With the arrival of more A-4E/Ns and the TA-4Js, the Skyhawk fleet serials were reorganized:

Serials:		
TA-4F	1xx	ex 5xx
A-4H	2xx	ex 1xx, 3xx, 7xx
A-4N	3xx and 4xx	
TA-4H	5xx	ex 1xx, 7xx
A-4F	6xx	
TA-4J	7xx	ex 4xx
A-4E	8xx	ex 2xx

116sq briefly used its emergency aid A-4Es and finally converted to the A-4N from 25 November 1973. Its A-4Es were transferred to 140sq which had been re-activated on 18 November 1973 at Etzion. 140sq also received some A-4Es from 110sq. As fourth A-4N unit, 140sq received its first new A-4Ns from the last batch on order on 20 May 1976. Its A-4Es were used to equip **143 squadron** which had formed at Etzion in April 1976. Just a month earlier, 109sq was the first Skyhawk unit to disband: On 1 March 1976, the unit was de-activated in order to prepare for the arrival of the Kfir C2. Its A-4Hs went to 110sq. Final Skyhawk unit to form was **141 squadron** at Hatzerim: It re-opened on 6 August 1978 with the A-4E/F/N.

The IAF Skyhawk OrBat for 1978:		
110sq	Ramat David	A-4H/N (on loan)
115sq	Tel Nof	A-4N
116sq	Tel Nof	A-4N
140sq	Etzion	A-4E/N
143sq	Etzion	A-4E/N (on loan)
102sq	Hatzerim	A-4H/TA-4H
141sq	Hatzerim	A-4E/F/N (on loan)
FSATS	Hatzerim	A-4/TA-4H/J

The exact units of the surviving TA-4Fs are not known. From 1980, the A-4 starts loosing ground. Late 1980, 110sq converts to the F-16A/B and transfers its A-4Hs to 141sq, replacing their A-4Es. 143sq at Etzion converts to the Kfir C2 and its A-4Es are sold to Indonesia. This top-secret program, dubbed *Operasi Alpha* by Indonesia, was described in detail in Scramble 344. A total of 31 A-4Es and two TA-4Hs were sold to the Muslim country. With the return of the Sinai to Egypt, Israel had to vacate its airfields as well. Etzion airbase was no exception, and 140sq had to relocate to newly constructed Ramon airbase in the Negev. On 8 November 1981, 32 Skyhawks made the move. 140sq was the IAF Fighter OTU at that time, and thus the largest IAF squadron with over forty A-4E/Ns and TA-4s in its inventory. 116sq also moved to a new home; on 3 October 1983 it relocated to Nevatim, followed by 115sq in October 1984.

Post Yom Kippur war, the Skyhawk remained an important FAC/CAS/SEAD aircraft and the fleet suffered two additional combat losses; on 19 April 1974 a 110sq A-4E was shot down over Syria and on 6 June 1982, the first day of Operation *Peace for Galilee*, 115sq lost an A-4N over Lebanon. See list of losses.

The IAF Skyhawk OrBat for 1984:		
115sq	Nevatim	A-4N
116sq	Nevatim	A-4N
140sq	Ramon	A-4N
102sq	Hatzerim	A-4H/TA-4H
141sq	Hatzerim	A-4F/H/N (on loan)
FSATS	Hatzerim	A-4/TA-4H/J

140sq was de-activated in the summer of 1985, preparing for the arrival of the F-16A/B. Its A-4Ns were distributed over 102sq, 115sq and 116sq. On 16 March 1986, 141sq is disbanded

at Hatzerim. Their A-4Ns go to 102sq and the A-4H/Fs are retired from service. The FSATS is merged with 102sq in 1990, thus forming the largest A-4 unit with over 40 aircraft. 115sq soldiers on with its A-4Ns until de-activated in 1994. As the sole occupant of Nevatim, 116sq finally prepares for the arrival of the F-16A/B with an A-4 farewell flight on 21 October 2002. Since October 2002, 102sq at Hatzerim is the sole user of the Skyhawk, operating over forty A-4N, TA-4H and TA-4J models in the Advanced Combat Training role for future fighter pilots, fulfilling a vital link between the *Tzukit* (until 2010 and replaced by the T-6 *Efroni*) and the fast jet fleet as well as for F-16 OTU course graduates. A small batch of three ex-USN TA-4Js was received in July 1994 (serials 747, 748 and 749, others being rejected). These aircraft never entered service and remained stored at Hatzerim until sold to US-based ATSI in 2001. In the mid-late 80’s, Argentina wanted to purchase a dozen A-4Es from Israel. Recently, details of this deal have emerged and are presented below. For yet unknown reasons the deal fell through and the airframes were subsequently stored at Hatzerim and Ovda.

BuNo	Armada s/n	IDF serial	notes
150092	3-A-301	844*	scrapped Hatzerim by 2013
151056	3-A-302	849	current at Ovda?
151120	3-A-303	899	current at Ovda?
151164	3-A-304	825	current at Masoor range
151994	3-A-305	863	current at Ovda?
152019	3-A-306	806	current at Ovda?
152023	3-A-307	820**	current at Masoor range
152030	3-A-308	810	Ovda from 2000 to 2010
152044	3-A-309	850	current at Masoor range
152050	3-A-310	854	scrapped Hatzerim by 2013
152078	3-A-311	833	current at Masoor range
152097	3-A-312	884	scrapped Hatzerim by 2013
* = Was stored at Hatzerim as 152099.			
** = The IAF believed this a/c to be 150023. Its true identity was only discovered by IAI!			

All the aircraft were painted in the two-tone Argentinean pale blue and reportedly had the new “last three” in red on the tails, but the aircraft were cocooned at IAI (except 844) so it is hard to confirm. Some- or all of the cocoons had the IDF serial crudely sprayed on.



