

THE A4 EVER

SKYHAWK ASSOCIATION JOURNAL VOL 23-1



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*Skyhawk Reunion
September 7-10, 2017
Sparks, NV*

Spring 2017

<http://a-4skyhawk.info>



THE PREZ SEZ

By Pete Cole

The A-4 Skyhawk Association Midyear Board of Directors Meeting was held on Friday 10 March 2017 in the Jacksonville, FL, area at the World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort. In addition to the board meeting and tour of Cecil Airport, the former NAS Cecil Field, a Light Attack Reunion with A-4/A-7 Bubbass was held the next day at Haller Air Park, hosted by Director Dave “Hide” Dollarhide and the “Dreamland Squadron.” I will report on the Midyear Board Meeting in this article; and also in this issue, Hide has a separate article on the Light Attack Reunion. However, I do want to congratulate Hide for organizing an *Outstanding* event that was attended by almost 200 ole A-4 and A-7 drivers, plus wives and significant others. If you were there, you met old friends and enjoyed great camaraderie, as well as an outstanding air show; if not, look forward to the next (Hide?). **BZ** Hide!

Midyear Board of Directors Meeting 2017

In addition to the required annual members’ meeting/luncheon and Board of Directors’ meeting at Tailhook every year, the Association also holds a face-to-face Board of Directors meeting midyear, in the winter/spring time frame. This year we rendezvoused at the World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort on Thursday 9 March. Dinner that night for the group was at the Murray Brothers’ Caddyshack restaurant on the resort grounds. This trip to Jax got Gunny Rav (Director Bill Ravgiala) and I away from the New England winter briefly, although a Nor’Easter blizzard hit the day after our RTB....enough said!

During the board meeting the next morning, discussions included membership, budget and finances, a board review of our insurance policies, website upgrades and requests, Skyhawks still flying, and the Hook ‘17 Skyhawk Association luncheon speaker. There were no new requests for donations from the Association for A-4 displays or restorations. The next two sub-sections summarize the Association business discussions relevant to the general membership. Once published and ratified, the official meeting minutes will be available to any member.

After the board meeting, we had lunch at Whitey’s Fish Camp in Orange Park, FL, on the way to our ‘VIP’ tour of the Jacksonville Aviation Authority’s Cecil



The Prez Pete Cole

Airport with our host Kelly Dollarhide, the Cecil Airport Director and Dave Dollarhide’s daughter-in-law. Guess we had some pull? This was not a tour of the old NAS Cecil Field base where many of us were stationed, but a tour of the airport side that included a perimeter drive along the fence, old gun butts, munitions bunker area, ramps, new/old hangars and the new businesses that have replaced the Navy. On the other side of the fence that composed the base, almost all of the old Navy buildings, BOQ, ORF (O Club), barracks and such base infrastructure that you might recall, have been torn down. The chapel is still there, however. Also, the renovated NAS Operations building and tower (modernized for the Authority and the FBO) are still in

continued on page 4...



Skyhawk Association Directors at Midyear Meeting. L-R Todd Frommelt, Jack Woodul (Emeritus), Terry Cooney, Dave Dollarhide, Mark Williams, Steve Linder, George Blosser, Terry Wolf, Pete Cole, Bill Ravgiala, Gene Atwell.



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

◆ ◆ ◆

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BOMBS AWAY!

• Spring 2017 •

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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.net 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: Warbird Heritage Foundation A-4B flown by Paul Wood thrills the crowd at Airventure 2012 Oshkosh. Photo by Scott Slocum, courtesy of Warbird Heritage Foundation (see www.warbirdheritagefoundation.org).

use, and, of course, we could conjure up old memories from the past. My squadron hanger was still there, now housing Coast Guard drug interdiction helicopters. It seemed much smaller than I remember from 1970, but I was a “jg” then...



Cecil Airport – Old NAS Tower and Ops Building.
L-R Dave Dollarhide, Terry Wolf, George Blosser, Jack Woodul, Gene Atwell, Bill Ravgiala, Steve Linder, Pete Cole, Todd Frommelt.

Friday evening, we enjoyed a delicious dinner at the 1905 Columbia restaurant, the oldest restaurant in Florida, founded in Tampa and run by five generations of the same family. We gathered at the historic St. Augustine location. Among the items we enjoyed was their famous sangria, and their 1905 salad.

After the Light Attack Reunion events of Saturday, we rendezvoused back at the hotel for farewells (for those of us with early departures) **AND** to celebrate Hide’s birthday with a large chocolate cake. We only used one candle so as not to have to post a fire watch. ☺



Dinner at the Columbia Restaurant St. Augustine, FL.



Hide’s Birthday Cake.

It was a great weekend. Remember that Association members are always welcome at the board meetings, both at ‘Hook and our Midyear location/events. Be on the lookout for next year’s fun!

Skyhawk Association Business

For those who could not attend, here are the highlights of the Midyear Board of Director’s Meeting discussions.

Membership: There are currently approximately 800 members, slightly down from last year. However, we have had 21 new members join since 1 January, and at least one more joining after the Light Attack Reunion (we hope more will, after attending that great event).

Recruiting and retention remain high on our goals list, and we are always looking for recruiting opportunities. We continue to promote new and continued membership by word of mouth, solicitations at major aviation events attended by Board members, local functions of Navy and Marine Skyhawkers (regular get-togethers), and Skyhawk unit and Ship reunions. You can help. PLEASE, milk your email lists for nonmembers and send them a solicitation. We CAN find some more of our squadron mates out there that need the cattle prod or at least the reminder! It’s your Association, let’s keep it vibrant, alive and well.

Reminder: our database is constantly changing, and it is not unusual to have a few kickbacks when we attempt to notify the membership by email about pertinent items, such as the release of the digital journal. PLEASE, let us know if you have a change in your email, address, or phone number, so we can keep our records up-to-date. Send changes to our Secretary, Terry Cooney at skyhawkasn@gmail.com.

Budget and Finances: Thanks to “Treasurer-for Life,” Mark “Senator” Williams, the books are in good shape and the bottom line is still in good shape. A copy of the Treasurer’s Report will be included in the minutes.

SDOs: Our Squadron Duty Officers (SDOs) are key people in keeping us connected and helping to get the word out when required. Since the publication of the Winter Journal, we have had three more volunteers step up to the plate. Charlie Stender has volunteered for the VA-205 billet; Jerry Feola, a new member, has accepted the VAQ-33 slot; and Bernie Fipp is serving as the VA-34 SDO. Thank you Charlie, Jerry, and Bernie! George Blosser offered Bernie the VA-34 slot and moved to NFWS (Top Gun). George can do that since as VP Navy, he

can... George Blosser has been a tireless recruiter since Hook ‘16 when he became VP Navy. He has filled eight billets. BZ George!

The official list of squadron SDOs is posted on the Skyhawk website “FAQ - Research – Contact” page, <http://a4skyhawk.info/page/faq-research-contact>, and while the majority of these are filled there are still some units that need an SDO. I ask all members to please review the list on the website and see if there are any open units for which you would consider accepting the SDO responsibility. Several of our SDOs have agreed to host more than one unit, and we greatly appreciate their additional efforts. For Navy units please contact George Blosser, VP Navy, george.blosser1@gmail.com, and for Marine and Foreign Service units contact Steve Linder, VP Marines, steve.linder@1969.usna.com.

Website: As you are probably aware, the website is in transition and being upgraded. Webmaster Gene Atwell, his assistant Dave Weber, and their volunteer web team have been working diligently. They are in the process of transferring all the data to and checking the new site.

Many of you are helping, but more volunteers are needed to assist with simple updates. Basic computer skills only are required. If you would like to help, contact Dave Weber, twidget55@darw.com. Also, take a look at your squadron’s web page. If you can add or correct information, that would be greatly appreciated.

Journal Web Access: FYI: All published *The A-4Ever* Journals available are in the Ready Room area (members only). Once logged in, click on **Association Journals**, which takes you to the download page.

A-4 Skyhawks Still Flying: According to Todd “Hun” Frommelt, the “keeper of the count,” there are 45.5 A-4s still flying. The tally remains essentially the same as reported in the Fall 2016 Journal ‘Prez Sez’ article: 13 military, 27 contract, and 5.5 private A-4s still flying as of March 2017. Hun’s updated report is included elsewhere in this issue.

Restorations/Displays/Squadron History Requests: The Western Museum of Flight at Torrance Airport, CA, is looking for restoration help on their A-4A BuNo. 142227. There is an announcement on the main page of our website: “Resto-

ration Crew Members Wanted.” POC is Cindy Macha, Museum Director, at cm@wmof.com.

It has come to our attention that Millville, NJ, Army Airfield Museum has a VA-55 bird on display. It is painted as a bird from the 1972 USS *Hancock* cruise. You might want to check it out if you are in the area.

I became aware at the end of November that the Quonset Point, RI, Air Museum is closed for business. They had two A-4s looking for a good museum home: an A-4F painted as a Blue Angel bird and an A-4M display bird. Director Bill “Gunny” Ravgiala recently learned that these two aircraft might be finding a new home at the Association of Naval Aviation Patriot Squadron museum at the old NAS South Weymouth, MA, site. Gunny and I plan to check it out.

99 VMA-214 Black Sheep: Steve Chapis, Associate Editor/Photographer for the *Warbird Digest*, is requesting input for a book on VMA-214 post WWII. The WWII history of the Black Sheep is well-known and well-documented, so his idea is to write about the history of the squadron after the war from *continued on page 6...*

NEW MEMBERS

Bayer, Merrick • Jacksonville, FL
Cline, Carl • Newton, NC
Daniels, Robert • Denver, CO
Feola, Gerald • Staten Island, NY
Follis, Thomas • Fleming Island, FL
Gillaspy, Dudley • Edina, MO
Higgs, Chuck • Manteca, CA
Hughes, James • Plantation, FL

Jackson, Richard • Shapleigh, ME
Kilpatrick, Jeff • Tucker, GA
Kortuem, Jerome • Fayetteville, AR
Lee, William • Federal Way, WA
Lengyel, David • Cheb, CZ
Leslie, John • St. Augustine, FL
Lindley, Robert • Williamson, GA
Moak, Lee • New Orleans, LA

O’Rourke, Robert • Ridgeway, CO
Pound, Frank • Annandale, VA
Rule III, Julius • Austin, TX
Slavik, Brennan • Laguna Beach, CA
Spann, Jeff • Bradenton, FL
Wells, David • Summerville, SC

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



THE PREZ SEZ continued. from page 2..

