

PILOT STORIES

DEDICATED to the Memory
Of those from the **GREATEST GENERATION**

December 16, 2014

R.I.P.



Norm Deans 1921–2008

Frank Hearne 1924-2013

Ken Morrissey 1923-2014

Dick Herman 1923-2014

*"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on Wings of Gold;
I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth of sun-split clouds -
and done a hundred things You have not dreamed of -
wheeled and soared and swung high in the sunlit silence.
Hovering there I've chased the shouting wind along
and flung my eager craft through footless halls of air.
"Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,
where never lark, or even eagle, flew;
and, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
the high untrespassed sanctity of space,
put out my hand and touched the face of God."*

NOTE: Portions Of This Poem Appear On The Headstones Of Many Interred In Arlington National Cemetery.

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BERMUDA TRIANGLE

(excerpt from a talk given on Hornet - 21 May 2011)

In the spring of 1945, I was in training at Fort Lauderdale, Florida flying TBM Avengers learning to be a TBM carrier pilot. On one occasion I was assigned a navigation flight from Fort Lauderdale. The route was from Fort Lauderdale eastward over the Atlantic for about 150 miles then to turn north towards Bermuda and make a leg back. It was about a 3.5 hr flight. Everything was going fine; not much to do on a navigation flight but to see that you are on the right heading. And go the right time. The first leg went fine.

We turned up toward Bermuda and about half way on that leg of the flight I glanced at my compass and thought I was way off course. I looked again and both of my compasses were spinning on their own. I tried to contact my wingman and no radio response. So I wiggled my wings and got him in and soon determined by hand signals that we were having the same problem. Fortunately it was a fair weather day. The sun was still up. It was late in the afternoon so I simply turned and heading toward the setting sun.

As we got closer to land the compasses kept doing its crazy spinning stuff and as we approached the coast three things happened at once: I got a communication from Fort Lauderdale tower, the compasses straightened up and I could see land. We were coming in just south of Palm Beach.

I contacted my wingman and the rest of the flight went just as smooth as could be and we landed. We tried to explain our problems to the operations duty officer and maintenance people and they said "Ya, Ya". We came down the next day to see how the airplanes were and there was nothing wrong with the airplanes. Their attitude was that we were a couple of dumb ensigns who got lost. We couldn't do much about that.

About 8 months after that 5 TBM Avengers left from the same station in Fort Lauderdale and flew the same or very similar flight as what we were on and those 5 airplanes never came back. They disappeared completely. There was some communication from those planes that the seas don't look right, the ocean doesn't look right and the compasses are crazy. That is the last they heard from them.

Then an Avenger search plane went out to search for them and it made one transmission that they were experiencing strong winds. That was the Last seen of that TBM. It disappeared completely.

Much later it was finally figured out that the area we were flying in and those other planes were flying in was in the area of the "Bermuda Triangle."

WORST NIGHTMARE

(excerpt from a talk given on Hornet 21 May 2011)

A couple of years after the war I was flying in another torpedo squadron I experienced a naval pilot's worst nightmare. About 100 miles off the coast from San Diego we were operating with two carriers: the *Boxer* and the *Princeton*.

The *Boxer* had Air Group 19 aboard and they had all those nice AD Skyraiders and F-8 Bearcat fighters. I was in Air Group 13 and we had the TBM Avengers and the F-6 Hellcats as fighters.

Assigned to an evening flight and the weather was not good. After 3-1/2 hours we returned to the ship and it was black as pitch. The weather was still poor and it was raining. Coming alongside of the ship I was the third in the flight. The first plane peeled off; the second plane peeled off. And then I peeled off. Going down to about 500 feet, straightened out to make my approach. It was sort of scary out.

Saw the gray deck over there, made my approach, sort of rugged but I got a cut. Landed nicely and taxied forward. Stopped and turned off my power, turned off my radio, and stepped out of the plane. Standing on the wing I look around and the plane next to me was an AD. We didn't have any AD's on the *Princeton*. So I thought he was on the wrong ship. I looked further in the distance and saw several AD's out there. Now I knew I was on the *Boxer*. I crawled back into the airplane, turned on the power and radio and called the flight controller and told where I was and all I got was, "see you tomorrow."

Got out of the plane and went down to a Ready Room as I had several friends in Group 19. Took my ribbing as much as I could down there. Over the squawk box came a question, "is Ltjg Herman down there?" The Admiral wants to see him. It so happened that the admiral was stationed on the *Boxer*. I thought, "here go my wings." Went to the Admiral's quarters, saluted, he turned around stuck out his hand and said, "Son, I'm glad to have you on board. I don't care which ship you are on." I was much relieved. Went down and got a bunk and was told I would have the first flight out in the morning going back to the *Princeton*.

When the call came for "Pilots Man Your Planes" I went up to the flight deck and looked as there was my plane painted with graffiti from top to rudder. There was nothing but laughter on the flight deck and I thought that was bad. When I finally got back to my ship with the plane I really got it. I really experienced a PILOTS WORST NIGHTMARE.

Cdr. Dick Herman

COMING HOME

(excerpt from a talk given on Hornet - 21 May 2011)

Regarding flights in the Pacific during WWII, there were two major problems: one was navigation and the other was communications. The Pacific Ocean is mainly devoid of landmarks. Therefore, we had to navigate by a system called Dead Reckoning: you plot on a chart where you are going to leave, right down to the last detail. You leave the carrier and do your best to follow the flight plan. If you don't and when you get back the carrier is likely not to be where it is supposed to be. Or maybe it's where it's supposed to be but you aren't.

The other part of it was communications. We committed to the ship for radio silence about 99% of the time. The reasoning was that the Navy did not want the ships broadcasting to the extent that the enemy could use a direction finder to find the ships location. Surely they did not want us broadcasting so that the enemy could follow us back to the ship.

We were permitted two signals as I recall. Both sent in the blind; that is not expecting an answer. One of them was called a strike signal. That is if you going in on a particular target you were supposed to signal that you had the target in sight or making a run on it. The other was called a significant enemy sighting. And you did that in the briefest possible terms relaying to anyone who was listening the coordinates, the size and number of ships, their course and approximate speed. So that somebody behind you could come along and try to put them out of business.

No matter what kind of plane you were flying the culminating event was coming home. Sometimes you were low on fuel; mostly you were low on impatience and very tired. But ultimately you were trying to put the airplane down on a 300 foot pitching deck which was about 1/5 the size of a crop dusters strip out here in the farmland, and hopefully land the airplane intact. In most naval aviators' mind is the fact that this is the most harrowing time in getting the plane, yourself, and if you had a crew safe on the deck.

The crowning blow to it all was my first leave after the air group was rotated back to the States. I was 20 years old, my driver's license had expired and I walked into that DMV office down by the auditorium in Oakland. Behind the desk was a wizard old guy. I handed him my license and said that I wanted a renewal of my license. He looked at me and said, "You are only 20 years old, Sonny, you are going to have to get your folks to sign for this."

Frank Hearne

GOING THE WRONG WAY

When recalled back into active duty with the Navy, having been in the V-5 program at the University of Minnesota, we were being carrier qualified in Corpus Christi, TX. On my first flight off of this reconfigured carrier our orders were to fly off the carrier and regroup as a squadron at 5,000'. When it was my turn I left the carrier and started my climb. However, for some reason I apparently became somewhat "paralyzed" and overshot my first left directional change. I continued - and continued to climb in a straight shot out from the carrier. Reaching 3,000 feet I received a message from the ships skipper, "Almquist, do you have control of your plane or is God flying it?" He continued to "request" that upon return to the ship to "please" stop by and "visit" with him. I did; he graciously requested that I had better do next time - and I did.

Lee Almquist

HUMANITARIAN AID NEAR THE GRAND CANYON

Our squadron, HS-2, had just returned from its 2nd combat tour off Vietnam in late October of 1967. It had been rewarding in many ways as we had been flying a lot of combat search and rescue into North Vietnam. However, it had also been a deadly cruise. Between combat losses and accidents we had lost 15 of our number in less than a year. Following a month of standing down and leave for many personnel after we arrived at our home base NAS Imperial Beach, California, we had just settled into a routine of light flying schedule and training new squadron mates.