Two TA-4Hs are operational; 544 and 545. Delivered in 1969, these machines are now 45 years old but still very active. 542 and 547 are in storage. Inset is the Ayit Meshupar logo. (Hatzerim, 26 November 2013, Marco Pennings)

Ayit Squadrons



102 Tayeset Ha'Namer Ha'Meofeef
the Flying Tigers Squadron
13 June 1968 - current



109 Tayeset Ha'Emek
the Valley Squadron
1 January 1968 - 1 March 1976



110 Tayeset Abirie Ha'Efioh
the Knights of the North Squadron
July 1971 - 1980



115 Tayeset Ha'Drakon Ha'Meofeef
the Flying Dragon Squadron
March 1969 - 1994



116 Tayeset Ha'Kanaf Ha'Meofeef
the Flying Wing Squadron
March 1971 - 21 October 2002



140 Tayeset Neshet Ha'Zahav
the Golden Eagle Squadron
Jan-Oct 1973, November 1973 - 1985



141 Tayeset Ha'Ayal Ha'Nogakh
the Battering Ram Squadron
August 1978 - 16 March 1986



143 Tayeset Ha'Tooky Ha'Manaf
the Smashing Parrot Squadron
April 1976 - 1981



The Flight School Advanced Training Squadron and FTS (below)
November 1972 - current (today as part of 102sq with 102sq badge)



All upgraded 102sq A-4N, TA-4H and TA-4J Skyhawks carry the striking Flying Tigers markings on the fin and the Ayit Meshupar logo on the fuselage. They are called AyitM in the serials list.



Read?

you think
we read?

FABLED FIFTEEN: The Pacific War Saga of Carrier Air Group 15

Thomas McKelvey Cleaver
Pacifica Military History, 2014.
229 pages.

Review by CDR Jack Woodul, USNR (ret)

After reading the excellent Introduction by CDR David McCampbell; Preface by "Mr. Naval Aviation History," Barrett Tillman; and the Foreword by author Thomas Cleaver, this reviewer was sorely tempted to just steal from the best and cob together a book review. Had I done so, I would have missed a remarkable history and detail of a truly fabled World War II Carrier Air Group during critical battles in the Pacific Theater.

But this book encompasses much more than a compilation of dates and combat facts. Cleaver provides a very clear sequence of both naval strategy and tactics of both sides of the two greatest naval battles in history, the Marianas Turkey Shoot and the Battles of Leyte

Gulf. The development of the equipment, Air Group 15, and the personalities of officers and men is both interesting and instructive, particularly the attitudes of the enlisted airmen. As a very important part of the larger picture, the crucial roles of the submarines and the remarkable heroism of destroyer sailors against Japanese battleships at Leyte Gulf are included.

CDR David McCampbell, the Carrier Air Group Commander and U.S. Navy Ace of Aces, is a textbook example of leadership from the front. This Medal of Honor winner had a style, grace, and talent that made those under his command want to emulate his example, both in the air and on the beach. He is not alone, of course. The major players who directed

and drove the ships are examined for the good, the bad, and the ugly.

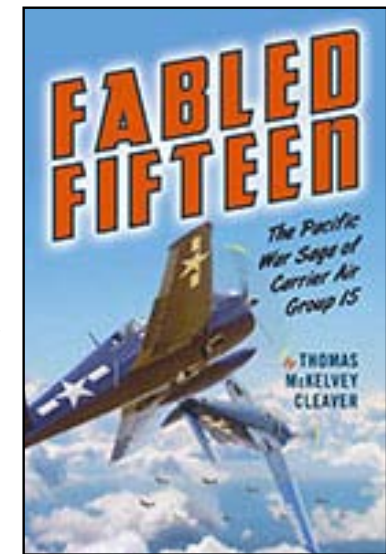
But for this former combat attack carrier pilot, the astounding six-month exposure to action is fascinating. It was a target rich environment of both enemy airplanes and ships, and Carrier Air Group 15 amassed a remarkable record of harvesting both. But it was not free—the loss rates for fighters, bombers and

torpedo planes were astounding in both human and material toll.

This period of naval history is also personally relevant to this reviewer, since the executive officer in his attack squadron participated in the battles for Leyte Gulf, dropping bombs on ships from his Helldiver, aka "The Beast." He brought lessons learned there and in Korea to our later war in Southeast Asia, and it was more than valuable.

Author Cleaver has written a valuable account of naval history. It is a very enjoyable read, full of action. It was instructive to this reader, who has studied the era all his life.

Highly recommended! ✈️



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DUTCH AVIATION SOCIETY

Shooting Stars ★ ★ ★ ★

By by Lieutenant Commander Ernest Mares, U.S. Navy (Ret)



The Shrike test platform was TF-10B serial number 124630 fitted with an A-4E nose section in place of the regular bulbous nose. Photo via the author.

During the early part of 1965, intelligence reports indicated that the North Vietnamese were installing SA-2 missile capability near Hanoi. Those of us on Yankee Station at the time were quite concerned over this. We were not allowed to attack these sites as they were being constructed, and for political reasons, we were also prohibited from conducting strikes against Haiphong Harbor while Soviet ships were unloading their SA-2 missile cargo.

In early May 1965 an A-4 from the USS *Midway* was shot down by a SAM. This was the start of Iron Hand which became the buzzword for anti-SAM operations. We were sent out to look for these sites, and rules of engagement, ridiculous as they were, allowed us to attack only the site that had shot down the A-4 from the *Midway* and no others.

No one could tell us where this site was located, but nonetheless it was our responsibility to locate and destroy that particular site.

We had no idea of the missile's actual capabilities, aside from briefings by our squadron intelligence officer. He promised that any time we flew higher than 100 feet above the ground, the SA-2 would get us with 100% percent success.

Initially our Iron Hand effort was conducted in the area of Nam Din where we tried to get the Fan Song radar to begin emitting. We even took turns climbing to 10,000 feet acting as bait to entice the missile radar to begin emitting. No Joy!