1946 all the way up to three years from now when 214 goes “stealth” with the F-35B. He has been in contact with Directors Steve “Dwarf” Linder and Bill “Jigger” Egen regarding research assistance from Black Sheep A-4 pilots, maintainers, ordnance, and administrative people. If interested, please contact him, Dwarf, or Jigger with input about your VMA-214 experiences, events, data, TINS, etc. Steve Chapis can be reached at flyboychappie@msn.com and 302-856-9355 or cell at 302-228-9648.

Events, NOTAMS, and R&I

The word on upcoming events and dates of note:

- VA-163 and VA-164 have scheduled a Saints/Ghost Riders reunion at the Nugget Casino in Sparks, NV, on 3-5 May 2017. POC for VA-163 is Richard (Ode) Odegaard, 775-626-0898, richard.odegaard@gmail.com. The POC for VA-164 is Jim Waldron, 410-409-1987. The Nugget reservation number is 1-800-648-1177, and the reunion Group Code is GVA163. Further information can be obtained from Ed Copher, ecopher@satx.rr.com, VA-163 SDO.
- Skyhawk Association trip to Israel 2017: Planning for the *second* trip-of-a-lifetime is in the final stages. We **do** have an opening for one couple or two singles rooming together. If interested, contact Terry Wolf ASAP. As in 2015, we will attend the Flight Academy Pilot Graduation ceremony and air show at Hatzirim Air Base near Beersheba, which is scheduled for 29 June 2017. The POC is Director Terry Wolf, tairwolf@comcast.net. If you did not see his outstanding article on our 2015 visit, “A Week with Israel’s Last Skyhawk Pilots,” in the Fall 2015 edition of *The A-4ever* (Vol. 21-3, p.11), please check it out! The basic tour package will extend from Saturday evening 24 June through Sunday 2 July. We are planning to have at least one evening get-together with our friends and retired counterparts from the Israel Air Force.
- The squadron mates of the VA-64 Black Lancers are planning a reunion at the Nugget Hotel and Casino, September

7-10, 2017, in conjunction with 2017 Tailhook Reunion. All former members of the Black Lancers are asked to contact Jim Murphy at jmurphyhia@verizon.net for more information. The Black Lancers served with distinction with Carrier Air Wing 6 aboard the USS *Enterprise* and the USS *America* through the 1960’s.

- The Skyhawk Association Reunion will also be at the Nugget Hotel and Casino September 7-10, 2017, in conjunction with 2017 Tailhook Reunion. The Annual Luncheon and Members Meeting will be held 8 September at noon at the poolside Chalet Terrace (see ad this issue). Speaker will be LCDR Terry Wolf, “Skyhawk Association and the IAF.” Reservations: Mark Williams, 400 Howell Way #102, Edmonds, WA 98020. The Attack Ready Room, brought to you by ‘Ring Master’ Jack “Youthly Puresome” Woodul, will be open every day.

Now Hear This!

As you know, in the last few “Prez Sez” articles there has been a request to help fill in the blanks for accidents/incidents. This form of using the journal to circulate requests for missing data on accidents has proven beneficial and will continue with a regular feature (first publication in this issue) by Gary Verver, gp@verx2.org. Gary is our keeper of the “List of Unknowns”, i.e., the Who, What, When, and Why of accidents that are not always completely documented. To help us continue to fill in the gaps, contact Gary with any information you might have. In addition, we need volunteers to help Gary maintain the data base. If you would like to assist, please contact him, as I am sure he would appreciate any and all help!

Dennis Carroll, dennisjc333@gmail.com, informed the Association about a US Naval Institute (USNI) project with which he was becoming involved. The USNI is beginning to digitize photos from the Vietnam war timeframe. The project is expected to take 18 months or more to complete. Staff at USNI are interested in accepting photos from outside, as well as those they can find in their archives. They are willing to digitize the photos themselves, if someone sends photos, and they will return the originals. Photos that are already digitized are welcome as well. Contact Dennis for further details.

A-4s Forever! ✈️

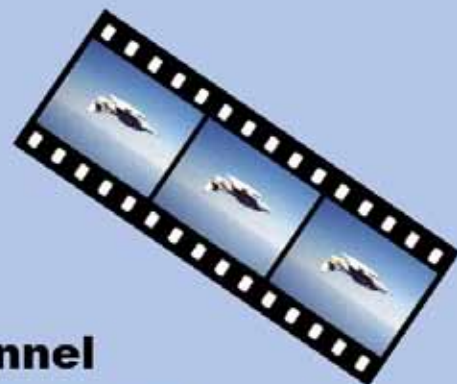
MEMBER’S MOVIES

Association Website Video Page

<http://a4skyhawk.info/page/skyhawk-videos>

Skyhawk Association YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/A4SkyhawkAssociation>



★ TAPS ★

Joe Gatewood, Hattiesburg, MS, 10/19/2016

Willis Potter, Sullivan, ME 11/19/2016

Carl Carite, Jr., Mt. Laurel, NJ, 11/25/2016

Richard L. “Dick” Grant, Poway, CA, 3/1/2017

For lists of A-4 KIA and operational losses, members can sign into <http://a4skyhawk.info> and go to the “Ready Room.”



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

TAKE NO PRISONERS

Letters to the Editor

sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.net



■ To the Editor: Reference the Trivia question in the Fall 2016 issue:

They were Mk-81 Snake Eye bombs. The big give-a-way is that the Mk-82 Snake Eye bombs had a ‘notch’ in their fins. Mark -81 Snake Eye fins bombs did not.

It is ironic that this question was asked. VMA-121 just had a 50-year reunion here in Yuma, AZ, three weeks ago, and a pilot asked the same question (Al Ransom).

SF!

William Baumbeck
VMA-121 Ordnance
1965-1968

[azsil@mindspring.com]

■ To the Editor: Reference Trivia question from Fall 2016 issue:

If memory serves, the photo in the Fall 2016 A-4ever shows a MK 82 on the inboard and center pylons of a TER and a MK 81 on the outboard pylon. During the late ‘60s Rolling Thunder days, the 250-pounder was stuck on to increase the total tonnage of ordnance dropped per day. I can’t recall if the two 82s vice three was a weight or clearance issue. The fact remains that we used the maneuver to deliver a 500-pound SE on target, and the little MK 81 would go who knows where. Staffers said a

bomb is a bomb, and Vietnam was the enemy so press on. The difference in the mil setting made me wonder. We were flying A-4Cs in an A-4E/F world, and I wasn’t happy dragging an extra 500 pounds that wouldn’t bring anyone to any table, but, 50 years later, still don’t want to make a fuss. If I’m wrong, never mind.

CAPT Don Gerrish USN/ret.
First A4C squadron (VA192) and last (VA112). Good old bird.

(Ed. note: thanks for the info Don. That’s a new one for me.)

■ To the Editor: Reference trivia question Fall 2016:

Looks like MK-82s
S/F,
Tom “Lucky” Luciano
[baron731@comcast.net]

Dave Dollarhide responds:

Thanks for participating, Tom. The answer is they’ve gotta be 81s, as an 82 is too big for the MER/TER station next to the gear door. Input from another member lets us know that the MK-82 also has a cutout/notch in the retard fins, while the 81 does not. I didn’t know that part.

■ To the Editor: Thanks for your quick response.

A small piece of A-4 trivia: At one time I worked in the Midway Museum’s Airwing where we restored and maintained the ship’s aircraft. While we were working on the A-4 one of the docents, who happens to be a former South Vietnamese Air Force pilot who flew Spads, came over and asked if he could sit in the cockpit. As he sat there with a big smile on his face he told me, “We wanted A-4s, but got F-5s. We needed a bomber, but got a fighter.”

Again if there’s anything I can do for you or the association out here in San Diego let me know. And if you’re out this way, I’ll host you on the boat.

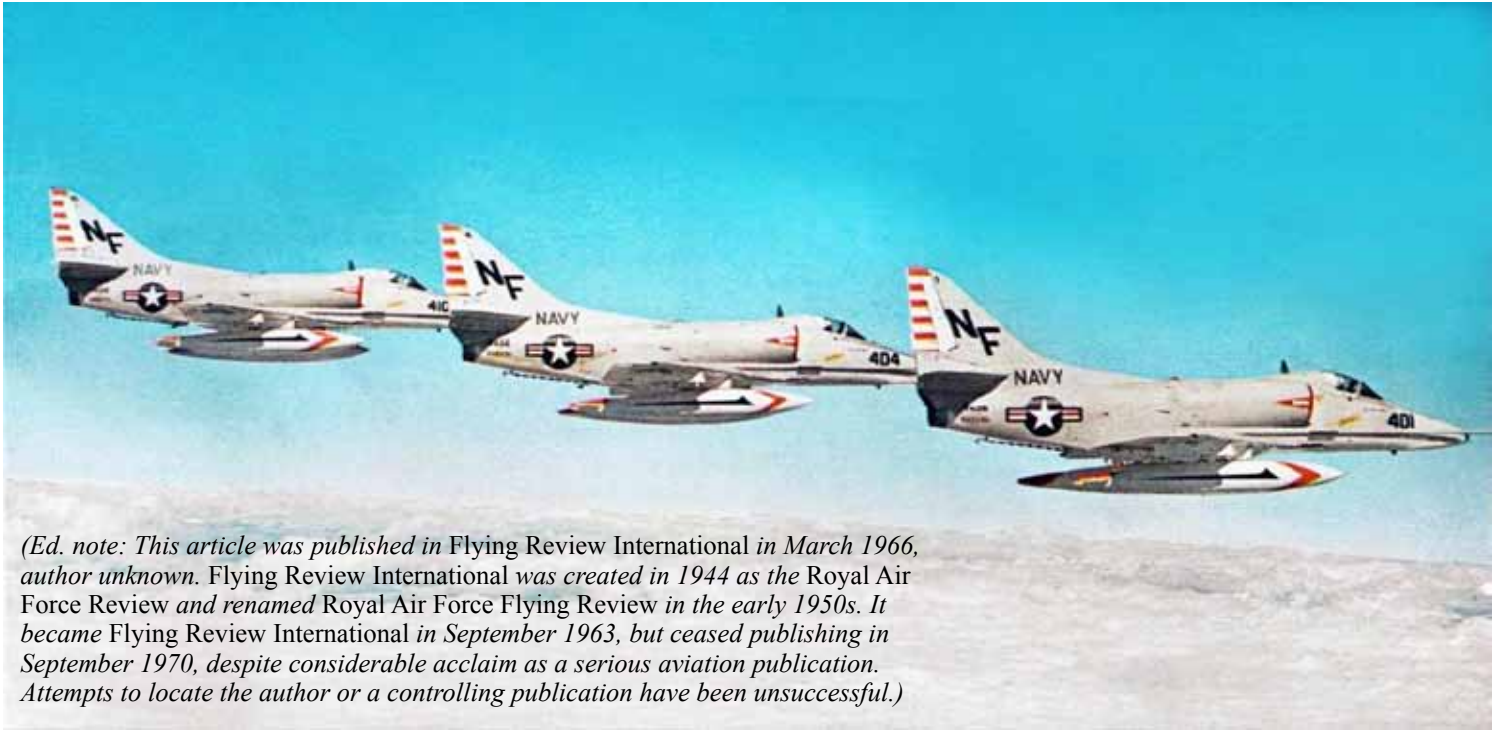
Cheers...
Robert
Robert Genat Photography
1982 Azure Way
Encinitas, CA 92024

■ To the Editor: Reference trivia question in Fall 2016:

That’s a pretty lousy picture (sorry), but I don’t see any scallops on the fins, so that makes them MK-82s. MK-82s - final answer.