In late December of that year, northern Arizona was hit by a huge blizzard. Parts of the state near and south of the Grand Canyon received 84" of snow in less than 3 days. There were hundreds of stranded ranchers, residents of small towns and Native Americans on their reservations in the area. They rapidly grew short of food, feed for their animals, medicine and many of the necessities of life.

I don't know who made the decision to act, (not sure FEMA even existed at that point), but whoever they were they decided to bring in helicopters from all over the southwest. We are talking Army Chinooks and Hueys, Navy and Air Force H-3's and Air National Guard birds. I don't specifically remember and Marines, but there might have been Marine H-46's too, if the Marines had them by then. The high altitudes limited the value of H-34's because they had R1820's and would have been at a real disadvantage. Even though it was cold as hell, which helped the density altitude we started every day at 4,000 msl and went up from there. It was also no place to be flying around at ground level through canyons in a single engine recip.

We flew 4 birds, with a standard 4 man crew and carried our own maintenance crews and a small amount of spare parts. More spare parts and extra maintenance personnel were flown in at a later date. At the time I was a Ltjg and not directly involved with maintenance but even I was aware of what a logistical nightmare we were facing. We first flew to Luke AFB near Phoenix. We left a cadre of maintenance people there and then the next day we flew to Flagstaff. Once we left Luke, we were on our own. That is to say, from that geographic point on, there was no fixed wing support for personnel or parts.

When we arrived at Flagstaff we landed at the municipal airport. First of all we are landing at a bit over 7,000 ft. The tower gave us the location of a landing spot and cleared us to land. I was the co-pilot and as such didn't make the actual landing. The HAC approached our landing spot and his only comment was, "that looks really small." Keep in mind that we had just spent 8 months landing on the back ends of Cruisers and Guided Missile Destroyers. Trust me, this spot in Flagstaff was, in fact, SMALL. It was also, very, very white. They had taken bulldozers and carved out a spot for us to land. The storm was gone and it was a very clear night. Oh yes,

did I forget to mention this was a night landing? As we approach our "landing pad" we start blowing so much snow that we went totally IFR at about 60' AGL. We (I should say he) was now totally on instruments and I was of little help as I could see nothing but blowing snow. During the approach we utilized our Radar Altimeter (which, thank God, we actually) Air Force H-3 Jolly Green Giants did not have said Radar Altimeters, but that is another whole story. One problem with the RadAlt is that it can think that the crusted top of the snow is the ground. Not good. Fortunately as we approached the hole in which we were about to land the RadAlt picked up the actually landing surface. Imagine the shock when your RadAlt starts reading 30" instead of 10'. We made it (duh) without any further little surprises until we shut down the rotors, only to discover that the walls of our little hole were about 7' higher than the top of our rotors. The rotors are 13' high. As we departed the helo we also noticed that the diameter of the hole was about 10 to 15' wider than the arc of our rotors and the tail rotor cleared by about 20'. After all these years it is possible I am exaggerating the clearances, but if I am, its not by much. It was classic case of putting 20,000 lbs of shit in a 15,000 lbs bag. O.K. a 25,000 lb bag.

As we left the bird in its new home we failed to notice something we should have picked up on. The outside air temp was 5 degrees F. We had just spent several month flying in temps closer to 100 degrees. This oversight would come back to bite us the next morning. After preflighting the bird we began the startup procedures. Imagine our surprise than as we lite off the #1 engine the T5 literally raced passed red line. We caught it and secured the engine. Fortunately no seals were fried but a lesson learned that all airline pilots already know. Frozen engines don't much like starts like that. The rest of time in Flagstaff and Tuba City, our babies went to bed at night with electric blankets around the engines. Needless to say, we did not have access to steam or any other source to heat the engines. Fortunately it was clear for the next 10 days and we encountered no icing problems.

Every morning we would launch at 0 dark 30 and fly to a very small municipal airport at Tuba City Arizona. From there we be given our mission instructions and began flying on a daily basis delivery food and medicine to the trapped civilians and where necessary evacuate them to safety. Thus began 10 days of some of the most gratifying and certainly the most fun flying I ever got to do. It was literally 50 hours of legalized flat hatting. For you non pilot types that's the kind of flying we airdales love the most which is also the kind of flying that can rapidly lead to you losing you wings, or worse. Actually, not much would be worse than losing your wings.

One afternoon I was flying in the right seat, which even though not the HAC (Helicopter Aircraft Commander) you are pretty much in control of what is happening. I had just landed in the corral of a Navajo rancher. We were at about 7,000' and had delivered food to his family. As we departed the corral and as we reached the edge we flew just above the treetops. They started out as saplings and as we got further away they got taller. Eventually they reach heights of perhaps 200'. By this time, we too, were at about 200" and had transitioned to about 100 knots. About then we reach the edge of the butte upon which his ranch was located. At the

edge of this cliff the butte went down about 1,500' at pretty near 80 degrees. At the bottom of this "canyon" were mounds that looked to be about 300 to 400' feet high. They looked like very large stalagmites. I looked over at the HAC in the left seat and then nodded in the direction of the canyon. He keyed the ICS and said, "Hell, go for it". So I did. I dumped the nose, banked left and put in right (opposite) rudder. We fell like a rock down the wall of the canyon, recovered a couple of hundred feet above the stalagmites and flew off to our next delivery point. Pretty calm stuff for a fighter or bomber pilot. But a kick in the ass in a helicopter. Also a totally stupid thing to do, but I guess if you survive it and you don't get caught it is, by definition, not stupid.

One really cool mission that my HAC got to do (I was flying with someone else and unfortunately missed being in on it) was a really cool rescue. He and another co-pilot and their two crewmen rescued 16 Navajo men women and children, plus 3 of their dogs. The Indians had been out gather pinion nuts, or some type of nuts, and had been trapped by the storm. Cool enough in of itself, but the rescue took place at twilight on the ridge of the north rim of the Grand Canyon. Given the temperatures and the lack of food, there could well have been several casualties over the next several days and nights.

Later when I was flying with this particular pilot we were flying back from Tuba City to Flagstaff. We had lost one of our hydraulic control systems. As per emergency procedures, we were flying low and slow. 60 knots and about 40'. I don't want to admit it but we were also following Army flying procedures and were using a highway as a navigational aid. Just kidding John with that one. At any rate as we were flying south we were approached by someone driving north on the highway. He had a spotlight on his pick-up and apparently thought it would be very cute to shine said spotlight into the cockpit of a low flying helicopter. Bad move. Size does count. Our spot light was a lot bigger and brighter than his spotlight. A little bit of tit for tat and he turned his off. At least he didn't run off the highway.

Mike Arrowsmith
1967

REASON FOR BECOMING A PILOT

Back in the late 1940's it was necessary for males upon turning age 18 to register for the draft. I turned 18 in January of 1948 at the time of my mid-year HS graduation. To register, I did.

Along comes the Korean War in 1950. Not wanting to get drafted as I was in my second year at San Francisco State College I joined the Naval Reserve program at NAAS Oakland. Being very naïve and unassuming I was assigned as a plane captain in VF-873. What I knew about being a plane captain you could put on the head of a thumb tack. It so happens that the plane in VF-873 was the Grumman F-6 Hellcat.

In June of '50, while at the Reserves, a pilot asked any of us enlisted if we wanted to take a ride in a plane. Having never been in a plane I quickly volunteered. The plane was a TBM Avenger. I got in the belly of the plane and we took off. I was hooked.

When I got home I excitedly told my parents that I got a ride in a plane and would like to sign up to become a Naval Pilot. Taking a physical and mental exams I had to wait until November when order came through to report to Pensacola and be in class 1-51.

On December 13, 1951, I qualified with 6 carrier landings on the USS *Monterey* CVL- 26. I was then transferred to Corpus Christi, TX for advanced training. Guess what plane I would be flying? Yes, it was the Grumman F-6 Hellcat, the same type that I knew nothing about back in 1950.