For the next several months, we frequently flew Iron Hand missions in the area of suspected missile sites hoping to cause enemy missiles to show

their position. We experienced both the frustration and the futility of using only our eyeballs to search for missile sites.

However, one thing we did learn from this is that by flying low to avoid the missiles we risked getting shot down by automatic weapons fire. My squadron lost several aircraft to prove this.

In October 1965, I flew a mission to bomb the Kep Ha highway and railroad bridge located approximately 15 miles northeast of the largest North Vietnamese city. The first aircraft dropped the bridge and this freed us to hit the secondary target—marshalling yards on the rail line between China and Hanoi. This virgin target was filled with ammo-laden freight trains and the results were spectacular. We counted 17 SA-2 missiles fired against our strike aircraft.



The uniquely modified test platform carrying Vice Admiral Tom Connolly lifted off Runway 21 to begin its exploration of Restricted Area 2508. USN photo.

Two and a half months later in January 1966, I reported for duty at China Lake and was assigned as the assistant project officer at the naval air facility. My major project was to support the Shrike program.

I was immediately scheduled to fly several familiarization flights carrying a captive Shrike missile. I received little if no introduction as to how the missile worked. I was simply told to evaluate the display and see if the missile would point me toward any radar in the area. I quickly learned that emitting radars appeared as light-colored dots and I could listen to the pulse repetition frequency that sounded like a tone in my headset. A PRF tone similar to a rattlesnake sound was characteristic of fire control radars. The performance of a captive Shrike missile and its ability to locate and identify various radars in the Indian Wells Valley was very impressive. I had absolutely no problem locating and flying to radars.

After about a month of this, I heard mention that needles were used to display Shrike information to the pilot. This confused me because I was used to looking at the A-4 radar scope where emitting radars were displayed as light spots on the display and Shrike would go for the centered dot. I never saw any needles.

That's when I found out that I was looking at SIDS which was an acronym for Shrike Improved Display System. I was one of the few pilots to be exposed to having targeting information

displayed on the standard nine-inch APG-53 radar scope installed in the A-4E instrument panel. The reference to needles turned out to be the crossed yellow needles that appeared in the AJB-3 vertical gyro that were normally used for the loft bombing display.

SIDS was a project headed by a young civilian engineer named Gerald O. Miller, whose initials GOM became

“Tell you what, son, we'll climb back up to 15,000 ft., and if you're uncomfortable with me landing the plane, you have a parachute and you can bail out.”

our pet name for the improved display system electronic package. SIDS was an obvious improvement over the AJB needle display because it showed relative position of multiple targets whereas the gyro's needles simply wobbled in the presence of several radar targets.

Jerry Miller accompanied me on many flights in the TF-10B aircraft to conduct SIDS testing. It became obvious to both of us that this new display system was urgently needed in the fleet and, more importantly, in Vietnam where the SAMs posed a serious and immediate threat. After the experimental portions of the test program were

completed, it was time to overcome the inertia of production funding and get the GOM hardware into production.

We needed to find a way to get this project funded!

Vice Admiral Tom Connolly was Commander Naval Air Forces, Pacific headquartered in San Diego. The admiral was concerned by adverse reports surrounding Shrike missile performance in Vietnam and summoned our technical officer, Captain Robert Moore, to North Island to brief him regarding this problem.

During the course of the briefing, Admiral Connolly was invited to visit China Lake to learn more about the Shrike program and was promised an opportunity to fire the missile.

After he left the meeting, Captain Moore called me and asked if we had an airplane we could use to provide a demonstration flight for the admiral. Our choices were limited to an F-4 Phantom or the TF-10B Skyknight that was being used for SIDS testing. The best choice was the latter because our F-4 was not configured for Shrike or SIDS.

A couple of weeks later, Admiral Connolly arrived at China Lake. He was greeted by many friends and former associates because several years earlier Connolly had been stationed at the lake in the capacity of experimental officer.

In the naval air facility ready room later that afternoon, I conducted a briefing for our demonstration flight scheduled for early the following morning. Besides the admiral, *continued...*

Shooting Stars cont★★★

Captain Moore, China Lake's Technical Officer, and Captain Bob Yount, Commanding Officer of the Naval Air Facility, were at the briefing.

I started by explaining that our test aircraft had two side-by-side seats and flight controls were available only on the pilot's side. Whoever was sitting in the right seat could not control the airplane or reach the switch to launch a missile.

For this reason the plan was that I would get the airplane airborne, and we would climb to 15,000 feet. At that time we would switch seats so the admiral could fly the plane. After the switch, Admiral Connelly would have a few minutes to become comfortable with the TF-10 before we started a little radar-hunting exercise to demonstrate how SIDS could be used to locate radar emitters. Then we would proceed to the northern part of Baker Range to fire a live warhead missile down the throat at an SCR-584 fire control radar parked in the mountain impact area.

I told the admiral that when the test was completed "we'll climb back up to 15,000 feet to switch seats..."

No sooner than I had said this, the old man jumped out of his chair wanting to know why we were switching seats. Captain Moore told him that it was so I could take the controls for the landing. Connelly made the comment, "now that's some kind of vote of confidence!"

Admiral Connelly glared at me and said, "Tell you what, son, we'll climb back up to 15,000 ft., and if you're uncomfortable with me landing the plane, you have a parachute and you can bail out."

With this remark, both Captain Moore and Captain Yount looked as if they both were having heart attacks. They quickly assured the admiral that this was necessary for safety reasons because he was not currently qualified to land the aircraft.

Somehow a fist fight did not erupt, but the briefing was quickly ended, and the admiral was taken to the officer's club for a reception.

Meanwhile, the two Captains called me aside to emphasize the safety aspects of this flight. I was given direct orders that *under no circumstances could I let that old man land the aircraft.*



AJB-3 needle display used with the A-4 low altitude bombing system (LABS). Photo via the author.



APG-53A display used with the A-4 search and terrain following radar, showing SIDS display. Photo via author.