LtCol T.R. White “Smoke”
[trandmaryjo@aol.com]

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



(Ed. note: This article was published in Flying Review International in March 1966, author unknown. Flying Review International was created in 1944 as the Royal Air Force Review and renamed Royal Air Force Flying Review in the early 1950s. It became Flying Review International in September 1963, but ceased publishing in September 1970, despite considerable acclaim as a serious aviation publication. Attempts to locate the author or a controlling publication have been unsuccessful.)

THE DOUGLAS A-4 SKYHAWK first entered service with the US Navy in October 1956 and according to present plans it will remain in front-line operations with the Navy and Marine units at least until 1974. Since the Navy signed the first contract to initiate A-4 development in June 1952, 1,845 examples have been ordered of the four single-seat versions. Production on these contracts will end in April this year, when the two-seat TA-4E will begin to come off the line; present contracts are for a total of 139, extending production into 1967, but eventual procurement may run much higher.

After initial US Navy requirements for the TA-4E have been met, the single-seater will go back into production to meet a recent Australian order for eight A-4Es and two TA-4Es, required for service aboard HMAS Melbourne. These ten aircraft are scheduled for delivery by the end of 1967. Meanwhile, work has begun on refurbishing a batch of 50 surplus US Navy A-4Bs which have been purchased by the Argentine Air Force under a \$7,180,200 deal. The first of these refurbished aircraft flew at the Douglas Tulsa plant on December 31, 1965 and deliveries to the Argentine will begin in June. As part of the deal, Douglas will provide spare parts and technical support for five years.

Douglas made a major effort last year to sell to Canada an export version of the Skyhawk known at the CA-4E (single-seat) and CA-4F (two-seat). In competition with the A-7A Corsair II and F-5A Freedom Fighter, the CA-4E was unsuccessful, but a further development with Rolls-Royce Spey engine has more recently been offered to various European air forces seeking a new tactical fighter-bomber. The Spey A-4 is one of the types which has been evaluated by the Belgian and Netherlands Air Forces in the current search for the new equipment for the reconnaissance, strike and close support roles. Douglas has made proposals to five European countries (including Belgium, Holland and Italy) for co-production, with preliminary design and flight testing to be done in the USA and the remainder of research, development and production shared between the participating countries.

IMPROVEMENTS WITH THE SPEY

The Spey A-4 is based on the proposed CA-4E airframe which was a single-seat development of the TA-4E, incorporating many of the latter's improvements plus new features of its own. Like the TA-4E, the CA-4E has a 9,300 lb st Pratt & Whitney J52-P-8A turbojet, lift dumpers, steerable nose-wheel, zero-zero ejection seat and modernized electronics. In addition, the wing and fuselage store positions have been strengthened, to

Douglas added to the versatility of the Skyhawk by designing for it multiple bomb racks which can be installed on three store stations and can each carry six bombs, as shown in this picture. Each of the outer store stations is carrying an ASM-7 Bullpup air-to-ground missile. Heading this page is a picture of three A-4Es from Navy attack squadron VA-56.

Down in California they've been...

HOTTING-UP THE DOUGLAS HOT-ROD

And the new versions of the A-4 Skyhawk now projected may give Heinemann's masterpiece a new lease of life. Already, 2,000 of the bantam bombers have been ordered in five variant and the first export contracts have recently been concluded.



The first of two prototypes of the TA-4E in flight with a fuel tank on the fuselage strong-point. First flown on June 30 two TA-4Es had flown 295 hours in 225 flights by the beginning of 1965

permit maximum loads of 4,600 lb (2 086 kg) on the fuselage, 2,600 lb (1 180 kg) on each inner wing position and 1,000 lb (454 kg) loads on the outer pylons. The maximum weight is increased by 2,920 (1 325 kg) to 27,420 (12 440 kg), and low pressure tyres are introduced for operations from unprepared fields.

All these features are offered in the Spey A-4, but use of the Rolls-Royce turbofan offers 41 per cent more thrust and 17-24 per cent lower cruising sfc compared with the J52-P-6A in the standard Navy A-4E, with consequent performance improvement. The Spey version in the Skyhawk is the RB.168-20, rated at 12,000 lb st (5 443 kgp) and specified also for the HS 801 (maritime Comet); it is essentially an unreheated version of the RB.168-25R specified for the F-4K Phantom II and is a military version of the RB.163-25 in the later Tridents and One-Elevens.

The Spey weighs some 470 lb (213 kg) more than the J-52 and has a frame diameter 3.5 in (8,9 cm) greater. To accommodate this larger engine, the fuselage of the Skyhawk is deepened by 5 in (12,7 cm) aft of the self-sealing fuel tank behind the cockpit, and is lengthened by a 10 in (25,4 cm) section just aft of the cockpit. The engine air intakes are enlarged to match the greater air mass flow requirement, the minimum cross-section of the inlet duct being increased from 3.3 sq ft to 5 sq ft (0,31 to 0,46 m²). The changes to the fuselage involve a small increase in fin area by increasing the chord and the overall height of the fin.

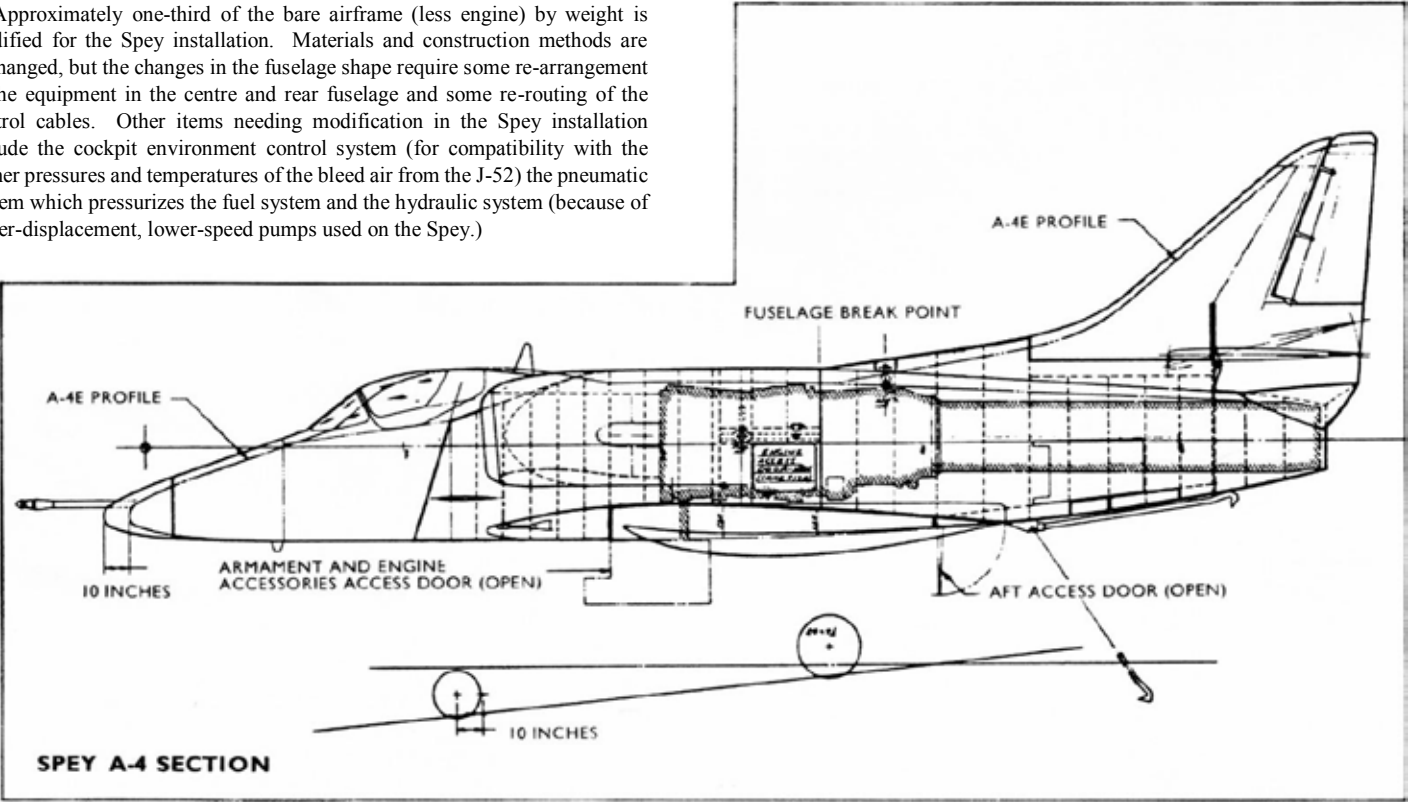
Approximately one-third of the bare airframe (less engine) by weight is modified for the Spey installation. Materials and construction methods are unchanged, but the changes in the fuselage shape require some re-arrangement of the equipment in the centre and rear fuselage and some re-routing of the control cables. Other items needing modification in the Spey installation include the cockpit environment control system (for compatibility with the higher pressures and temperatures of the bleed air from the J-52) the pneumatic system which pressurizes the fuel system and the hydraulic system (because of larger-displacement, lower-speed pumps used on the Spey.)

The Spey A-4 has an empty weight of 10,739 lb (4 871 kg), compared with 9,853 lb (4 470 kg) for the standard A-4E. As already noted, there is a 2,920 lb (1 325 kg) difference in maximum weights and the maximum ordnance load is increased to 12,000 lb (5 443 kg). Key points of the Spey A-4's performance are its ability to take-off in 3,840 ft (1 170 m) at max weight, its 2,750 naut mile (5 095 km) ferry range without refuelling and its Mach 0.92 max speed (590 knots – 1 093 km/h) at 35,000 ft (10 670 m).