What goes around, comes around. It was a fun plane to fly.

Dale Berven
NAVCAD 1951-52

DILBERT DUNKER

During the 16 weeks of pre-flight, Naval Aviation Cadets (NAVCADs) had various educational classes and P.T., physical training. In the latter portion of P.T. cadets had to swim a certain distance in a certain amount of time and also get in the Dilbert Dunker. This was a poor excuse of an airplane cockpit where you got strapped in and waited. Waited for the contraption to slide down a steep slope into the swimming pool and get turned upside down. This simulated your ditching a plane at sea.

The cadet just ahead of me had a somewhat uncomfortable experience in that when he was overturned the parachute he was sitting on slid out from under him and got caught under the seat. Thankfully, they have two swimmers with snorkels that check things out.

My turn was next. Guess what? The same darn thing happened to me so I just relaxed and let the swimmers get me out. For anyone who was a weak swimmer it must be a horrifying experience. Since this happened twice they shut down the Dunker until the problem could be remedied.

Dale Berven
VF-91 1953

PRIDE OF A PILOT

Back in the 1950's, a NAVCAD (Naval Aviation Cadet) had to make 6 carrier landings to complete basic training. You train, train, and more train to perfect the FCLP (field carrier landing practice). This simulates an actual carrier landing, yet it doesn't. Once you make all 6 landings you think you are King of the Mountain.

Those going on to single engine advanced training flying fighter planes at the end of your training you had to make 12 successful landings. Then after completing that phase you earned your "Wings of Gold." Again, you were on the top of the world, King of the Mountain.

Once you get into the fleet and make numerous carrier landing on rough seas and sometimes witness fatal carrier landings you realize that you are not king anymore. Just another mortal trying to do their very best and stay alive.

Dale Berven
Pre-Flight & Training Command
Pensacola, FL. 1951-52

MORAL QUESTION – SHOULD I OR NOT?

In the Korean War many of the supplies received by the North Korean soldiers were transported by ox-carts. Usually, the person pulling the ox cart was a civilian. Do I go down and try to destroy him? Does he or doesn't he have ammunition that will be shot back at you? If you attacked the cart and the thing explodes the pilot would thank God for making the right decision. However, if there were no explosion all you could do is pray that the civilian did not get hurt. We were not after the general populace, only the armed forces. For some pilots it was a hard decision and I know of some who talked it over with the chaplain.

Dale Berven
VF-91 1953

LETTER SENT HOME - 8 April 1953*

(letter sent home from the USS Philippine Sea, CVA-47)

Dear Folks,

I might start this letter out by saying I had a very interesting and trying day. First of all, coming back from a strike (mission over No. Korea) this morning I got a barrier on landing. Didn't hurt the plane or myself though. Then on a CAP (Combat Air Patrol) this afternoon, after being catapulted I had complete electrical failure. I came around on an emergency landing. I had fuel in my starboard (wing) tip tank but not in my port tank. That, therefore, made my right wing heavy. Below 140 kts. The plane wanted to go into a right turn (or the right wing wanted to drop on me.) So I made a straight in carrier pass and took a cut at 150 kts. Pretty fast! The right wing started to drop but luckily or skillfully, however you want to put it, I touched down before any damage could be done. As all carrier pilots say, "what the hell – as long as you get out in one piece – damn good landing."

Dale Berven
VF-91 1953

SENSE OF HUMOR - 1

Flying an aircraft off a carrier takes skill, concentration, and luck. It doesn't prevent aviators from having a sense of humor. During late 1952 the USS *Philippine Sea* CVA-47 with Carrier Air Group Nine was heading to the Korean War. We departed Alameda in December and headed for Hawaii and the ORI (Overseas Readiness Inspection).

Leaving Hawaii in early January 1953, and bound for Japan most of the pilots had been ashore in Honolulu and had to fly their planes out to the ship. The night before departure the pilots lived it up. A Ltjg in VF-91, Charlie Adams, was a likeable "live-wire" and an excellent pilot. On the last night out he and others came across a small sign that Charlie wanted. Upon landing on the carrier the next day and disengaging the tail hook, Charlie taxied forward and while opposite the Island he hung the sign out the right side of the cockpit – "CAUTION - STUDENT PILOT." Most everyone laughed except the exec of our squadron, he was furious.

SENSE OF HUMOR - 2

Each ship and each squadron has a call sign. The call sign for the *Phil Sea* was "Onionskin"; the call sign for VF-91 was "Junegrass." In the landing pattern at the 180 position (opposite the ship) a pilot will call in giving his plane number, state gear down, hook down and give his fuel state (number of pounds of fuel).

Charlie Adams again was at his best. He called in - "Onionskin, this is Junegrass 07, gear down, hook down, state 800 lbs." He then added, "My radio is out if you read me rock the ship."

There was complete silence.

SENSE OF HUMOR - 3

Finally, after returning from Korea, four of us decided to drive up to Tahoe and go skiing. Going up US 50 towards Tahoe the car was pulled over by a CHP officer. He got out, looked us over, and said, "What do you think you guys are a bunch of jet pilots?" We laughed, and he said "Oh NO." The look on his face was something to behold. We informed him that we just returned from Korea. The driver didn't receive a ticket, just a warning to go slow and also a Welcome Back greeting.

Dale Berven
VF-91 1953

SENSE OF HUMOR – 4

On the USS *Philippine Sea* CVA-47, the junior officers (Ensigns and Ltjgs) ate dinner at 1700. The senior officers (Lt. and above) ate at 1800. One day I had the duty officer watch in our Ready Room and was relieved just before 1800 so I could get dinner. I sat next to a Lt. in our squadron who was somewhat of an alcoholic.

The menu was spaghetti with meat balls. The meat balls were tasty but very rubbery and was hard to cut. Being a lazy ensign I used my fork to dissect the meat ball and when pushing down on the fork my hand slipped and went kaboom into the spaghetti and sauce. My hand was flat on the plate and one noodle went flying out under my little finger and landed squarely on the Lt's left cheek. That noodle SLOWLY slid down his cheek and finally fell off. Talk about those around us laughing. I learned a lesson: always use a knife when cutting into a Navy cooked meat ball.

SENSE OF HUMOR – 5

Prior to leaving for Korean on the Phil Sea our squadron, VF-91, stationed at NAS Alameda went down to San Diego for Carrier Quals. We were there over the weekend.

One night after qualifying on the ship four of us, two ensigns and two Lt. went out bar hopping. One of them, Lt. Hugh Batten, a WWII navy ace for shooting down 5 enemy planes, was very athletic. I was somewhat of an athlete. Walking down a street we came to a gas station that had a flag pole and a light standard close by. Hugh challenged me to see who could climb up the pole faster. He took the flagpole and I had the light standard.

We were up about 10-12 feet when we heard a whistle and someone shouting to get down. Lo and behold it was the Shore Patrol. The poor guy didn't know what to say to us officers. I can imagine what he told the other S.P.'s about seeing two dumb officers on a pole.

Oh well, BOYS WILL BE BOYS.

Dale Berven
1953 VF-91

“POOPY SUIT”

When the water temperature is below 60 degrees (or thereabouts) naval aviators must wear cumbersome exposure suits commonly referred to as “poopy suits” to help prevent hypothermia if having to ditch. The waters in the Sea of Japan off the coast of Korea during the winter months are really cold so flying mission during the Korean War necessitated wearing these suits.

When using the waterproof suits ones had to use talc or baby powder and sprinkle inside the suits in order to step and slide into the outfit. It was not an easy chore.

There were occasions when we had to land on an auxiliary field in South Korea known as K-18. This field housed the So. Korean Air Force flying P-51 Mustangs. It also had tents where one might use in case it was an overnigher. A Gedunk (and bar) was available for both enlisted and officers alike.

One of the pilots in VF-91 figured out that he could insert about 12 cans of beer in the numerous pockets on the poopy suit. This made him look like the Michelin Man in commercials.