Shortly after dawn on July 22, 1966, Admiral Connelly and I strapped into TF-10B number 124630. On the starboard wing was an AGM-45 missile with a live warhead, gleaming in the morning sunshine of a typical, picture-perfect Mojave Desert day. I looked over at the old man in the right seat, and he was smiling like a young boy about to take flight for the first time.

After takeoff, we climbed to altitude and switched seats. With the admiral now at the controls, we began our search for emitting radars, and the

improved display system worked perfectly. Admiral Connelly was definitely impressed!

We worked our way onto Baker Range, and again, the admiral had no problem finding our radar target. We made two practice runs to make sure our flight profile was correct. Since this was a demonstration firing, we wanted to be in the heart of the firing envelope—once the missile was in flight, there would be no second chance.

On the firing run, the missile left the launch rail cleanly, and we could see it all the way as it accelerated and streaked toward the white-painted SCR-584 target van. When the missile hit the target the resultant flash resembled a mini-nuclear explosion. By any chance could this have been augmented by a little trinitrotoluene planted by the target crew? We'll never know whether or not they were watching from a nearby mountain top and planned to blow up the radar van if the missile missed.

But the missile didn't miss, and Admiral Connelly was absolutely euphoric! We made a couple of turns over what was left of the target, and he could hardly stop talking. Finally he asked me to do him a favor. He told me that Dottie Dunn, the Tech Director's secretary, had always accused him of screwing up every time he flew a test mission. He wanted me to call Dottie and tell her that he didn't screw up this time!

My response was, "Admiral, enter the pattern 3,500 feet downwind at ninety-knots and shoot for eighty-five on final!" His landing was absolutely perfect.

As we taxied back into the chocks, the Technical Officer and the Commanding Officer of the Air Facility were shocked when they saw who was in the pilot's seat. Apparently their facial expressions did not go unnoticed because just before he shut down the engines, the seasoned naval aviator told me, "Son, if either of those two four-strippers gives you any crap about letting me land this plane—call me, and I'll shit-can both of them!"

Somehow the SIDS program managed to get a few bucks. Four months later Jerry Miller and I were sent on a quick trip to Yankee Station under priority one orders to put GOM boxes in the fleet airplanes.

R.G.'s ART



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

**Royal Australian Navy
A-4Gs over
HMAS Melbourne
(R.G. Smith #359)**

*Image courtesy
of Sharlyn Marsh
[www.rgsmithart.com]*

Dive, Skyhawks!



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Skyhawks... Still Slipping the Surly Bonds

• **Dateline: January 2014 Update** (changes highlighted in yellow). **Hun reporting** •

Out of some 2960 aircraft produced by Douglas Aircraft (starting 60-years ago this year !!!), just how many of our *Skyhawks* still take to the air regularly? We've got lots of that kind of information in several areas of the Association website, but we think it appropriate to maintain a full consolidated list of actual current operators. That's what this article and its yearly update intend to do. Let me admit, upfront, that it's not quite as simple as it looks.

On the military side, our foreign operators have legitimate security concerns about exact numbers. On the contract services side we have some serious competition concerns about how well and how many of their A-4 assets are available. And on the private owners side, well, lets just say "fly-able" can be demonstrated or be only very hopeful and wishful thinking. And with all the civilian aircraft, just like in the airline business, tracking down the aircraft owner can be tricky and it's often hard to avoid some double counting.

"Show me the money" also comes into major play. With worldwide economies tight, government budgets being cut, and rising costs of keeping old airframes and their engines airworthy, it's amazing to me that **any** Scooters are still slipping the surly bonds. So with all that in mind, here's our latest, best estimate....

Military Service:

Israel: The largest export operator of *Skyhawks* has had as many as 353 various models in service, the most recent being the A-4N and TA-4J/H, all known as AyitMs (Vulture). Although gradually removed from front-line units, the Israelis still have a training squadron (102 Squadron Flying Tigers) of A-4N's and TA-4J/H's used for pilot training and other detachments doing EW work and other missions. **Update:** Latest releasable information is that they expect to maintain *Skyhawk* operations at this level at least until July of 2014, when

replacement *Aermacchi M-346* trainers are expected to start coming on line. The latest plan calls for 1/3 fleet replacement this summer, 1/3 around the 1st of January 2015, and final fleet retirement in July of 2015. **Estimate: 20 A-4N and 22 TA-4J/H AyitMs** ①

Argentina: Argentina's Air Force and Navy at one time operated close to 100 A-4Bs, but the last of those older airframes were retired in 1999. In 1994, they purchased 36 A-4Ms (redesignated A-4AR), and many of these are still operational with their 5th Air Brigade. The latest information available? About 12 single and two-seater models are on the flight lines, with an equal number in operational reserve (stored in good condition). It's hoped another 4 aircraft will be brought on line from reserve when the budget allows. **Update:** One OA-4AR lost in Feb 2013 was replaced from reserves with a TA-4AR. **Estimate: 10 and 2 TA-4AR/OA-4AR** ②

Brazil: The Brazilian Navy acquired 20 Kuwaiti A-4KU and 3 TA-4KU in 1997, redesignating them as AF-1s and AF-1As. These aircraft are operated with the modernized French aircraft carrier now named NAe *Sao Paulo*. A modernization contract with Embraer running through 2015 was signed in 2009 to upgrade a mix of 12 AF-1/1A aircraft. **Update:** They are currently flying a mix of upgraded and older KU's as a select dozen are rotated through the program. By 2015 we expect these upgraded KUs to be the only ones active. **Estimate: 9 AF-1, 3 AF-1A** ③

Update: Indonesia, Kuwait, Australia, Malaysia, and New Zealand *Skyhawks* are confirmed as gone, 'pedestaled', 'museumed', scrapped, or sold. Some of the Kuwaiti aircraft are flying with the Brazilians (above). Some of the Australian aircraft were picked up, used and later retired by New Zealand... but 8 of those will now see new life, having been acquired by Draken International (see below). Malaysia also

retired their *Skyhawks*, but some 40 airframes were left in the Arizona desert as a parts supply. Some of those are finding life with A-4L LLC (below). Finally, the Singapore *Skyhawks* are now gone as well. There are about 44 Israeli and a small number of Singapore *Skyhawks* currently on the market for any patient folks with deep pockets. More Israeli *Skyhawks* will hit the market over the next 2 years as they start receiving their *Aermacchi M-346* replacements.