Douglas estimate that there is currently a market for about 2,000 low-cost ground attack aircraft, to replace F-84s, F-86s and other obsolescent aircraft. The competition for this market is growing, not only from other US manufacturers (primarily Northrop with the F-5A and Ling-Tempco-Vought with the A-7A) but also from the European industry, primarily with the BAC Breguet Jaguar. At \$764,000 complete with all-weather navigation equipment, the Spey A-4 is among the lowest priced of the available types, and is offered in quantity in less than two years from the go-ahead.

THE SKYHAWK TRAINER

Design of the TA-4E was undertaken to meet US Navy requirements for an advanced tactical trainer to supplement and eventually replace the TF-9J Cougar. Differences from the A-4E on which the trainer was based comprise,



primarily, the longer front fuselage incorporating two seats in tandem under a single long canopy; and the uprated J52-P-8A engine, the same model as used by the Navy in the Grumman A-6A Intruder.

Both pilots in the TA-4E have Douglas Escapac 1C ejection seats, with zero altitude capability and a speed range of 0-600 knots (1 110 km/h). The rear seat is raised 9 in (22 cm) above the front to give a good view ahead, and a blind flying hood is available in the rear cockpit.

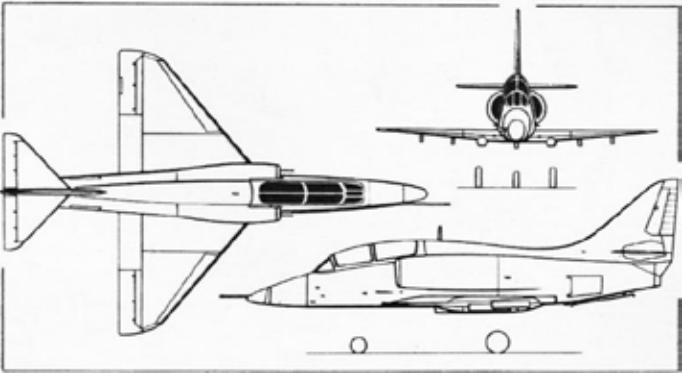
The TA-4E retains the five external store positions of the A-4E plus two 20 mm MK 12 guns in the wing roots with 100 round per gun. The fuselage strong point has a carrying capacity of 3,575 lb (1 620 kg); each inner wing station can carry 2,240 lb (1 015 kg) and the outer wing stations will take 570 lb (258 kg) each. Among the stores which can be carried in various combinations are 250 lb (113 kg) MK 81 bombs, 500 lb (227 kg) MK 82 bombs, napalm or fuel tanks, mines, rocket pods or 20 mm gun pods, air-to-surface missiles or buddy in-flight refueling packs.

Internal fuel capacity of the TA-4E prototypes was reduced by 140 US gallons (527 l) compared with that of the single-seat A-4, because of the additional cockpit limited available fuselage space. To overcome this in the projected CA-4F export two-seater, Douglas designed a saddle tank over the engine behind the rear cockpit, and this is expected to be adopted in production TA-4Es for the US Navy.

The TA-4E electronics are basically the same as used in the A-4E with duplication in the two cockpit where necessary. Equipment specified as standard includes:

- APG-53A terrain clearance radar (forward cockpit)
- AJB-3A low altitude bombing system (forward cockpit, with all-attitude reference repeated in the rear)
- ARC-51 UHF communication (both cockpits)
- ARR-69 UHF auxiliary receiver (both cockpits)
- ARA-50 ADF (both cockpits)
- ASN-41 dead reckoning navigation (forward cockpit)
- ARN-52 TACAN (either cockpit)
- APX-64 IFF radar beacon (forward cockpit)
- APN-141 radar altimeter

An A-4C from Squadron VA-46 (USS Shangri-La) poses with some of the ordnance which can be carried. In addition to the variety of bombs, this array includes ASM-7 Bullpup A and GAR-8 Sidewinder 1A missiles, LAU-3A/A 19-shot 2.75-in rocket packs, and LAU-10A 4 shot 5-in Zuni rocket packs. The aircraft itself is carrying two fuel tanks and a Douglas-developed D704 in-flight refueling store.



The Skyhawk has a Douglas-designed Bendix flight control system which provides stability augmentation, attitude, altitude and heading hold, pre-selection of heading and control stick steering by the pilot. The consoles for this system can be installed in either cockpit. Ailerons, rudder and elevators are all hydraulically-actuated through tandem packs, either one of which will operate the system if the other fails. There are two independent 3,000 psi (211 kg/cm²) hydraulic systems, each with its own reservoir, pump and warning system. Also hydraulically operated are the landing gear, nosewheel steering, flaps, fuselage speed brakes and spoilers. The variable incidence tailplane is actuated electrically.

Based as it is upon a carrier-qualified combat aircraft, the TA-4E is compatible with USN aircraft carriers and a deck-landing hook is standard equipment. The stalky undercarriage permits stores with a diameter of up to 31 in (0,78 m) to be carried on the fuselage centerline when the aircraft if being catapulted. The approach speed is 133 knots (246 km/h) at the maximum weight for steam-catapult launch is 24,500 lb (11 113 kg).

The first prototype of the TA-4E made its first flight on June 30, 1965 and the second on August 2nd. Work had already begun on the first production batch

	A-4E (J52-P-6)	TA-4E (J52-P-8A)	CA-4E (J52-P-8A)	A-4E (SPEY)
Empty weight lb (kg)	9,853 (4 469)	10,602 (4 810)	9,937 (4 507)	10,739 (4 871)
Take-off weight (clean) lb (kg)	16,216 (7 355)	15,783 (7 160)	16,300 (7 395)	17,058 (7 737)
Take-off weight (max) lb (kg)	24,500 (11 113)	24,500 (11 113)	27,420 (12 437)	27,420 (12 437)
Take-off distance (clean) ft (m)	1,210 (369)	1,610 (490)	1,200 (366)	1,200 (366)
Take-off distance (max) ft (m)	5,280 (1 610)	5,280 (1 610)	6,320 (1 926)	3,840 (1 170)
Max speed (clean) knots (km/h)	585 (1 084)	574 (1 064)	581 (1 076)	590 (1 093)
Combat radius with 4,000 lb (1 815 kg) bomb load, naut miles (km)	290 (537)	390 (723)	330 (612)	412 (764)
Ferry range, naut miles (km)	2,195 (4 068)	2,200 (4 080)	2,120 (3 930)	2,750 (5 095)
Stalling speed (approach) knots (km/h)	92 (170)	100 (185)	92 (170)	96 (178)
Landing distance, ft (m)	3,410 (1 040)	3,040 (927)	1,660 (488)	1,750 (533)

of 35 ordered earlier in 1965 and the first of these is likely to fly in April. A second order for 104 has subsequently been placed and total procurement up to and including fiscal year 1967 is expected to be 152.

THE SKYHAWK FAMILY

US Navy and Marine Corps squadrons now operating Skyhawks over Vietnam are benefiting in a very real way from experience gained during the Korean War, for the A-4 was conceived in the period 1950-1952 when some tough lessons were being learnt over Korea with an earlier generation of combat aircraft. In the same period, the Douglas company conducted a series of design simplification studies which led early in the 1952 to a proposal to the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics for a lightweight fighter-interceptor. This proposal attracted Navy backing for the Douglas method of reducing weight and achieving a breakthrough in simplification, but the aircraft most needed at that time was a Skyraider-replacement in the ground-attack role. On June 21, 1952, the Navy placed a contract with Douglas for such an aircraft, then known as the XA4D-1. Its design gross weight was to be 15,000 lb (6 800 kg), exactly half the figure which the Navy had originally specified for a jet replacement for the AD-1 Skyraider. Other requirements were a top speed of 500 mph (805 km/h) combat radius of 460 miles (740 km) and the ability to carry 1,000 lb (453 kg) bombs.

An initial design target empty weight of 8,136 lb (3 690 kg) increased to 8,400 lb (3 810 kg) by the time the first Skyhawk was built, but the permitted gross weight went up to the remarkable figure of 22,000 lb (9 980 kg), of which total more than 8,000 lb (3 630 kg) could be in the form of external bomb-load over short distances. Both empty and maximum weights have increased in later models, and the A-4E can carry a maximum of 9,155 lb (4 150 kg) externally, and has greatly improved payload/range characteristics compared with the original model.

Design of the Skyhawk was directed by Ed Heinemann, then Douglas chief engineer at the El Segundo plant and the small size of the aircraft soon led to the appellation "Heinemann's Hot-Rod". Two prototypes and ten pre-production aircraft had been ordered initially, and the first of these flew on June 22, 1954, just two years after the formal contract was placed. Operational status was achieved just over two years later, on October 26, 1956, with USN Attack Squadron VA-72.

The first production version of the Skyhawk was the A-4A (originally A4D-1). It was powered by the 7,700 lb st (3 493 kgp) Wright J-65-W-4B turbojet, an American-built version of the Armstrong Siddeley Sapphire, and had three external stores points, one under the fuselage and two under the wings. Production of the A-4A totaled 165, but even before deliveries to VA-72 began on September 9, 1956, Douglas had begun flight development of a new version, the A-4B (A4D-2).

SECOND ATTACK MODEL

First flown on March 26, 1956, the A-4B had 28 per cent new structure and equipment for improved performance and new roles, and was powered by a 7,700 lb st (3 493 kgp) J65-W-16A engine. The fuselage and landing gear were strengthened, the rudder and tailplane were redesigned, dual hydraulic flight controls were fitted, a single-point pressure fueling system was introduced and provision made for in-flight refueling, with a long probe extending forward from the starboard fuselage side. A new compass and a dead-reckoning navigation computer were introduced and provision made for air-to-ground missiles to be carried. In all, 542 examples of this version were built; most have now been relegated to second-line duty or declared surplus and as already noted, 50 have been sold to the Argentine Air Force.

On August 21, 1959, the third major Skyhawk variant, the A-4C made its first flight. Originally designated A4D-2N, this had 15 percent new structure and equipment to improve its capability for night and all-weather operations. Terrain clearance, navigation and ground ranging radar were added; with a new lengthened nose structure to accommodate the radome.

Other new equipment comprised the AJB-3 all-attitude reference and loft bombing system and TPQ-10 ground control bombing system, an improved gunsight and the Douglas Escapac ejection seat. Production continued until 1961, a total of 638 coming off the El Segundo line. Some 20 Navy and Marine squadrons were operating this version of the Skyhawk in 1965.

The biggest redesign of the Skyhawk came in 1961, when plans to install the Pratt & Whitney J52 came to fruition after some delay. The first A-4E with this engine flew on July 12, 1961, other changes adding up to 29 per cent new structure and equipment. The 8,500 lb st (3 855 kgp) J52-P-6A permitted a further increase in weight and load-carrying ability, matched by general fuselage and wing strengthening. Two additional stores stations were introduced, one under each wing, and new equipment included TACAN, Doppler navigation, MK 9 toss-bombing system, radar altimeter and the AJB-3A low altitude bombing system.