Coming back to the ship after having landed at K-18 Ltjg McDonald made a good landing, raised the tailhook, then added power to start taxiing. As soon as he started moving he throttled back but the throttle was stopped by a beer can sticking out the side of his suit. Unfortunately before he could correct the situation he slowly hit another plane and caused minimum damage to both.

To prevent serious consequences to Mac, the maintenance chief and maintenance officer both wrote up the accident report as – THROTTLE LINKAGE FAILURE.

Dale Berven
VF-91 1953

A WAR THAT COULD HAVE STARTED...

On July 23, 1954, two Chinese Communist planes shot down a British airliner off of Hainan Island, a very large island off the south-east side of China, just north of Vietnam. The US Navy had a task force in the area that consisted of the *Hornet* and the *Philippine Sea*. Both carriers participated in a search and rescue operation. It so happened that a ship nearby recovered 10 survivors of the plane. Another 9 had died.

Three days later two AD Skyraider aircraft from the *Phil Sea* were attacked by Chinese planes and the Skyraiders shot down two Chinese aircraft. This confrontation was quickly known as the Hainan Incident. The media got hold of the story and Life magazine quickly sent a reporter and photographer out to the task force.

The day after the *Phil Sea* pilots shot down the two Red planes, my flight was on a CAP (combat air patrol) flight. Just prior to our returning to the task force my flight leader purposely flew over the Chinese mainland hoping to lure some MIGs up for a dogfight. Talk about eyeballs wide open! Fortunately, no Communists planes took the bait. It's a wonder we didn't start an international confrontation.

At that time the Admiral had his flag on the *Hornet*. This meant that the pilots of the *Phil Sea* and the media personnel had to come to the *Hornet* to meet with the admiral. While on board, the Life photographer toured the ship, visited our Ready Room where we were being briefed for flight within an hour. Wouldn't you know it! This picture made the October 4, 1954 edition of Life picturing pilots of VF-91 from the *Hornet*. The pilots of the *Phil Sea* went berserk! They did the hard work and we got the copy. A reprint of this photo is hanging in Ready Room 4.

Dale Berven
VF-91 1954

MISSIONS OVER NORTH KOREA

One incident while flying a strike in Korea the primary target was a North Korean stronghold situated on a mountain that contained numerous tunnels. It was suspected of housing much ordnance. Well we made two runs dropping six 250 lb bombs each. On the 2nd run, two planes in front of me dropped their bombs and I thought the whole mountain top would explode. From numerous tunnel openings there were secondary blasts. It appears we did the job correctly and as expected. What a sight!

On 23 May 1953, I was in a 4 plane flight making an early morning 0430 (UGH!) strike somewhere in North Korea. That flight lasted 1.4 hrs. In the afternoon I had a Combat Air Patrol (CAP) at 1300 in a different airplane. This flight was 1.7 hours. The CAP flights get boring in that you are positioned out from the Task Force about 90-100 miles at 25,000'. The ship's Combat Information Center (CIC) directs you in flying an oval pattern ready to attack any possible enemy planes heading for the T.F.

It might be interesting to note that the plane flown in the morning had a Bureau No. of 123017. This plane, a Grumman F9F-2 Panther jet, is now located in the Cavanaugh Flight Museum north of Dallas, TX. In September of 2013, my wife and I visited this outstanding museum and were able to sit in the cockpit. What a thrill! It so happens to be the last flyable F9F-2 Panther around.

Dale Berven
VF-91

LANDING ON THE WRONG CARRIER

In good old fashion Navy tradition if a pilot lands on the wrong carrier the flight deck crewmen on the other carrier take the liberty of painting up the plane. It is a humiliating experience to fly back on board your carrier and the plane has a "paint job." This happened to former and late docent, Dick Herman. [Note: read Dick Herman's story "WORST NIGHTMARE"]

In 1954, flying off the *Hornet*, I was leading a flight of 4 F9F Cougars on a CAP mission. It was stormy out and the rain was coming down in sheets. Returning to the *Hornet* I led my flight into the flight pattern and approaching the fantail something was wrong. My brain circuit breakers were working overtime. What was wrong? Suddenly I determined that the Palisades Barrier, the nylon one to stop jets was different. This one was not the same height as the one on the *Hornet*.

I took a "wave-off" at the same time the Landing Signal Officer (LSO) gave me a cut. I was afraid that my tailhook would snag the barrier as it was being lowered. Thank God it turned out OK. Maybe my dyslexia came into play as the *Hornet* is CVA-12 and the ship I approached, *Boxer*, was CVA-21. Several weeks later I happened to see the LSO of the *Boxer* and asked him if he remember the *Hornet* pilot that almost landed on his ship. His comment, "that SOB was so low that his jet exhaust left a wake on the flight deck." My only comment was, "I am that SOB."

Dale Berven
VF-91 1954

HOW CASUAL CAN ONE PERSON BE?

On November 7, 1954, Ltjg Carlos Baker of VF-91 was scheduled for a flight that included Ltjg Jim Gray, my roommate. What follows is taken from a letter I wrote to my parents on Nov. 8.

“Probably by now you have read in the paper about Ltjg Baker in our squadron. If not, here is the story. Immediately after the cat shot he felt the controls acting up. One of the other fellows told him he was on fire. By that time everyone was on the air telling him what to do. Carlos decided to climb up and get altitude. Jim Gray was by then flying on his wing explaining the whole tail section was aflame. The fire soon went out but he was still having control difficulty. It was impossible to land back aboard so they informed him to try and land at Taipai, Formosa (now Taiwan). As it was, Taipai was socked in so he headed back to “hit the silk.” Every passing minute the plane was getting harder to control. All this time Jim was flying on his wing. He finally got near the force and used the ejection seat. After getting free of the seat and opening the chute, he remembered about the 8mm movie camera in his flight suit. He immediately got to the camera and started taking pictures of his descent. He took some of his chute above him, of Jim orbiting him, and of his plane spinning below. All this time we were watching him and his chute. He was picked up by our helo in no time and is flying again today. We are anxious if his film survived the salt water OK as they will be invaluable. How casual can one person be?

[P.S. Carlos and his family did visit the Hornet Museum several years ago on a family live aboard. He is a retired Superior Court judge from Capitola, CA.]

Dale Berven
VF-91 1954

TOTAL REVULSION, FEAR, AND HELPLESSNESS

Prior to leaving on the 1954 USS *Hornet's* "Round the World Cruise", my squadron was in San Diego for C.Q's (carrier qualifications) to happen on the USS *Philippine Sea* CVA-47.

Poised on the starboard catapult ready for launch, I was strapped in the cockpit of my Korean War vintage F9 Panther jet. Engine straining at 100 % power, I scanned the instruments for final assurance that all was ready for my first catapult launch from a fleet class carrier. The launch would be followed by my first jet carrier landing, followed, in turn, by several more of the same. Completion of this sequence of carrier launches and landings would mark the end of my long quest to become a fully qualified fighter pilot in the United States Navy. I was the junior pilot in a 24 pilot squadron that was about to become operationally ready to join the Seventh Fleet in the South China Sea aboard the USS *Hornet*.

It had been nearly two years since I had begun my training as a Naval Aviation Cadet in Pensacola. The training had been intense, tough, sometimes rather exciting, almost always really fun and rewarding, occasionally mixed with elements of (minor?) trepidation. But the experience had been totally positive! There had been no time when I had thought that this was not for me.

Completing my scan of the panel, everything said "GO". I pushed my head back against the headrest, and fixed my left hand around the throttle locking system that prevented the throttle from being thrust aft (idle) during the forward thrust of the catapult. Looking straight ahead, with my right hand I saluted the catapult officer, who was out of my sight, below and to my right, but who I knew was watching me for that salute which would be his signal to pass the word to the crewman who would fire the catapult on his signal. I then quickly returned my right hand to the stick, and placed my right elbow against my stomach, which was supposed to prevent the stick from being forced full aft during the acceleration of the catapult. Then I waited for that second or so (it seemed much longer), for the humungous kick in the pants that I had been trained to expect.