Contract Services:

There are several operators, most with multiple aircraft types and numbers, who are performing contract services for the US, Canadian and German military and defense manufacturers. Services cover a wide range of operations, from CAS and FAC training, air refueling evaluations, target towing, adversary air and the like. Some of that, you'll recall, was great to do while you were fleet pilots, and some maybe not so great. Well, the fleet pilots have their plates full these days, so there is a significant demand for such contract work, even with sequestration and tight budgets all around. The major players here, in no particular order, are:

Advanced Training Systems International (ATSI): Headquarters in Mesa, Arizona. In 2001, ATSI purchased an inventory of 10 Israeli A-4Ns and 3 TA-4Js. It had leased several of these, eventually sold two to BAE, lost one (bird strike) and now operates with 7 A-4Ns and 3 TA-4Js. **Update:** As of December 2013, ATSI was purchased by the Canadian air contract services corporation *Discovery Air*. *Discovery* has not responded to our request for information, but we expect ATSI to operate under their *Discovery Air* Defense Services unit. **Estimate: 7 A-4N and 3 TA-4J** ④

Draken International: New to the A-4, military contract flyer *Draken International* recently (2012) completed its purchase of the 8 preserved New Zealand A-4s, a mix of 5 A-4Ks and 3 TA-4Ks. They are reporting

all operational at the time of this writing. Additionally, they operate 3 A-4Ls leased from A-4L LLC. **Estimate: 5 A4K, 3 TA4K and 3 leased A-4L's** ⑤

BAE Systems: BAE operates 6 A-4N *Skyhawks* (4 from Israel, 2 from ATSI) in support of the German Air Force out of Wittmund Air Force Base, Germany, doing mostly target towing and other support work. **Update:** they have, however, lost the 2015 continuation of the contract to *Discovery Air* (Canada) and will start ferrying their A-4s to AMARC the end of this year. We don't know what aircraft *Discovery Air* will use in their stead. **Estimate: 6 A-4N**

A4L LLC: This outfit acquired 9 of the Malaysian 'parts aircraft' in Arizona and has brought several of them into service under contract as orders come in (such as *Draken's* current contract). Several more of them (presently spread through restoration facilities in Perryville, MO, Sherman, TX, and Bill Maszala's storage facility, ATW Aviation, Inc., in Marana, AZ) could be flying fairly soon after being contracted. We'll keep them listed with A4L LLC until contracted out. **Estimate: 1/2 A-4L** ⑥ (with 3 others leased to *Draken* (above))

Airborne Tactical Advantage Company (ATAC): Headquartered in Newport News, VA, ATAC operates several types of fighter/attack aircraft and into 2011, included 4 A-4N and 2 A-4L (leased). As of 2012, however, ATAC is out of the A-4 business and now does mostly Hawker and L-39 work. Rumor has it they may be looking for A-4's again. **Estimate: 0 A4s**

Discovery Air (Canada): *Discovery* operates a wide ranging fleet of aircraft for contract services and supports the Canadian Armed Forces through its *Discovery Air* Defense Services unit. December 2013 saw the completion of their acquisition of ATSI (above) and their winning of the 2015 BAE German Air Force support contract. It is not known what assets they will use for that (currently A-4N) contract. Their ATSI A-4's are credited under ATSI (above).

Teton Aviation Services: This air contract service has available about 10

privately-owned aircraft ranging from MiGs to a Citation, and owner Dr. Rich Sugden is about to bring online TA-4J 154306, currently in final check out in Idaho at Teton Aviation. **Estimate: 1/2 TA-4J** (partial credit until 1st flight....we DO have engine runs and taxi checks recorded again this month).

Tactical Air Defense Services (TADS): This Carson City, NV, contract service provides training and support services to US and Allied air forces. Its aircraft mix ranges widely from MiG's to Falcons. It acquired Aerogroup, Inc, which had an A-4, in 2006, but we have no update on current *Skyhawk* flying, other than that their web site still lists them as an asset. **Estimate: 0**

Tactical Air Sytems, Inc (TAS): This Mesa, AZ, company spent some five years trying to purchase 17 stored New Zealand A-4s, and due to long U.S. government approval delays and lack of financing available, appears to have given up the effort last year. **Estimate: 0**

Private Collections:

Collings Foundation: Dedicated to preserving "the heritage of the sky," this perhaps most well-known foundation operates some 18 flying historic aircraft and maintains for display several more. Its TA-4J, N524CF, is often seen at the most popular air shows around the country. With FAA certification to fly back seaters, you too can fly again...for about \$7500. **Estimate: 1 TA-4J** ⑦

Warbird Heritage Foundation: WHF has a similar mission as the Collings Foundation. It operates approximately a dozen heritage warbirds in air shows and appearances around the country. Its A-4B, N49WH, is actually owned by Mr. Paul Wood and first flew in late 2009. It is also designated a Navy Legacy Flight warbird demonstration aircraft. **Estimate: 1 A-4B** ⑧

Pacific Aero Ventures, LLC: Privately owned by Don Keating, this beautifully restored TA-4J (by Mike McDougal of Fighting Classics Restoration) is a recent addition to the flying *Skyhawks*. Don has parts for possibly 2 more A-4s for Mike to work on

once he sells this beauty, N518TA, currently on display at the *Palm Springs Air Museum*. If I only had \$6 million.... **Estimate: 1 TA-4J** ⑨