When production of the A-4E for the US Navy ends in April, 500 will have been built; eight more are on order for delivery to the Royal Australian Navy in 1967.

By the Spring of 1965, Skyhawks had flown over 1,700,000 hours, in the course of which they had established the best reliability record of all USN attack aircraft. The mean time between failures which would be serious enough to cancel or degrade a mission is 23.6 hours, and using standard methods of assessment, this indicates that the A-4 has a 90 per cent probability of completing any particular 2½-hour mission.

Maintenance records are also outstanding for a carrier-based aircraft, USN combat squadrons having shown an average of 12.8 maintenance man-hours per flight hour. This reflects not only the basic simplicity of the Skyhawk design, but also the care taken to provide good accessibility. The safety record of the A-4 is also one of the best of all Naval jet tactical aircraft.

A-4s have been operational in Vietnam flying two primary missions – close support of South Vietnam troops and interdiction against targets in North Vietnam. Confirming experience with the type in other areas, the A-4s have achieved excellent availability rates – in the region of 95 per cent – and combat flying has not increased the maintenance man-hours significantly. The A-4 has also shown that it can absorb considerable damage and yet remain airworthy.

In a world of constantly escalating costs and growing complexity, the A-4 continues to vindicate its designer's philosophy of simple, straightforward design and stringent weight-saving techniques. The A-4E is still one of the cheapest tactical fighter-bombers on the market, and its cost-effectiveness, which was excellent in 1956, is still so good today that the 15-year-old design can hold its own in company with much newer types and – as the Australian purchase indicated only a few months ago – can still be shown to be the best aeroplane for the job.

DOUGLAS TA-4E SPECIFICATION

DIMENSIONS: Span, 27 ft 6 in (8,37 m); length, 42 ft 6 in (13,0 m); height, 15 ft 4 in (4,67 m); wing area, 260 sq ft (24,15 m²); sweepback, 33.2 deg.

WEIGHTS: Empty, 10,602 lb (4 810 kg); operating weight empty, 11,295 lb (5 123 kg); take-off weight, clean, 15,783 lb (7 160 kg); max take-off weight, land or catapult, 24,500 lb (11 113 kg).

PERFORMANCE: Typical configuration for familiariza-tion and instrument training: two 300 US gallon (1 135 l) external tanks; take-off weight, 20,396 lb (9 251 kg) with 8,568 lb (3 886 kg) of fuel. Take-off distance to 50 ft (15,2 m), standard day temperature at sea level, 4,810 ft (1 466 m); range, 1,350 naut miles (2 500 km); mission time, 3.2 hr; max speed at combat weight (60 per cent fuel) of 16,969 lb (7 697 kg), 549 knots (1 017 km/h) at sea level, 498 knots (923 km/h) at 35,000 ft (10 668 m); combat ceiling, 38,700 ft (11 796 m); stalling speed at landing weight of 12,935 lb (5 867 kg), 104 knots (193 km/h); landing distance from 50 ft (15,2 m), standard day tem-perature at sea level, 3,150 ft (960 m).

POWER PLANT: Type, one Pratt & Whitney J52-P-8A turbojet. Military rating, 9,300 lb st (4 218 kgp); normal thrust, 8,200 lb st (3 720 kgp). Fuel capacity, 560 US gal (2 120 l) in wing, 100 US gal (378 l) in fuselage, up to two 300 US gal (1 135 l) and one 400 US gal (1 510 l) tanks external.

Unbroken Chain of Events

A personal account of the USS Forrestal Fire

By Capt. Dave Dollarhide USNR (Ret)

July 29, 1967 – “Fire on the Flight Deck”

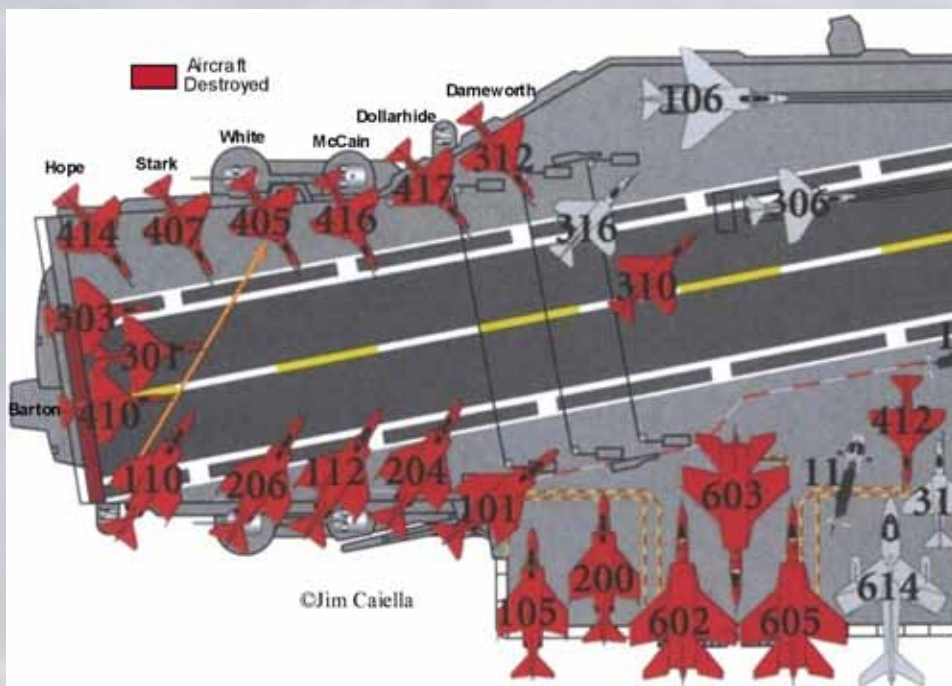
It was our fifth day of combat operations on “Yankee Station.” Unlike most arriving air wings, we had bypassed “Dixie Station” and the normal warm up period of close air support missions in South Vietnam. Air Wing Seventeen started right into flying large formation “Alpha” strikes to the more hostile North Vietnam targets. Today, I was scheduled on the 1100 launch, a 22 plane strike group, plus support aircraft.

Down in the VA-46 Clansmen’s ready room, Gary Stark, Fred White, Denny Barton and I began to brief our part of the strike as a “division” of four. Herb Hope and John McCain were there briefing also, but as a different strike element. We had just learned we’d be dropping bombs left over from the Korean War. The M-65 was a 1,000# “fat” bomb, designed to be carried by propeller aircraft. We’d never seen these things and were unfamiliar, but someone gave us the correct gunsight setting, we finished the briefing and walked across the passageway to ride the escalator to the flight deck.

My A-4E, AA 417, was spotted on the port side, close to the LSO platform and as I began to preflight, I was taken back at the sight of the rusted M-65s on either wing. They were large in diameter and didn’t seem to have the normal bumpy, insulated exterior seen on modern day bombs.

Nomex flight suits were not in the supply system at this point, so we were wearing Marine fatigues. My sleeves were turned up and I felt somewhat confident about the mission. My post engine start checks were completed and the Plane Captain had removed the ladder, some of the tie down chains, and departed the flight deck. With my canopy open in the one hundred degree heat, I was looking toward the VA-106 A-4 parked upwind and to my left. In the cockpit was “Crash” Dameworth, a friend.

Suddenly, above the noise of engines and wind, I heard a heavy “whump!” Due to no fault of the pilot, a Zuni



rocket was accidentally fired from an F-4 across the flight deck, striking the 400-gallon external fuel tank of Fred White’s A-4. This resulted in a violent fuel explosion and fire surrounding our airplanes. *(When the F-4’s first generator was energized during engine start, a current had surged out to the already armed rocket pod on his left wing, firing one rocket.)*

Looking towards “Crash,” I remember the fear on his face as he looked past me. I snapped my head around to see the flight deck engulfed in fire, with people



scrambling out of the inferno. One of our VA-46 mechanics back peddled out of the flames just ahead of my right wing, terribly injured and burned. I was awash with panic. Throttle off...disconnect my torso harness...oxygen hose disconnected while rising up...and I literally dove out the left side of my cockpit. Eight feet later, I hit the deck like a bag of sand, breaking my hip and arm.

One or two people came to my aid, helping me stand and move to the center of the flight deck. Suddenly, they were gone and I was limping along solo when a “Green Shirt” from VF-11, Joe Patane, held out his arms. I lunged and we both fell to the deck in the vicinity of the number three arresting wire. My feet were now pointed toward the fire, maybe fifty feet away. The scene was horrific with people, airplanes and weapons engulfed in the fire. I could see that McCain was out of his airplane, but Gerry Stark and Fred White were still in their open cockpits.

Charges in the “ejector feet” of our bomb racks began to activate in the fire and bombs started to fall unarmed to the deck. However, due to the age of their high explosive material (HE), high order detonations quickly ensued in the burning jet fuel and in short order, the first of nine M-65 detonations occurred just those few feet away. 90 seconds had passed since the rocket had launched.

It had only been a few seconds since Patane had put out his arms. I don’t recall any noise, just an instantaneous and violent shock wave that slid me up the deck a foot or so. I took shrapnel hits to my foot and hip. A glance upward showed the sky filled with debris. I began to rise and Patane



said to stay down, but determined to leave the scene, I ran/hobbled my way forward and dove under a Phantom parked aft of the island. Someone came out and helped me to safety.

Just inside an island hatch, my flight gear was cut away and I was carried by Butch Massey (VA-65) down numerous ladders to Sick Bay Ward 2 on the second deck. The ship shuddered as the M-65s continued to explode. Brave crewmembers battled the blaze on the flight deck and just over my head, through the steel of the hangar deck, I could hear the noise of people yelling and pushing anything that could burn or explode overboard. Sick bay quickly filled with terribly injured friends and shipmates.

The battle to put out fires and save the ship continued for much of the day. Most, like me, were just survivors, but heroes abounded. All experienced their own version of this life changing experience. When it was over, one hundred and thirty four shipmates were gone...Gerry, Fred and Denny among them. I was the only survivor from our flight.

Looking Back

It didn’t have to happen! The Navy’s worst peacetime accident could have been avoided or mitigated by corrective action at any one of several decision points. The following is a list of events that led to the accident.