In my reaction to the experience that followed, there was no hint of ambiguity. The instant the catapult fired, and continuing for the second or so that it took to hurl me and my Panther jet off that ship, I was instantly filled with an awful feeling of total revulsion, fear, and helplessness! What the hell am I doing here?!!! What have I gotten myself in to? It was clearly and completely a "no fun" experience. The force and violence of the acceleration was simply so much stronger than I had anticipated that I did not like it one bit! For the first time in my entire training I had just been flung through an experience that I clearly and unambiguously hated, and as I retracted the landing gear, closed the canopy, and began to prepare for the turn down wind for the all important qualifying landings, it was clear that my attention was not

focused on the approach and landing as it should have been. My mind was occupied with a single thought: "If I manage to successfully get this bird back aboard that ship, they're gonna do that to me again!!!"

To this day, I hardly remember those first two landings. My mind was filled with the dread of the cat shot that would follow the landing! My experience of the second shot was the same. It was no fun! Again I returned for another landing aboard, full of dread for the next shot! But although that third shot was still not fun, it didn't seem quite as bad as the first two, and, with the fourth jet cat shot, I said goodbye forever to my dread and dislike of the catapult. Beginning with the fourth shot, my reaction to the experience was forever the same. My body and my mind had somehow adjusted. As I shot down the track, I would bellow a mighty and gleeful "Yahooooo!!!" into my oxygen mask (which, of course, no one could hear, including me, over the noise of the engine and the catapult and the wind). I had successfully conquered the single instance of my total naval aviation experience (to that point) that I had found to be unequivocally unpleasant!

Gardner Bride
1954 VF-93

A VERY WET LANDING

The F-8 Crusader comes aboard an aircraft carrier at a pretty good clip; somewhere around 160 knots. Doing that on an Essex class ship makes for some interesting sights and events.

The Navy requires an aircraft to have a minimum amount of fuel on board before starting a carrier approach. Reach that fuel level and the pilot has to in-flight refuel. No big deal and it happens often.

One dark and stormy night (aren't they all when you're trying to get aboard) one of the Crusader drivers was making an approach after a mission over North Vietnam. He got a little high, missed the 4 arresting gear wires, and boltered. Off into the night he went to try again. His next try was the much the same and again he boltered. Now he was below minimum fuel but "knew" he could get the beast on deck next time around so didn't refuel.

After the third miss a high and urgent voice came over the air waves "I'm low on fuel and need a tanker".

My roommate was the duty A-4 Skyhawk tanker pilot that night and had been watching the recovery from overhead the ship and saw the whole episode evolve. He had the F-8 in sight and called, telling the Crusader pilot to fly straight ahead and he would join on him. It was a very quick rendezvous. The refueling hose was deployed as the A-4 was joining up and it appeared the day would be saved.

The refueling panel on the Skyhawk is located on the left console just behind the throttle. This panel has two identical toggle switches right next to one another. One extended and retracted the refueling hose. The other allowed fuel to flow to the receiving plane. To extend the hose its switch was moved to the aft position. To allow fuel flow its switch was moved to the forward position.

Most tanker pilots flew with the fueling switch in the auto (forward) position so the receiver would get fuel as soon as the hose was pushed five feet into the buddy store. My fearless roommate left it in the off position until the guy needing fuel said "I've got a green light, give me gas", or words to that affect.

The F-8 pilot got the green light and asked for fuel. The tanker pilot reached down and pushed forward what he thought was the fueling switch. Unfortunately he hit the retract switch and the hose promptly disappeared back into the buddy store. Much screaming about putting the F*%^#king hose back out ensued. It was quickly re-extended but alas too late.

The fighter pilot's engine ran out of fuel and quit. He was forced to eject into the cold, wet, dark sea. The plane was lost but the pilot got picked up by the ship's helicopter. I don't know what words were exchanged between my roomy and the very unhappy Crusader driver but I noticed that every time the *Ticonderoga* got to port the fighter guy never seemed to have to pay for his drinks.

Allan Cartwright
1968 VA-195

ALPHA STRIKE

During the Vietnam War our government had a list of highly desirable targets. These were on the "A" list. To those of us flying these missions they were known as Alpha Strikes. An Alpha Strike is a large air strike against an important target. Most of these strikes were generally in or near major northern cities: Hanoi, Vin, and Haiphong as examples. These places were where the North Vietnamese had large trans-shipment points, railroads, power plants, and air force bases. Hanoi was also the capital of the country. Haiphong had a harbor with access to the South China Sea.

Consequently the American interdiction effort was concentrated in and around these areas. The North Vietnamese (NVN) were well aware of this and had these places well defended with anti aircraft artillery (AAA) and surface to air missiles (SAMS). There were also NVN fighter sorties flown against US planes but they picked their time and places and weren't nearly as large a threat as the ground defenses. Attacks by the U.S. Air Force were generally made from the south and west out of bases in Thailand. Navy strikes were made from carriers in the Tonkin Gulf coming in from the south and east.

The majority of Navy combat flights went looking for targets of opportunity south of the hub cities. These flights were made along Highway 1 and the rivers winding throughout the flat lands. Bridges, rail yards, roads, trucks or boat traffic were all fair game.

When the weather was good and the leadership in Washington, D.C. deemed in necessary and advantageous, word would come to the fleet that an Alpha Strike was to be launched. These attacks might be by a single ship's airwing, a combination of multiple carriers aircraft, or also might be coordinated with Air Force planes. They were a very big deal and for pilots the most dangerous missions.

The summer of 1968 provided all the elements for many such strikes to be launched. The USS *Ticonderoga* had three A-4 Skyhawk attack squadrons, two F-8 Crusader fighter squadrons and an F-8 photo detachment on board as well as other support planes. Each attack and fighter squadron had fifteen to sixteen planes. The Skyhawk mission was primarily as a bomber but had equipment and weapons (Shrike air to ground missiles) for detecting and destroying surface to air missile radar sights. The fighter squadrons mostly defended the attack group from enemy planes but, much to the chagrin of the fighter jocks, could also be armed with bombs. The photo birds would take pictures of targets before and after strikes.

An Alpha strike would consist of between 25 and 30 planes. The aircraft were divided into different task groups. The first planes over a target were the photo planes with their fighter escort. They took pictures of the target before it was hit by the main force, Next came the A-4s equipped with the anti SAM, Shrike missile. Their whole purpose was to get the SAMs to fire at

them and then silence the sights so the main strike force wouldn't have to dodge the ground to air missiles. Right behind came the anti aircraft artillery planes. They were to attack the AAA sights to lessen the ground forces chances of downing any planes. As well as high explosive bombs the anti AAA aircraft could also carry cluster bomb units (CBUs). CBUs were an anti personnel bomb. It didn't destroy the AAA sight but took it's radar off line. Any personnel in the area would be discourage from manning the radar-less guns. Finally the main bombing group would dive in on the target.

The strike A-4s, and any unlucky F-8's so tasked, were loaded with different types of bombs dependent on the target. The Skyhawk could carry a variety of high explosive bombs: from 250 pound through 2000 pound. The maximum bomb load was in the neighborhood of 6000 pounds. A full load of weapons and full fuel tanks on hot days made the A-4 too heavy for a catapult takeoff. That problem was solved by not filling the fuel tanks. But that presented the problem of not having enough fuel to get to the target and return to the ship. That was overcome by having the A-4s refuel after getting airborne and then refueling again after the strike.

Not all the defenses devised by the strike group worked all the time or completely. That made life difficult for the bomber groups. Avoiding SAMs or AAA caused the attacking planes to not have the ideal roll in altitude and/or airspeed. After heavy maneuvering trying to re-acquire the target became a problem too. Once in the dive run concentration was focused on altitude, airspeed and keeping the crosshairs on the target. Hopefully at the drop altitude (5,000 feet above the target) the dive angle and airspeed were all correct and it was bombs away and the target got hit.

The next order of business was to make a mad dash to the sea and join up with the flight. The ocean was the refuge for pilots. The Navy had ships, helicopters, and planes there to facilitate rescuing any pilots who may have been shot up and had to get out of a battered plane. Unfortunately many pilots never got to the water and became prisoners of war. Many others lost their lives over the skies of North Vietnam.