Skyhawk Ventures, LLC: Porter Span- gler and Dan Carr and their team worked hard getting this hybrid 'C' ready to go, and it paid off! First flight was in Aug 2011, and it's been flying ever since! **Worthy of note... our own "Hide" (Association President Dave Dollarhide) has been sniveling LOTS of flight time! Estimate: 1 A-4C** ⑩

Aero Mark, Inc: Located in Idaho Falls, ID, owners Bob Hoff and Jerry Dust run two FBOs and are working on getting their A-4L back in the air someday. Sugar Daddies welcome? **Estimate: 0**

Fighting Classics Restorations: we might add, is working on an A-4C that we may see flying by sometime in late 2014. Go Mike! **Estimate: 1/2 A-4C**

One final note: AMARC, or the Aerospace Maintenance And Regeneration Center (also referred to as the boneyard), is a joint-service facility managed by the U.S. Air Force Material Command located in Tucson, AZ. It used to store, amongst it's over 4000 aircraft, significant numbers of A-4s. There are very few remaining. There are several A-4 aircraft for sale from several brokers (check the web), but just 'several,' and they don't look too close to flyable. Although the Israeli A-4s will be coming to market in greater numbers soon, we suspect they are pretty high-time airframes and may not be real marketable. We'll see. We appear to be running out of airframes, gentlemen. There're not too many more to play with.

A-4s Still Flying!

as of January 2014

66 Military

27 1/2 Contract

5 Private

Total: 98 1/2



SIZE DOES MATTER

Modelers' Corner

By Joe Turpen

A-4 enthusiast Carlos A. Garcia shared these pictures of his Blue Angel diorama featuring 1/72 scale Douglas A-4 models. Note the TA-4J leading the formation.

See his art at:

Carlos A. Garcia

<http://www.aviationart.com.ar>

<https://www.facebook.com/AviationMaritimeArtworks>



Assembled models by © Carlos Adrián García

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

SCHEDULING

Reunions & Requests



PLAN AHEAD

- **VA-164 Reunion**, Marriott Springhill Suites, November 5-9, Pensacola Beach, FL. Contact is Chip Brown, [cbrown164@yahoo.com].
- **Skyhawk Association 2014 Annual Meeting and Luncheon at Tailhook**: 12:00 noon, September 5, 2014, Nugget Hotel, Sparks, NV, see www.a4skyhawk.org for more information.
- **Tailhook Association Reunion & Symposium 2014**, Nugget Hotel, Sparks, NV, September 4-7, 2014, see www.tailhook.net for more information.
- **VMA-311 Tomcats Reunion 2014**, Holiday Inn Downtown Market Square, San Antonio, TX, October 1-5, 2014, see <http://www.vmf-vma-311reunion.org/> for more information.

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



★TAPS★

For TAPS lists, members may access these links:

www.a4skyhawk.org/2D/KIA.htm

www.a4skyhawk.org/2E/ops_losses.htm

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



Bob Polhamus - Boynton Beach, FL

Gary Kiel - Menomonee Falls, WI

John Caldas - Harahan, LA



NEW MEMBERS\$

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

Contact Terry Cooney at

skyhawkasn@gmail.com or at

2421 Clubside Dr., Beavercreek, OH 45431

Deason, Robert - Hurricane, UT

Deniz, Alper - Istanbul, Turkey

Doane, Christopher - Nuevo, CA

Durtche, Frank - Louisville, KY

Eldridge, Robert - Bristow, VA

Esselbach, Brian - Land O Lakes, FL

Greene, Paul - Havertown, PA

Isaly, Doug - Yuma, AZ

Jensen, Norma - Sydney, NSW, Australia

Malensky, Michael - Boise, ID

Nilsen, David - Radcliff, KY

Noziglia, Bob Jr. - Collierville, TN

Richardson, Michael - Weatherford, TX

Roquemore, Glenn - Irvine, CA

Schine, Michael - Chesapeake, VA

Stiles, Floyd - Phoenix, AZ

BOOM'S TRIVIA

Puzzlers from Boom Powell

Four objects familiar to most A-4 drivers... and lots of other Naval Aviators from a bygone era. The question is, what are they?



#1



#2



#3

Could be any squadron name.



#4

What is the unofficial name of the red with yellow band ribbon? (Especially when worn as a singleton)



#5

Bonus: what are the three on bottom row known as collectively?

See answers on page 21

FROM THE ATTIC

Mailbag

These China Lake photos from Bob Lawson show a test of the Vertical-Seeking Subsystem (VSS) for the Maximum-Performance Ejection Seat, which was cancelled in 1982. I'm told it was cancelled because the decision makers thought it would result in pilots pushing the envelope further, and thus not result in any saved lives. I can think of at least one China Lake TA-4 front-seater that we'd still be talking to if he had had this technology. The back-seater made it by a fraction of a second, and the front-seater didn't by a fraction of a second.

By Gary Verver
(Photos from Bob Lawson)



Test of the VSS ejection system initiated.

Time-lapse photography shows trajectory of seat.

BOOM'S TRIVIA

Answers from Boom Powell

#2

TL-29 knife and screw driver. Much more useful than a Dzus key. The screw driver blade also had a sharpened edge. The blade could slip and put a nasty cut in your knuckles. Wimps filed it off.

#3

The "I've-Been-There" belt and buckle. Readily available from vendors at Cubi Point and in Olongapo. Any squadron, wings and name could be carved into the metal buckle and there were some imaginative ones. This example pretty much standard. The cloth belt didn't hold up very well, but acceptable uniform wear. Slide adjustable so could be worn as years and waistlines advanced.

#1

Dzus Key; useful for undoing Dzus fasteners during preflight or to open blivets. Three sizes. Not much other use except maybe as an emergency peanut butter spreader.

#4

The "Alive in '65" ribbon—there was a medal too. The beginning of medal/ribbon proliferation. If everyone has one, what's the point?