- As we proceeded to the combat zone a decision was made to short circuit normal arming procedures in exchange for expedience in meeting the “Alpha Strike” schedule.
- Cannon plugs used with rocket pods were connected without the airplanes pointed in a safe direction.
- It was felt that the arming safety pin in the back of the pods was enough protection, but these pins were already known by many to malfunction, if



- the wind was blowing the attached warning flag.
- Deviating further, final arming of weapons was accomplished while airplanes were taxiing. *(Just the day before the fire, an AO caught his foot under an F-4 main tire while arming rockets. He then fell in front of the wheel and lost his arm as the airplane continued to taxi over him. I was in the hospital with this sailor and know the story as related by him.)*
- Someone at a very high level in the Department of Defense decided to expend bombs that had been in storage since the Korean War.
- Bombs from that era did not have a proper thermal protective coating.
- The high explosive (HE) material had become unstable due to storage conditions and time.
- These bombs had been high-lined from an ammunition ship to the Forrestal the night before. One of the carrier’s weapons department supervisors expressed serious concern about the age and volatility of the M-65s.

A “JAG” investigation was completed, with the report containing some 7,000 pages. VA-46 and VA-106 had lost eleven Skyhawks and most surviving A-4s were damaged to some degree. I remember the total airplane losses in Air Wing Seventeen were around sixty million dollars. The cost of repairing Forrestal was huge and the loss of life, devastating. Over time, the Navy took many corrective actions as a result of the Forrestal accident... life saving procedures and policies that are still in place today, almost fifty years later.

Skyhawks Still Flying

Dateline: February 2017 Update (RED = changes from last year)
Todd "Hun" Frommelt reporting

We're into our 6th year of tracking our Skyhawk flyers, and it's time for the first 2017 update. Here goes....

Background Out of some 2960 A-4 aircraft produced by Douglas Aircraft, just how many are still flying around the country and the world? As the principal record keeper and contact maintainer for the Skyhawk community, it seemed pretty logical that the Association be the one to keep the count of "still flying." So here we are, some 65 years after the initial government contract was awarded (June 1952), 63 years after Bob Rahn made the first flight (June 1954), and, as you'll find below, there are **about 46** Skyhawks **still performing** with speed and agility all over the world! It's been a fine flying machine indeed! We'll keep the report's organization the same—militaries still flying, then contract services, private collections, and a final section on legacy operators—those no longer employing our A-4.

Military Service

Despite its age, the Skyhawk is a highly-capable airframe, as you all well know. It's very good at missions not requiring supersonic speeds and advanced radars and avionics, although some users have refitted their Skyhawks with formidable upgrades. Its main advantage from both government and contract flyer points of view is its cost (and capability). Two militaries around the world still fly the A-4 and a total of about 10 single seaters and 3 two seaters are currently flying in their service.

Argentina: Argentina's Air Force and Navy at one time operated close to 100 A-4Bs, but retired those older airframes in 1999 after getting up to speed on their 1994 purchase of 32 A-4Ms and 4 OA-4Ms from the US government. Their redesignated A-

4ARs and OA-4ARs are still operating in their 5th Air Brigade, although at much reduced numbers due mainly to budget, parts and maintenance difficulties.

This past year, budget difficulties and some remaining embargo issues had them struggling even more. Without complete reporting from them, I'll leave their numbers unchanged, but treat those as very best case numbers. **I credit them currently with 6 single-seat and 1 dual-seat flyers, with another 12 close enough to flying status to be 'operational reserve.'** **6 A-4AR/1 OA-4AR**



Brazil: The Brazilian Navy became a Skyhawk operator when it acquired 20/3 A-4KU and TA-4KU aircraft from the Kuwaiti government in 1998. Re-designated AF-1s and AF-1As (2-seaters), these aircraft operated off the Brazilian Navy's modernized French aircraft carrier *São Paulo*.

About 10 years ago, a select dozen were picked to receive a major upgrade program to be conducted by Embraer from 2009 to 2015. The upgrade program has been slow, but the new aircraft are now appearing on the flight line as AF-1Bs and AF-1Cs (2-seaters) with about 3 modernized aircraft currently available for operations. **1 modernized aircraft and pilot were lost last summer during security practice for the Olympics.** Best guess? Three updated AF's and possibly 3 more original AF's available for proficiency flying. **And it looks now like the *São Paulo* will be decommissioned rather than fixed.** **They expect 3 more upgraded aircraft to arrive in CY 2017.** **2 AF-1B/1 AF-1C and 2 AF-1/1 AF-1A**



Contract Services

I don't remember having contract air services around while we served, but these days are different. With op-tempo as high as it is, the airlines hiring, and current airframes being **really** expensive, it has become cost effective for the government and industry to contract out many air support requirements. Over the past dozen years, many outfits have appeared with airplanes and crews ready to tow targets, act as cruise and anti-ship missiles, run air refueling evaluations, or even provide close air support to government and industry users. And, lately the missions being contracted out even include "Red Air!" Throw us into THAT briar patch any day! There are four



63 Years and still going strong...

contract services which utilize the Skyhawk to provide air support, and some 22 single-seat and 5 TA-4s are currently flying/available in their service. As is the case with many of the privately-owned Skyhawks, there is a mix of P-6, P-8, and P-408 engines. The Ns have Israeli tailpipe extensions, and some fleets are flying with cold seats. But most of these aircraft "aren't your daddy's airplane," **ESPECIALLY** in avionics! Check out some of the cockpits for starters...



Draken International: Draken International, headed by Mr. Jared Isaacson, got into the A-4 business in 2012 when it put the finishing touches on the purchase of 8 well-preserved New Zealand A-4Ks, 6 single-seaters and two TA-4Ks. (See the Association's *A-4 Ever Fall* 2014 issue). These are P-8 engined, glass cockpit and very upgraded Skyhawks. Then in the end of 2014, Draken bought 6 A-4Ns destined for the boneyard from BAE Industries, who had just lost a support contract in Germany. Draken now has a **very** substantial air force in Lakeland, Florida, that includes these A-4s, and a mix of 15 assorted Aer-macchi MB339s, L39s and a T33, all flying. A further 26 MIG 21s are on site, crated awaiting need, and 28 L159s purchased and/or awaiting delivery! By the time you read this, about half of those L159s will be on site. **Sadly, one of the TA-4Ks was lost (but not the pilot!) in an engine failure mishap while doing contract work at a Nellis Red Flag exercise this past summer (2016).** **6 A-4Ks and 6 A-4Ns/1 TA-4Ks**



Discovery Air (Canada): Discovery Air operates a wide-ranging fleet of aircraft for contract services and supports the Canadian Armed Forces through its Discovery Air Defense Services (DADS) unit. The Skyhawk section of DADS is also known as Top Aces, USA. In December 2013, they completed the acquisition of ATSI of Mesa, AZ, which included 7 previously Israeli A-4Ns and 3 TA-4Js. DADS also maintains a fleet of Donier Alpha Jets, Westwind 1124s and is "quite well advanced" in talks for the acquisition of F-16 aircraft. They successfully outbid BAE for the German Air Force contract at Wittmund, Germany. Look for them to be in the hunt for US contracts as well. **All of the N's are in Germany, the T's remain in Mesa, AZ. 7 A-4Ns/3 TA-4Js**



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 brought TA-4J 154306 into flying status back in early November 2014. **1 TA-4J**



continued...

SKYHAWKS STILL FLYING



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 came in. They have leased aircraft to both ATAC and Draken in the past and have 3 flyers in Denison, TX. One or two more could be flying fairly soon after being contracted, with those spread through restoration facilities in Perryville, MO, Sherman, TX, and Bill Maszala's storage facility, ATW Aviation, Inc., in Marana, AZ. **3 A-4Ls**



Classic Fighters: This Skyhawker "new boy on the block" has a TA-4J owned and operated by Doug Matthews. His TA-4J, 156925, joins an air stable which includes a P-51, 2 F-86s, 3 Marchetti S211s, an F4U Corsair and a T-33. First flight was in Fall 2015. The TA-4 is now based at Titusville, FL. **Sale rumors are starting to be heard here! 1 TA-4**



Fighting Classics Restoration: This is Mike "Maj" McDougall's restoration shop down at Marana Regional Airport, AZ. Maj put together the Pacific Aero Ventures TA-4J for Don Keating and is nearing completion of an A-4C (148597) for Mr. Fred Machado. Fred's from Florida, but is Argentinian, and the new A-4C is already in Argentine colors (right top and middle). He also recently acquired the Spangler/Carr A-4C (NX2262Z) bought a short while ago by the Valiant Air Command Warbird Museum in Florida (below right). That one will also be in Argentine colors soon. Both will be kept at Fighting Classics in Marana for the time being. We'll give Maj and Fred a half credit for the second Charlie which Maj plans to have flying by the end of 2017. **1 1/2 A-4C**



Pacific Aero Ventures, LLC: Privately owned by Don Keating, this beautifully restored TA-4J (by Mike McDougall of Fighting Classics Restoration) is a 2010 addition to the flying Skyhawks. Don has parts for possibly 2 more A-4s for Mike to work on once he sells this N518TA beauty, **currently flying regularly in the Seattle area.** If I only had \$2-3 million! **1 TA-4J**



Warbird Heritage Foundation: Has a mission similar to the Collings Foundation. It operates close to 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 also performs as a Navy Legacy Flight warbird demonstration aircraft. **1 A-4B**



Legacy Skyhawk Operators

Militaries: Out of the 2960 A-4s built, the vast majority of them saw service, of course, with the US Navy and Marine Corps. First delivery went to the Navy in September of 1956, and two days later the Marine Corps started getting theirs. The USN operated some 110 different squadrons of Skyhawks, from active attack to training. The A-4 came off the frontline in 1975, but continued operation in the training command, the reserves and, finally, just the VC squadrons until May 2003 (VC-8). The USMC operated some 49 squadrons (32 VMAs) of various types of Skyhawks, with them coming off the frontline finally in February 1990 (VMA-211). However, the Marine Corps operated them in the reserves until June 1994 (VMA-131).



The International pipeline started in late 1966 with Argentina getting delivery of reworked A-4Bs. International deliveries of brand new A-4s started in July 1967, with Australia receiving their first A-4Gs in that month, followed in that December by Israel receiving their first A-4Hs. Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Kuwait and New Zealand also flew Skyhawks. The Kuwaiti A-4Ms are now being used by Brazil; New Zealand's A-4Ks now work for Draken; and Singapore shut down their last A-4 squadron in December of 2013. Canada and France gave the Skyhawk serious consideration, but never initiated Skyhawk buys. And, in December 2015, our preeminent international Skyhawker military, Israel's IAF, finally retired its last Skyhawks.

Contract Services ATAC of Newport News, VA, flew A-4Ns and Limas until 2013; BAE Systems flew A-4Ns (now with Draken) under contract with the German government until December 2014; ATSI of Mesa, AZ, was purchased by Discovery Air in December 2013, and its Top Aces now operates that A-4 fleet; TADS of Carson City, NV, flies contract support, but no longer has A-4s in its inventory.