Alpha strikes were dangerous and scary. Anyone who says differently is either crazy or lying; most likely the later.

The last part of a strike was to get the plane back aboard ship. Not always an easy task after the adrenaline had dissipated and the nerves were not quite calmed down. But once in the comfort of the ship there was always a shower, a hot meal, and maybe a toddy ----or two.

Allan Cartwright
1968 VA-195

HELP, WHERE ARE WE?

After completing Naval Flight Training getting my "Wings" and Survival/POW school I was sent to Okinawa to join my squadron.

After a few months I was assigned to take a squadron aircraft type S-2 to Sasebo, Japan for overhaul and bring back an aircraft that had been overhauled. The overhaul procedure is called PAR, "Precision Aircraft Rework."

All the work done was by a Japanese aircraft company and the employees spoke very little English. I asked to test fly the aircraft before flying 1000 miles back to Okinawa over southern Japan and the Pacific Ocean.

We took off and climbed out through an overcast to 5000 feet. After a few preliminary airborne tests all our communication VHF & UHF radios failed, plus our navigational radios. We now were I.F.R. (instrument flight rules) not able to talk or navigate. As the tension rose quickly we were basically lost and norodo (abbrv. - no radio) IFR.

I had a copilot and 1 crewmember sitting in the rear of the aircraft. I called him to the cockpit and asked if he had a H.F. (high frequency) radio which is basically used only for very long range coms which is 1500 to 2500 miles away.

The crewmember was able to operate the H.F. and talk to a distant radio station. We were to fly a triangle flight pattern which told the local radar operators we had no com. radios.

The H.F. station got a landline conversation to Sasebo approach control. Through this makeshift system and the crewmember yelling instructions from the rear of the plane to us in the cockpit we were vectored slowly back to the runway through the weather.

Once on the ground it became very clear how close we were to running out of fuel in a foreign country with no form of communication and with bad weather conditions.

Henceforth I never took a test flight unless the weather was VFR (visual flight rules).

Tom Constable
1968

THE GRUMMAN IRON WORKS

It was only my second takeoff in the S-2, and I was all over the runway. This was normal. The S-2 is a short-coupled aircraft, and there is a large hydraulically operated panel in the rudder that acts like a sail but keeps the aircraft straight in the event of an engine failure. It takes a few tries to keep the plane going straight down the runway on takeoff.

The plane kept drifting off to the right and, as we lifted off, cocked off to the right. It was clear there was only one way we were going – down. The instructor took the aircraft, pulled the power to straighten us out, and we crashed about 50 feet off of the right side of the runway. As we were sliding to a stop we hit a small retaining wall that had been dumped next to the runway when they built the Air Station (we didn't know this until later). It bent the plane in half and did major damage.

We turned everything off and scrambled out the top hatches. As I looked to my left, there was a fire starting under the port engine. Looking to the right, the main fuel pipe had broken and avgas was pouring onto the ground. It didn't take long to decide we did not want to be near that plane when the two met.

I don't remember how I got to the ground from the top of the plane, but I do remember the three of us raced to get away from the fire. Fortunately, the fire crew saw us go down and was about 15 seconds behind us. They got the fire out before it could reach the avgas. We escaped with shoulder strap burns, and the instructor had a nasty gouge in his helmet; otherwise, we were fine. There is a reason why you wear helmets and shoulder straps.

Turns out the starboard engine failed as we were taking off at the same time the rudder assist hydraulic mechanism jammed so there was no way the plane could be kept on a straight course. The investigation verdict was 100% mechanical failure.

We used to call the S-2 the Grumman tank. If you landed it flat, there was a good chance you would walk away. I can attest to that.

Bill Lewis
1960

THE NIGHT WE TRIED TO BURN DOWN CHARLIETOWN

NALF Charlestown, RI, was a WWII night interceptor training facility under the auspices of nearby NAS Quonset Pt., RI. Quonset was a prime training field and was tasked in the building of air groups for the Pacific. In later years it was one of the remaining major East Coast aviation bases, the primary mission of which was the training and hosting of carrier based ASW air groups and home port for *Essex* and *Lake Champlain*, both ASW carriers. For FCLP air groups primarily used Charlietown, day and night.

We carried .38 caliber pistols equipped with tracer ammo on all over water flights. Then another device was devised and issued for signaling called the pencil flare gun. Cartridges about the size of a triple A battery were screwed into to the pen-sized launcher wherein you would pull back the trigger and let go. Simple? But it took two hands where the pistol only took one?

As often, our air group went to Charlietown for night "bounce" and decided to evaluate the flare gun against the pistol. One plane was sent to Block Island (about ten miles) and anchored at various altitudes while we fired one shot from each device from the LSO platform so the pilots could record the comparative illumination of each. Radio communication had been established of course. When completed, the observation plane was called back and we started bouncing. Soon the station crash trucks came out!! Oh shee..., we had started a fire in the brush which was growing all over between the many runways. The LCDR O-In-C came out in his truck and was Mad as a hatter! "You guys get off my field"! We had to pack up and resume the period back at home field, QP where there was normally a curfew of midnight! The currency of air group fixed-wing S-2's and A-1E's was needed to be able to go back aboard in a day or two and this was our last available opportunity to insure night currency! We finally finished and de-briefed. Then we LSO' went to the BOQ and emptied the beer machine by sun-up. What a night to remember! But I do not remember the results of this very un-scientific test - sorry!

I visited Charlietown several years ago. All the runways have been broken up and the brush is very high - what a blaze it would be now!

D.E. Lubich, LT, USN
1963

THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

Returning from night FCLP at NAS Quonset Pt. RI, the Air Group Duty Officer told all of us to go directly home and pack as we would be sailing for Cuban waters early the next day - the debrief would be done aboard ship. Were we finally going to war?! President Kennedy had backed down Nikita Khrushchev and the missiles were to be removed. My carrier, *Lake Champlain*, along with other ASW carriers such as *Essex*, *Wasp* and *Randolph*, was tasked to fly around the clock surveillance missions with both fixed-wing and helicopters to confirm the removal. The aircraft were the S-2 Tracker, A-1E Skyraider and H-34 Seabatt (helo).

Our first of many flights was in moonlight so visual sightings were easy. Radar was also used in conjunction or entirely later on. The two crewmen in the back were ready to write info the pilots would voice over the intercom. We up front were busy (on instruments) and at a very low altitude! Night minimum search altitude was 300 feet, but we needed to go lower in order to read the vessels name and home port off the stern. Running darkened while approaching from the stern, the co-pilot would arc off the 70 million candle power searchlight on the right wing to read the information. Then I would climb just enough to "rig" (identify the layout of the hull and deck arrangement, uprights, masts, funnel and course and speed. Most importantly of course was to see the missiles, at least those topside. A photo flare pod was slung under the right wing and operated by the co-pilot with the same control as for the search light. Small magnesium flares would eject and detonate to trigger the camera lens to open and get a picture. This was done several times to capture as many images as possible during the one run we were allowed. I worried that some hot head down there would fire at us - the S-2 had no armor plating nor self-sealing gas tanks!

The helicopter crews did their work in daytime and brought back pictures taken when alongside these ships. Some were enlarged and displayed in the after wardroom showing men and women on deck brandishing small arms while giving these crews the international salute!

The whole effort took about twenty eight days for which everyone received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

I wonder if Nikita ever put his shoe back on? He was the only First Secretary not to be buried in the Kremlin Wall.

D.E. Lubich, LTJG, USNR
1962

A HOLIDAY PRESENT

Out in the L'antic, one bleak, gloomy night,
came a loud call, wrought with great fright
"LSO to the platform", thus came my accord,
radar had something wanting aboard

I picked up my panels and peered thru the night,
only an apparition with pulsing red light
Into my dance I went, but to no avail,
for this one was trouble by the tail

The wave-off a sure thing to bet,
it came in high, low, fast and slow, so no choice but dive in the net
So another try for this carrier, with cut but no hook,
this strange craft succumbed to the barrier

Over on its back with reindeer all tangled,
another mortal pilot would have been mangled,
The crew quick with the rescue,
retrieved red suit and helmet askew

"Ho, Ho, Ho", his laugh-filled glee,
presents for all,
and glasses for me!