#5

Bonus: The three Vietnamese awards (bottom row) were a "I've-Been-There" for the chest. Never saw any not in a trio, nor with a different number of stars. Not even sure what the award criteria was. Available pre-mounted with the "Alive in '65" ribbon.

See questions on page 19



VMA-212 A-4B off the runway at Kaneohe Bay, HI, Feb 1963.
(Photo via Norm Spilleth)

Surfs up! Captain R.P. Connolly of VMA-212 ejected from his A-4B on February 28, 1963, when the aircraft departed the runway after an arresting gear cable snapped. Two Marines, the parachute rigger and the ejection seat mech, presented the pilot with the ejection seat face curtain and the parachute rip cord as souvenirs. In turn, the pilot presented a bottle of Scotch to each Marine.

Puresome Unplugged

~ YP's Excellent Adventures ~

From *The Hook* magazine, Fall 2007

The Further Adventures of
YOUTHLY PURESOME

by CDR Jack D. Woodul, USNR(Ref), artwork by Carl Snow

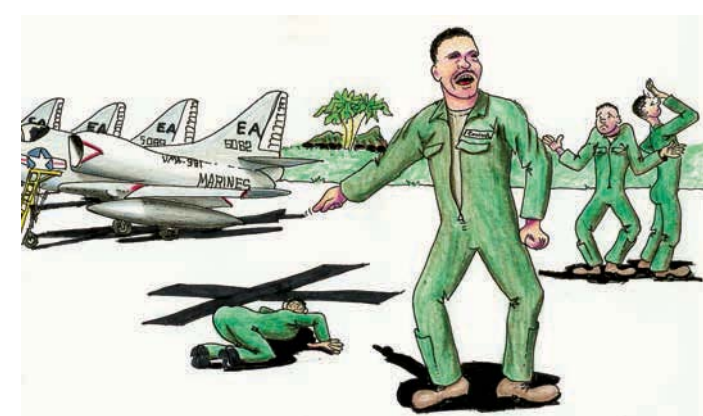


Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

Santini's *Skyhawk* squadron humped down to Gitmo without frabbing up none, and they parked their planes on a seldom-used taxiway below the Trip Treys tent city in the palms, due to other units crowding the main ramp. But while the Trip Treys were living in tents and eating snakes and C rats, Santini and his boys had scored the air-conditioned BOQ, their meals served by white-coated waiters. And they were getting per diem payments! This did not go unnoticed by the Trip Treys junior officers.

It must have been Demon Rum that pushed them into Payback Mode. Lit only by that fluid and the tropical stars, they snuck down to the Scooter flight line, selected the plane on the end, pushed it back into the jungle palms and up a slight rise, and covered it with cammo canvas!

Morning found some burbling down around the *Skyhawk* line, with lots of high-and-tight scratching and shoulder shrugging and forehead slapping. But nobody was saying squat, because it might mean *Frabb Up!* Which, of course, would never do. So the Trip Treys watched while Scooter troops looked everywhere. Divers swam and searched off the pier; the tower was questioned about possible stealth takeoffs; and the troops were assembled and semi strip-searched for bruising from an unreported ejection! Santini was kicking arses and



taking names, but he wasn't gonna report losing an airplane!

It was one of them days for Santini. Completely frustrated, he wandered up to the Trip Treys Happiness Hour, which started early without the constraints of having to fly at night. He gnashed his teeth and chawed his cigar. As the tropical sun set, Santini noticed a peculiarly shaped canvas silhouette just downhill. Closer scrutiny revealed that it was ... the missing *Skyhawk*! Yaaaaaaa! Santini turned red from his unzipped navel to the top of his crew cut — he had done been frabbed! He stormed down the hill to get his troops to return the baby to the fold. Even though the frabbing was unofficial and would not bugger his chances at promotion, The Great Santini noted

names and blames in his daybook, and stashed it in a secure place.

The Balloon did not go up. The Commies blinked, then took out their missiles and went on to figger out how to cause more trouble for a bunch of years. Santini did make colonel and became celebrated in novel and film. Some 20 years later, both Santini

and the alleged ringleader of the *Skyhawk*-napping met at a reunion of Marine Aviators. Dressed in a white suit with a full white beard and cane, Santini looked like a skinnier Colonel Harlan Chicken. But not having frabbed up, making Full Bird, and being a certified character must have mellowed him. No sword got pulled from the cane, and Santini even autographed a copy of the novel bearing his name.

And the autograph did not mention a missing *Skyhawk*.



Hosing Santini

Times were jolly, jolly good for the VMF(AW)-333 "Trip Treys." There they were in the tropical paradise of Puerto Rico's NAS Rosenfelt Roads, whoostling about in their *Crusaders*, doing gunneries, rat racing and corking off the occasional *Sidewinder* missile at hapless targets. Come 1600, they would repair to their tents beneath the tall palm trees and have Happiness Hours before they munched C rations and the occasional snake, just for drill. Tender songs about "Nelly, Darlin'" were sung while time-honored Marine rituals involving Brasso and Kiwi polish spiffed things up.

But, far off in Commie Russia, sinister plots were hatching. It was devised to ship ballistic missiles off to Commie Cuba so that the Beardy Revolutionary Government could better defend their cigarro factories and rum goody distilleries from the Evil Yankees. Ships snuck SAM batteries and ballistic missiles across the sea, and technicians started digging launch pads. The Premier and his Commissars grinned evil grins that showed stainless steel dental work.