Private Collections

It's good to be well established financially, if you want to own a Skyhawk! Currently 5+ flyers are in private hands, 3 TA-4Js, an A-4C (another one close!) and an A-4B. One of the flying TA-4Js is for sale! Mike "Maj" McDougall has that A-4C very close to flying and another one on order!

Aero Mark, Inc: This group is led by Bob Hoff and Jerry Dust up in Idaho Falls. They're sitting on a well-preserved A-4L with two J-65 engines looking for a buyer or investor. Let me know if you want some contact info!

Collings Foundation: Dedicated to preserving "the heritage of the sky," this perhaps most well-known vintage aircraft foundation operates some 18 flying historical 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 returning, you too can fly again...for about \$7500. **1 TA-4J**



A-4's Still Flying!

as of March 2017

13 Military

27 Contract

5 1/2 Private

Total: 45 1/2



Skyhawk Losses

~ The Mission Continues ~

by Gary Verver

I'm sure that everyone is aware that the Skyhawk Association research team has been trying for some time to complete the records of Skyhawk losses. We have records of many Skyhawks that were lost to accidents or direct enemy action for which we don't know the who, what and where information. We've been listing some of these losses in the Prez Sez column in each issue and thanks to those who contacted old squadron members and dug through their garages, a number of those losses have been resolved.

"We have records of many Skyhawks that were lost to accidents or direct enemy action for which we don't know the who, what and where information."

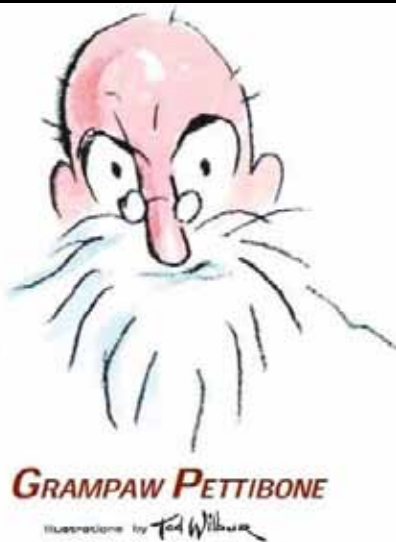
Because we're very committed to this effort, we've decided to make this a regular feature of *The A-4Ever* each quarter, and we hope that our readers will take helping us to complete these records as a challenge. You might be surprised to learn that slightly over 1,300 USN, USMC, and civilian-operated Skyhawks, as well as 220 foreign models, have been lost over the years. So, 1,500 plus Skyhawks out of 2,960 produced.

To start us off, here are two losses courtesy of Grampaw Pettibone. We know what happened and approximately when (these losses probably predate the Pettibone article by 3 months to a year and possibly longer), but can't match them to a specific loss. We hope our readers can divine the squadron, bureau number, location etc. for:

A young A-4B pilot who had been more or less grounded with a bad shoulder for six months had been trying to requalify himself in the A-4B after getting back in a Group 1 status. On his own he reread the flight handbook and

flew 7.3 hours in a local A-4B outfit's aircraft. He managed to have an A-4C assigned for an afternoon local area fam. hop and called aerology for the local weather forecast and got that and nothing more in the way of weather along his proposed route. He took off at about 1300 local with 9200 pounds of fuel and headed out on his planned low level route at 1,000 feet altitude. After an hour he noticed a band of rain ahead of him and low ceilings that seemed to go clear to the ground and had a line of thunderstorms in it. He was in a small

hole with about 5,000 pounds of fuel so he climbed at full power to 30,000 feet in an attempt to top the weather. The cloud still towered way above him and it was real trouble staying VFR so he started an idle descent in a spiral and leveled off at 1,000 feet. He made brief but poor radio contact with an AFB weather service which told him the weather at his home base was still good, but there were severe thunderstorms in the area. He decided to retrace his route remaining VFR with 4,000 pounds of fuel estimating that he could make it with 800 pounds to spare. All went well for 250 miles except for a higher fuel consumption than anticipated, but only 100 miles from home he hit a band of rain and low ceilings which stretched across his route. After attempting to circumnavigate the weather fuel was down to 800 pounds and he was no longer sure of



his position and requested help on traffic control frequencies and finally on Guard. Soon after he made contact with his home field and radar gave him a DF steer at 40 miles. At 1352 local time at an altitude of 3,000 feet and a fuel state of 200 pounds he notified home base of his intention and ejected. Pettibone, June 1963.

An A4D pilot was making a cross-country flight from his east coast air station to MCAS Yuma to establish advance liaison with scheduled refueling stops for a full squadron set to follow him in a few days. He was carrying starter probes and misc. maintenance items in a converted drop tank to be dropped off at each planned fuel stop. After making the necessary liaison connections at a Midwest base rough weather rapidly built up between him and his next scheduled stop in El Paso, TX. Finally, around 1730 he filed IFR at 35,000 feet to El Paso straight through the middle of the storm belt and took off fueled to maximum capacity at 1856 CST. At 1911 he reported breaking out on top at 35,000 feet and followed up with routine position reports up to 1931 CST. At 1935 a preliminary call by him to Ft. Worth radio was abruptly terminated and at 1937 the A4D dug a 30-foot crater in the ground killing the pilot. Pettibone, February 1963.

Please e-Mail Gary Verver (gp@verx2.org), or sa-journal-editor@a4skyhawk.org if you can help.

TINS!*

WRONG-WAY LSO C.R. JONES

(Ed. note: the following excerpt from Boom Powell's new book, *Wave-Off! A History of LSOs and Ship-board Landings concerns a landing accident aboard USS Intrepid during the ship's SE Asia cruise in 1968.*)

In 1968 an errant, battle-damaged Skyhawk returning to *Intrepid* (CVS(A)-11) wobbled, swerved, and veered at the platform. The assistant (LSO) and the phone talker both jumped into the safety net and were killed. LSO "C.R." Jones dived left onto the flight deck and sustained a 5-inch cut across his shoulder from the bomb sway brace on the crashing A-4.

Watching the PLAT, squadron mates saw Jones lying on deck. First one arm moved and shook. Then the other wiggled, followed by both legs kicking before the camera moved to the crash itself. Not too long after, Jones walked into the ready room and was greeted with gasps of amazement. "We thought you were dead with your back broken when we saw your arms and legs twitching."

"Nah. I just wanted to check everything was working before trying to stand up."

LT Ken Hespe, who was an LSO, had landed just prior to the crash. He ran across the flight deck, grabbed a handheld radio and, still in his flight gear, talked the remaining eight aircraft aboard. There was no mirror, it had been destroyed in the crash.

Remarkably, a request for more information using the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) made while researching this book was denied because the crash of an A-4 48 years ago was still "classified"!

*Wave-Off, Chapter 9, p. 155.



Wrong-Way LSO C.R. Jones. Image from 1967 USS Intrepid cruise book (Via George Blosser).

Amplifying information on this accident was provided by Bo Browning (who was airborne when the accident occurred) via Skyhawk Association member Jim Warner and Association Director George Blosser.

It was in 1968 on *Intrepid*, VA-106, CO Walt Clarke, XO John Harns. Exact date unknown.

It was a routine day cycle on Yankee Station. I was on the launch after Dave Callahan (*mishap pilot*). When the mission was over and I was feet wet, I was told "signal DELTA, max conserve." I knew something was wrong down there. There was some delay on recovery but not serious. When told signal "Charlie," I was also told that it would be a talk-down recovery as the mirror was inoperative. We could not use the emergency manual starboard mirror because the manual control was located on the platform which was damaged. We made normal "visual" landings.

After ops were over for the day, I saw that the LSO platform was gone as well as the mirror. When airborne, Dave had a failure of the elevator trim. As I recall, a review of his aircraft gripe sheets showed that there might have been a previous gripe about a stuck trim, but maintenance could not duplicate. (Am not positive about the previous gripe but think that is accurate.) Dave called the ship and reported the stuck trim. He was advised to slow flight and check for control at approach speed. He apparently did this and indicated that he would not have a problem. As you know, Dave was well known to be the "I can fly the box it came in" type, so don't know how marginal his control really was. Callahan's crash was on the PLAT. He made a modified straight in approach at slightly higher than normal speed. Nearing the ramp, he apparently realized he was in trouble, added power and began a slight turn left. This resulted in him taking out the LSO platform and wind screen and continuing forward to crash into and destroy the mirror. His plane went off the port side. Neither he nor the wreckage was recovered. I did not see an ejection on the PLAT.

As an aside, C.R. Jones was the LSO. At the last moment before the plane hit the platform and windscreen, C.R. dove to his left, toward the ship's centerline, and while he was horizontal in the air, the sway braces on Dave's number five wing station cut C.R. across the back at about the shoulder blades. C.R. was a very lucky guy and survived by less than inches!

To satisfy my own curiosity (as the maintenance type), at the next opportunity I set the trim for hands off at 250 knots and slowed to approach speed without re-trimming. To try to maintain level flight at approach speed, I had the stick all the way back against the vest/flotation gear and still needed more back stick to safely fly the bird.

Bo Browning.

(Ed. note: *Wave-Off!* will be of interest to any Naval Aviator, especially LSOs. Watch for a review of it in a later issue of *The A-4Ever*.)

Read?

you think
we read?

GEAR UP, MISHAPS DOWN: THE EVOLUTION OF NAVAL AVIATION SAFETY, 1950-2000

Vice Admiral Robert F. Dunn, USN (Ret).
Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD. 21402.
2017. 204 pp. Ill. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Cdr. Peter B. Mersky,
USNR(Ret.)

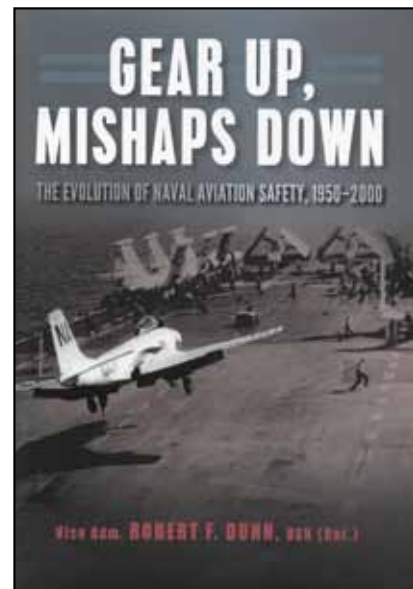
An experienced pilot was dead. A family and a squadron despaired. A shipmate lost, and aircraft lost, another statistic to add to the horrendous safety record of Naval Aviation in the 1950s.