Dwight E. Lubich
LSO VS-22 USS *Lake Champlain* (CVS-39)

LAST DOWN, FIRST UP

After weeks of training for initial carrier landing qualification in the North American T-28 Trojan, the flight/group of the six of us "nuggets" were ready to go to the "boat". The night before this event I was asked by a fellow student (not in this flight) and his wife if I would baby sit their new daughter of just three days! They wanted to go out for a quicky (dinner that is). I had baby sat older children when in college for beer money, but not this young! Can you imagine the stress!

We seven (instructor leading) taxied out in a four plane section and a three plane section. Guess who was last? Once over the USS *Antietam* (CV-36) we were given signal Charlie, so our leader brought the flight down and we got started. First he arrested and then launched to anchor overhead while we goslings got our turns. The first two passes were intentional hook up or bolter passes to experience missing a cross-deck pendent (wire). Then with tailhooks extended we each were to make six arrested landings (traps). I didn't get any wave-offs either from technique error nor a fouled deck. This all happened so fast requiring extreme concentration that the experience was over but quite gratifying!

I was given the signal to join up with my flight but I could see only one other T-28 overhead wherein I expected to see (at least) most of the others. I climbed up and joined up with this, the only one, and it was the instructor! Where were the others? That night the instructor and his wife gave us a party after which we all went out to Pensacola Beach and finished the party in the surf. I don't remember how I got back to the BOQ!

D.E.Lubich, ENS, USNR
1960

SEEING IS BELIEVING!

When a warning system alerts the pilot of a problem, he/she may first hope that this is possibly a malfunction in the warning system, but then again, it might be real - so read on.....

Off Bermuda I was "shotgunning a second tour LCDR with lots of previous experience in the S-2 Tracker. He was re-qualifying and had been doing well as I had expected. Catapulting was the order of the day. Just after he had saluted the launching officer, the fire warning light illuminated for the right (starboard) engine! I quickly looked to my right (I was in the right seat) and saw that the paint was peeling off the inboard side of the cowling! No false warning - the genuine thing! No chance to abort as the launching officer had already signaled the "shooter" to fire. "Tom, fly and clean up and at least get some single engine airspeed, then I'll "punch it out" (feather) the Starboard engine". We ran the single engine and fire shutdown checklists and declared our predicament. We then switched seats as I was plane commander and would make the landing and we didn't have enough gas to get to Bermuda single engine. We practiced this scenario ashore. I later learned from my squadron CO, who was on the bridge with the ship's captain, who declared that "he's not going to make it"! What do captains know!?

As suspected, a blown exhaust stack was the cause. No distinguished flying cross but the satisfaction of successfully completing a single engine carrier landing.

D.E. Lubich, Lt, USN
1964



Dwight Lubich and Tom Coleman:
Stbd. engine fire on catapult shot -
feathered w/ single engine trap.

LOBSTERS IN THE AISLE!

After my fleet carrier tour, I was assigned as "Aerodynamics Program Officer" at the David W. Taylor R & D facility in MD. Flight pay was earned by flying four hours a month. My boss was a Captain who liked to entertain in the Washington, DC area - maybe looking for a promotion and held parties! On a couple of occasions, he would serve fresh lobster.

Knowing that I was current in the C-45/SNB (military version of the model 18 Beechcraft) at the Naval Air Facility at Andrews AFB, he asked (ordered) me to fly to NAS Brunswick to pick up a dozen (or so) lobsters. Glad to have a useful mission away from the desk, I grabbed a co-pilot and launched. It was common for military flights to do this same thing (training of course) and if you called ahead and placed an order it could be picked up at base operations.

Apparently the cardboard box got damp and with all that seaweed in there, and broke open when we hit turbulence. I had to go to the back where a very small head was located (yes, even much smaller than on modern airliners). Well, the lobsters were crawling around the cabin. I tried not to step on them and disappoint the Captain (my fitness report, you understand)! I collected them and put them into what remained of the box and tied it up with a parachute harness.

I hope that party was a success, however, the Captain never made Admiral!

D.E. Lubich, LT, USN
1966

IT ONLY TOOK TWO AIRPLANES

The ASW reserve air groups from both coasts converged at NAS Pensacola, FL on two different occasions to day re-qualify fleet experienced S-2 and E-1 pilots, most of whom were now airline pilots. Also, this was to day-qualify me as an angled deck/OLS LSO.

This was prior to the above date. In July of that year the three west coast squadrons operated off San Diego aboard *Ticonderoga* for our two week "cruise". Six plane commanders from each squadron were selected to night qual, myself being one, and if successful, I could get qualified as a night LSO.

The saga begins

The S-2 assigned to me at NAS Alameda had a previous write-up. The pilots gyro horizon had a habit of tumbling but had been "fixed". I only got as far as the SFO/OAK Bay Bridge on departure and guess what?

Oh well, the weather en route and at NAS North Island was good so we pressed on. The problem was fixed (again) and it flew several times with no problem. Guess which plane I got to go out to the "boat" and night qual? The first two landings were "duskies" which are those made after official night time but still were considered as night landings. I had to make a total of six arrested.

Then I had to declare that I would be down after the next trap (the gyro again) and was parked on the forward, starboard flight deck. This eliminated the use of one catapult and didn't go over well with the captain! I was given another plane parked behind the Island, and it had a history of "the pilots primary instrument lights circuit breaker popping"!

Pre-fighting it there next to the landing area was something I had never done and it was rather unsettling! I kept my flashlight at the ready (turned on) and launched. You guessed it, the jar of the launch popped it. I re-set it and flew the pass to a trap.

This happened on all subsequent passes. As a good Boy Scout, I was ready. I was now night angle-decked qualified both flying and waving. I heard the boarding rate (number of traps per hour) was higher than any active duty air group! What a night!

D.E. Lubich, LCDR, USNR
1971

KEEP HER RUNNING DWIGHT....

In preparation for carrier re-qualifying [see story *"It Only Took Two Airplanes"*], four VS-82 S-2s flew from Alameda to North Island for several days of day "bounce" (MLP) before leaving for Pensacola and flying out to Lexington. An overnight stop was planned for El Paso for rest (sure)! Just west of Phoenix I started to loose torque pressure in the left engine and white smoke was emitting from the engine breather. These R-1820 Wright Cyclones were recently experiencing master rod bearing failures and I expected a chip light, which detects metal failure, to illuminate. After a short study of the situation I knew something was wrong in there, so I called the flight leader that I would "cage it" (feather it) and head for Davis Monthan AFB at Phoenix. The leader replied "keep her running Dwight...we'll have liberty in El Paso tonight". No way, I'm the plane commander! I told the crew to make sure their parachutes were ready in case the right engine failed. The rest of the flight followed and landed. This was my second engine shut-down (see story entitled Seeing is believing), but a single engine landing on a long runway is easier than on a carrier deck. One of the crew in my airplane had some sport jumping experience and didn't trust Navy chutes and refused to go back up! Sooo, the flight leader, who was the squadron C.O., took him aside - guess what - he got back in another plane!

My co-pilot and I were told that a reserve C-118 (DC-6) would pick us up and take us to Pensacola. Much later it arrived and the crew was tired as they had flown from Alameda to San Diego and now had to make this stop! "Any of you guys ever flown one of these" asks the PC? "I was a flight engineer on these at United and have made a couple of landings" I answered. OK, once we level off you climb into the co-pilots seat. Once there I tried to lean out the engines, the sequence (throttle, prop control and mixture) I couldn't quite remember correctly, so I backfired number four! The crew chief was playing cards in the back and came running up to do it correctly. The PC in the left seat only stopped snoring!

The qualification aboard Lex went well and I picked up my plane in Arizona (engine change) and joined the flight back to Alameda.