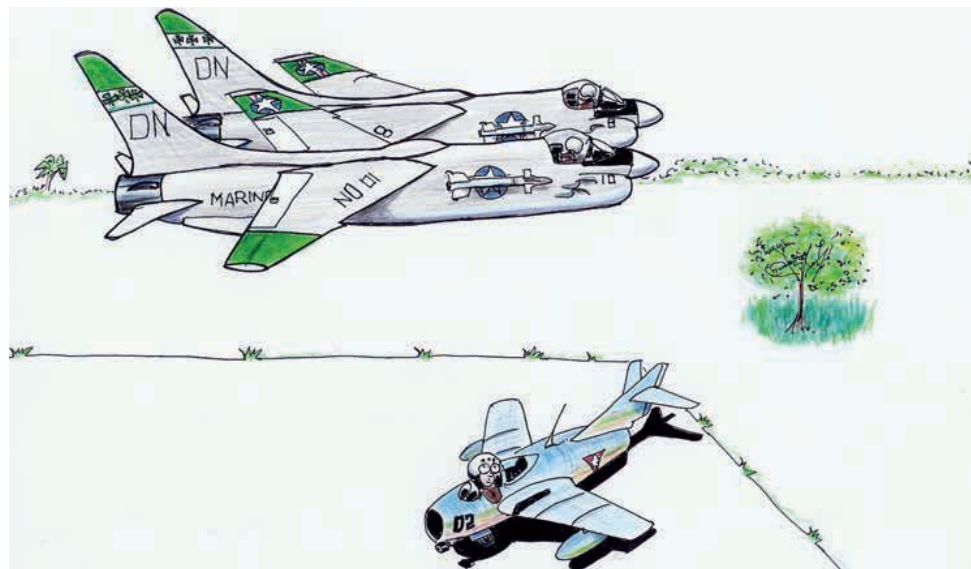
All this did not go unnoticed by Brave American Boys. Sneaky Air Force U-2s took pictures of the goings-on, which turned into eight-by-ten glossies of great clarity that Pentagonians passed on to the Best and the Brightest manning the White House. Doing without cigars and daiquiris was bad enough, but ballistic missiles 90 miles offshore just wouldn't do! But before the Balloon went up, it was decided to send in photo *Crusaders* for some really good close up shots of Beards and SAMs and missiles, oh my!

So the *Crusaders* of the Trip Treys down at Rosey were tasked with flying combat air patrol (CAP) for the photo birds in case the Rat Eating Commies decided to send out the

MiGs. Naturally, the Trip Treys were thrilled. In their off time under the palms, they sharpened their steely knives.

But the Trip Treys weren't going to get to have all the fun. All around ConUS, airplanes, ships and troops positioned and got ready. At MCAS Beaufort, it was decided to send a *Skyhawk* outfit down to join the Trip Treys, just in case the odd bomb needed to be dropped. The *Skyhawk* outfit picked for the job was VMA-331, whose skipper was none other than The Great Santini, who was expected to provide a great disturbance in the Force.

Santini had not yet been immortalized in book and film, but he had been colorful enough in a career that spanned World War II and Korea to get himself passed over for colonel a couple of times. VMA-331 was a good deal designed to boost Santini past colorful into colonelcy. Though he didn't give up omnipresent black cigars and a flight suit unzipped to below his navel, the word to his squadron was, "*You people will not frabb up none!*"



The Rest of the Hosing Santini Story

Thanks to LtCol Walle Boeck, USMC (retired)

VMF-333 TransLanted from Beaufort down to Rosy, air refueling to make the trip. Four planes were required to be on hot pad duty at Gitmo, so the brass decided to experiment using the squadron as the smallest deployable unit. Everything on the deployment was in tents. VMA-331 was attached to 333, as was the Puerto Rican ANG in their F-86H's. Some of the aircraft on the line, both F-8 and A-4, were armed.

Come the Marine Corps Birthday, and Wally was the junior Second Lt, and he gets to be SDO. Early in the evening, the NCO's from 333/331 get into a fight in their tent club, Wally roars down there in a couple of jeeps, brings back the three worst cases, who wont quit fighting, and handcuffed them together around a telephone pole to enjoy the rest of the evening. Shortly after 2000, a new troop, who is guarding the flightline comes up and says an A-4 is missing. Sarge said "Naw," went down and checked. Sure enough, an A-4 is missing. Dirt roads led away from the flight line and up the hill toward the tent city. Sure nuff, up the hill closed to the Trip Trey skipper's tent, was the A-4, attached by a tow bar to a jeep. Evidently, that is as far as the jeep would get.

Wally's vehicles surrounded the plane, lights shining, and that got noticed by a Navy shore patrol vehicle, which shone a spotlight on it and came up, Stop it! Radio messages being sent, (quit it, let's

just clean this up), Purty soon, helos started landing, full of FBI, CIA, and other spooky types, sure that the bad guys have snuck in to do mayhem to an armed aircraft.

By now, A-4 is back on the line, but they want to know wassup, want to talk to the skipper. Turns out that the skipper (Lyle B. "Doc" Matthews) had ended up celebrating the Marine Corps Birthday down with the Enlisted troops, made the usual drunken comments that "*He Could Fly Any Frabbing Airplane They Is,*" and the 331 snuffies decided to test him and see if he could fly an A-4, and they had drug it up to him. They were the ones that stole the airplane.

The spooks were in three Navy cars, and Wally took them up to see skipper in his tent.

Skipper was tango uniform. Completely. Major was incoherent. So, they became convinced that the Second Lt was clearly the one in charge at that juncture, and that it had been a prank, no commies were really involved.

So, when they went back to their cars, all 12 tires were flat, valve stems unscrewed by the snuffies, who understood wot was going on. So, about 0100, Wally found a 6-by, drove it up, and used its compressor to air up the tires. His last official act, around 0200 of a very long day, was to unlock the handcuffs on the telephone pole guys and send them home.



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The Editorial Staff is Cleaning House! Back Issues of The A-4Ever on Sale!

Back issues from Fall 2004 (Vol 10, No. 4) to Spring 2013 (Vol 19, No. 1) are available, except for the following issues (11-4; 14-2; 14-3; 16-1; and 16-2). The stock of some issues is very limited, so act fast.

Note: if you have ordered back issues at the regular price in the last 90 days, email the editor for a special deal!

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