These lines are how Admiral Dunn begins his important book on the development and refinement of safety in Naval Aviation. Perhaps a somewhat esoteric subject for someone not involved in flying every day, but certainly at the center of modern operations, whether it comes from flying from carriers or from shore bases. No matter if you fly high-performance jets, slow-moving (rela-

tively) transports, or vitally important but occasionally complicated helicopters that are carrier or land-based, you need to be safe, promoting safety in every squadron in which you are a member.

During the formative years, perhaps 1920-1960, Naval Aviation (which of course includes the Marine Corps and Coast Guard) suffered hundreds of mishaps that resulted in hundreds of injuries and deaths. One note: The use of “mishap” instead of “accident” is hard to explain for laymen and those not associated with Naval Aviation. Frankly, I have never seen a satisfactory definition. And often, the two terms are used interchangeably as they sometimes are in this new book. I was once told that “accident” implies human involvement and/or human error which resulted injury, death or loss of a valuable aircraft. Then, the logical question is doesn’t “mishap” mean the same thing? Probably, but for the time being, the official term is “mishap.”

The details in the book come not only from deep research—it began as his project while a Ramsey Fellow at the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.—but also from the admiral’s own personal knowledge of his subject at a level that few military authors can offer. A member of the Naval Academy’s class of 1951, he flew the AD Skyraider, and then the A-4 Skyhawk. He saw combat with VA-146 during Rolling Thunder and eventually commanded the squadron in 1967. He commanded the USS *Saratoga* (CV-60) in 1976, and was COMNAVAIRLANT in 1986, during the operations in Libya. He then served as DCNO(Air)—Op 05. Admiral Dunn also served as the Chief of Naval Reserve 1982-1983. Most importantly for the book, he also served a tour as Commander Naval Safety Center 1976-1977. So, he definitely knows his subject from the inside. And finally, a truly dedicated aviator, he made his last trap at the age of 60 at the controls of a single-seat F/A-18A Hornet in June 1988! You can’t beat *those* qualifications.



As he progresses through his history, Admiral Dunn describes the horrendous record of mishaps through World War II and during the post-Korean War period. He uses simple graphics, mainly charts to show the steep rising and falling rates that characterized this dangerous time that saw the loss of so many people and aircraft mainly from operational, rather than combat, causes. He also includes the development of new and better aircraft instruments and ground simulators that helped crews fly their planes thereby curtailing, to an extent, the mishap rate.

There are detailed discussions of programs that emphasized the role of the newly established Naval Aviation Safety Center whose staff strove to better manage understanding of safety in the air and on the ground. These sections of the book could have only been written by a highly experienced Naval Aviator and better still, one who had been, at one time, at the heart of Naval Aviation safety leading the command tasked with managing the Navy’s safety programs. Admiral Dunn describes the introduction of the NATOPS program in May 1961 with its far-reaching effect on every facet of Naval Aviation from its iconic blue-book compendiums of individual and specific aircraft types and models to the operations aboard carriers and ashore. It’s difficult to imagine the air navy today without them.

The book also describes the now-Naval Safety Center’s various publications, including its flagship magazine *Approach*, first published in July 1955. Although that well-known magazine is currently under-



Cdr. Dunn in his assigned A-4C loaded with Mk. 83s heads for a target in North Vietnam. (Via Robert F. Dunn)

going a perhaps-painful transition in format—the long-range results of which will definitely remain to be seen—its historic effect on Fleet and Reserve aviation with its long-standing invitation to Naval Aviation crews at all levels and specialties to contribute their experiences to educate their compatriots will always be an important contribution to the promotion of aviation safety in all communities.

While *Gear Up, Mishaps Down* should be of interest to anyone who follows military aviation, it should definitely be read by squadron COs, XO’s and Safety Officers almost as part of their pass-down folders, that is, if the PCO, PXO and newly-assigned Safety Guru haven’t read it already. The squadron rank-and-file might also benefit from reading it. Finally, the book might also be useful to various industries and general civilian aviation as well.

TRIVIA ANYONE from Dave Dollarhide

Answer: We received a number of replies on this one. These have to be MK-81 250# bombs on the Triple Ejector Rack (TER). Due to needed clearance from the landing gear door, MK-82 500 pounders can only be loaded on the center



and outboard stations of a TER, when mounted on the wing stations (Stations 2 and 4 on A-4E and subsequent airplanes). One member, CAPT Don Gerrish, brought up the practice of loading MK-82 bombs with one MK-81, noting that the only issue was differing mil settings on the gunsight... the most logical reason I’ve heard. Bill Baumbeck let us know that Snakeye fins on the MK-82 had a “notch” in the fins as a visual clue to what size bomb is loaded.

Last Question: Are these MK-81 or MK-82 bombs loaded on the Triple Ejector Rack (TER)?



MK-82s (conical fins) on a TER would look like this:



Then-Cdr. Dunn stands by his A-4 after a mission with VA-146. (Via Robert F. Dunn)

Puresome Unplugged

~ YP's Excellent Adventures ~

Coming Home

by Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

Puresome knew he was really headed away from Yankee Station when the atomic powered USS *Enterprise* and her escort, USS *Bainbridge* met them in the middle of the Indian Ocean. They put on a speedboat display, showing off during a couple of passes by the *Independence* leaving rooster tails of froth behind them. The *Bainbridge* even had her missile batteries train on them as it sped by.

That didn't matter to Youthly or anyone else on the flight deck, waving bye-bye and yelling "Adios, Mike Foxes!" as the two ships pulled away, *Enterprise* headed North to see the Elephant, while *Independence* faced a long trip to Norfolk around the Cape of Good Hope and a whole lot of Atlantic Ocean. The make work All Officer's Meetings didn't have the same edge as they had on the way to the Tonkin Gulf War Games, and the wardrooms fed them lots of ice cream to sleek them up some. Of course, Candy Andy had figured out that they would lose an hour of sleep per time zone as a personal affliction. Slowly, Youthly found his shoulders relaxing. At the end of the Trail was Tunita, his son, and the Land of the Big PX.

As they started getting close, the Air Wing started readying the aircraft for the fly off to NAS Oceana about a day before the Boat and lesser mortals pulled into the pier at Naval Station Norfolk. Pilots filled cruise boxes with bags and bags of Oriental pillage they had obtained during the cruise. Puresome figured that the ship would sit a lot higher in the water after all the Nikon camer-

as, Noritake china, Akai tape recorders, monkey pod, and even motorcycles were off-loaded. Of course, it was no surprise when Norman the Fink, the beloved schedules officer, published the flight schedule for the squadron fly off that LTJG Youthly was not on it, along with several other arrogant junior occupants from the back of the ready room. It was part of the Juniority package.

Finally, the big day arrived. Pilots assembled in the ready room and did their fly off briefing. Arrangements were made in the various flights to be sure that someone would do the radio calls for anyone whose radio was down, and it was hoped that someone would have a TACAN, but, if not, they'd follow the *Phantom's* smoke. It was quite enough, thank ye, that the Scoot's engine would start (A4D's are Tinker Toys, they are flown by littul boys; powered by a rubber band, wind them up and launch by hand....). When Flight Quarters was called, and the pilots stormed out of the ready room, hollering "I've got mine, pull up the anchor!" Puresome headed to Vulture's Row, high up on the Boat's island to watch the big show.

It was a perfect, crisp December day to go flying, and it was impossible not to get excited at all the activity on deck. When the Air Boss did his loudspeaker chant to start engines, the great thundering war birds came to life, and the smell of jet exhaust fumes mixed with the salt sea smell, and signal flags snapped on their halyards. Finally, aircraft started to taxi to catapults.

The aircraft on the Number Three



Jack "Youthly Puresome" Woodul

waist catapult was a Black Ace *Phantom*, manned by their skipper. He was going to be the first aircraft launched, and other *Phantoms* lined up behind the blast protectors in sequence. The ship turned into the wind and picked up speed; the Foxtrot flag ran up the halyard. The Black Ace *Phantom* taxied over the shuttle and extended its nose strut. When all was ready, the Shooter gave the turn-up signal, the twin J-79 engines belched out their thunder and fire as the afterburners lit fully. The pilot and Shooter exchanged salutes, and the *Phantom* launched down the catapult track in a cloud of steam and smoke.

But about halfway down the catapult stroke, a huge billow of fire came from the belly of the *Phantom*, toasting the next airplane behind it and crisping some flight deck personnel. As the *Phantom* started climbing, a hundred feet of bright flame followed it, and calls were being made to Eject! Eject! And, kaboom! The rear canopy separated and the RIO ejected.

Since he was impeccably dressed in a Hong Kong suit and had a lap full of fancy Nikon camera and lens, and several Rolex watches and trinkets on his wrists, a shower of interesting debris left with him.

Meanwhile, the *Phantom* skipper came out of burner, and THE FIRE WENT OUT! Seems the 400-gallon centerline tank had received a bridle slap that had torn a great rent in it, and the escaping petrol had been ignited by the fire belching from his burners. Real good.

So, the Scopie plops in the water, and the helo picks him up, as the *Phantom* flies on to Oceana without his rear cockpit. Meanwhile, the Scoots are happily launching off the forward cats, while the mighty fighting Fantooms back aft go through some shuffling to get the toasted aircraft out of the way, and things generally get sorted out. Eventually, all the aircraft got launched, some of their pilots lying like rugs about their up status.

Puresome thought it all wonderful drama, with a smattering of Karma for the smug senior bastids who got to fly off.

So, he and his pals Weed and Candy Andy consoled themselves with a jug of Old Overholt and swore that the second thing they'd do when their wives opened the door was to put down their seabag.

The toasted *Phantom* was moved to the back of the Boat's island and covered with brown butcher paper. The boat moved carefully thru the early morning sea fog, and early rising Puresome watched a line of tugs come out poking up thru the mist like log knots. A jolly blue and white Customs helicopter landed on deck, and went thru a show of passing the boat thru customs, sprinkling Federal holy water on it.

As the huge mass of the *Independence* eased along side the pier, there was a waiting crowd, and in it were the VA-86 wives, holding up a huge orange banner that said "WELCOME HOME, SIDEWINDERS!" Since there were sixteen aircraft and eighteen people that did not return, they were doubly happy that at least all their husbands made it home.

The dependents swarmed aboard

the boat and flooded the flight deck. Nobody asked about the hulking object wrapped in butcher paper. Puresome got the hell out as soon as he could. He had a flight on United Airlines to catch, taking himself and as much swag as he could carry back to Albuquerque, since Tunita had gone home to New Mexico to work while her husband was gone.

No doorknob or hatch hit him in the hiney enroute to the airport. But he was a different man, and he wondered how different his wife would be after being responsible and on her own for seven months.

What the hell. Everything was gonna be all right. His Daddy taught him that a long time ago. Besides, it was part of the package.



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