D.E. Lubich, LT, USNR
1970

LIFE IN BASIC FLIGHT TRAINING

A college friend and I reported to NAS PENSACOLA 6 August 1960 for Naval Aviation Cadet training. Meeting the two of us at the local municipal airport was another college friend then in basic jet training at VT-4 Mainside NAS. As he drove us toward Pensacola he told us not to report in until late Sunday night as we would be instantly in the program and confined to the station.

The three of us enjoyed the weekend and did log into the INDOC BATTALION on Sunday night. Next spring in 1961 now in Basic Flight Training at NAAS Whiting Field I was a salty cadet. Heading into Pensacola for the weekend I decided to play a trick on the INDOC Battalion Cadet Officer on duty. Me wearing civilian clothes of course I walked into the Battalion looking lost. I introduced myself as a new cadet and tried to look unmilitary. The cadet officer said to get my gear and head up topside. I mentioned my "orders" did show report on the next Sunday night. Enjoying a weekend in Pensacola was my plan. The cadet officer tried to order me to stay and I said we could meet again on Sunday. He looked really disappointed as I headed out the door back to my real liberty.

I will bet the cadet officer was really going to hammer me when he thought me showing up.

Scott McIntosh
Pensacola, FL 1960

BELLY LANDING

As a First Class Naval Aviation Cadet stationed at NAS Corpus Christi, Texas in advanced training at Training Squadron 30 my flight was scheduled for a rendezvous training flight. It was Thanksgiving Day. The squadron line duty watch was on a light duty day.

Weather was warm and the sky was clear. Starting my preflight I opened the internal fuel cap and looked in. I saw purple shimmering which I took to be a full tank and later turned out to be heavy 115/145 purple fumes in a warm tank that had not been refueled for a day in Texas gulf weather.

Finished preflight. Start engine and taxi to run-up. Going through pre-takeoff I notice 600 pounds fuel indicated. Flight leader informed. Button pushed on fuel gauge and CB reset. Same indication. My visual check of fuel passed to flight leader with my feeling internal tank was full. Flight leader asks my intentions. My choice is to continue flight with what I believe to be a faulty gauge.

Needless to say, 600 pounds later the engine quit with my instant realization what I saw on pre-flight. Luckily we are flying over the Texas cattle range of the King Ranch.

I slow to decent speed and prepare to bail out following the preparation learned back at NAAS Saufley Field in the T-34 bail out trainer.

Mike and headphones disconnected.
Shoulder lap belt straps off.

Canopy open and crouch right on seat ready to jump. A last look back at the inside of the cockpit.

The attitude gyro shows AD descending, level in steady state.

IT WAS DOING JUST FINE WITHOUT ME.

I decided to rethink my plan giving this friend a break and land. Straps back on. Radio cords still disconnected. Cattle running zig zag across my landing line.



Landing with gear up flaps down. Helicopter ride back to NAS Corpus Christi. SPD Board. I give my story thinking full tank. Line Fueller swears he filled the tank.

Commander splits the difference and gives me a down requiring my study and explanation of the fuel system. Aircraft 137505 prop and engine changed. Back on the line. Years later a/c lost in Vietnam.

Scott McIntosh
LANDING ON THE TEXAS KING RANCH
25 NOVEMBER 1961
AD6 SKYRAIDER 137505

AILERON ROLL

SCENE

Reported to VA-95 as a 22 year old Ensign.

STRIKEX: Launch off USS *Ranger* (CVA-61), Single a/c flight, 2000# shape, internal and two drop tanks of fuel. VFR Low Level Routing Optional. Logbook shows 6.6 hr flight and recovery at NAS North Island.

Simulated target: Fox Field near Palmdale, CA

So this young Ensign planned a VFR routing direct to one of my homes in La Puente, CA, Mt. San Antonio College in Walnut, CA and Victorville, CA where my parents lived, then a route to Lake Mead killing time and eating lunch before starting my route and simulated strike on Fox Field.

ACTION

My AD Skyraider is heavy. Catapult launch off USS *RANGER* cruising West of Long Beach, CA was routine and I head toward La Puente.

While attending the local high school I worked at an auto shop owned by a former U.S. Marine who was wounded at Iwo Jima. Arriving overhead the shop I flew a tight 360 turn at about 1000 ft and waved at my former boss and crew.

Then I got the bright 22 year old idea to fly an aileron roll over head. Power changed to rated for 220-240 knots avoiding flying over the local high school. Then I descended to 500 ft agl before making a ten degree high climb for my aileron roll.

As the aileron roll started routinely at about 800 ft agl it slowed while inverted due to all the weight carried. The stick was slammed to limit and the rudder was deeply pressed. I managed to scoop out with a learning moment.

Enroute to Mt. San Antonio College the ceiling was lower and the 22 year old Ensign was going to try the same aileron roll. At about 90 degrees roll I stopped and rolled level reflecting on the previous 10-15 minutes.

Now heading to the Cajon Pass and the high Mojave Desert. The cloud ceiling was solid and blocked my VFR climb so I just climbed through the overcast being familiar with the highway 66 and the mountains around.

VFR again heading to Victorville low level I offset from highway 66 about 100 yards. There was not much traffic. Ahead I could see a car with a young boy sitting in the back seat with arms crossed looking out the rear window. Two adults were sitting in the front seat, perhaps his mother and father. As I got closer to the car flying at 100 ft agl the boy finally noticed my AD and I could see he became very animated, turning around to the front seat and likely telling them what he saw. The adults did not move. Perhaps the boy's report may have seemed too unlikely to the adults. The boy kept pointing at my AD. As I passed the car the adult heads snapped to my direction passing 300 feet away.

I imagine the boy's comment was, "See, I told you so."

Onward to Victorville.

My parents' home then was west of downtown in a neighborhood. Approaching my street I descended to about 75 ft agl and slowed to 100 knots with full flaps. Flying down the middle of the street I dropped a message bag with a red streamer that had a note to them I was deploying on the USS *Ranger* in the Pacific soon. No cars were on the street and no one seemed to notice my AD flying slowly by.

The rest of the route to Lake Mead was routine and less eventful. Arriving overhead I turned on the autopilot for an extended holding pattern over the lake while I ate lunch and went sightseeing at a conservative altitude. After 35 minutes or so My AD and I routed to Fox Field near Palmdale staying clear of all the airports and restricted areas. About the time my offset simulated strike was made I could hear many A4 pickle beeps hopefully at other simulated targets.

After flying by Fox Field my AD and I flew to recover at NAS North Island.

Scott McIntosh
VA-95 1962

DECK RUN ON THE CAT TRACK

During the USS *Ranger* 1962-1963 Western Pacific cruise I was aboard attached to VA-95. This was my first sea tour as a boot Ensign.

One dark evening I was scheduled for a 4 ship formation and rendezvous flight. After eating the usual smoke, steam and exhaust during the jet launch it was our turn for the AD sorties. By this time in the launch the spare aircraft were pulled forward spotting for the recovery and only the waist cats were in use.

My turn during the AD Skyraider launch came and I was directed to the deck edge number 4 cat. The entry angle was not comfortable and hard to hold with 35 knots of wind blowing against the side of the fuselage. Because of the entry angle the cat crew was having trouble with my cat lineup. I could feel my aircraft rocking as the blue shirts pushed against its side. Hookup seemed to drag on. Finally, the cat officer gave me the run up signal followed by crossed arms within a few seconds and then the reduce power signal. He looks under my AD. Shortly he gives me the signal that I will be pushed back out of the shuttle hookup spot. O.K., now I am thinking that my flight is sitting up there wondering when this boot Ensign will ever find his flight to join up. After the blue shirts push me back I am again directed into the deck edge cat for the bridle hookup. It seems routine this time and very shortly I am given the run up signal by the cat officer.

This is the moment my evening takes a frightening turn. At the moment I reach max power I feel the holdback fitting break. Micro seconds of confusion go through my mind. I have not turned on my lights for launch and I feel a mild thrust down the deck that later I find is just the tension pressure on the shuttle. I have heard stories related by Naval Aviators including statements that "everything seemed to happen in slow motion." For me there is a similar view of events with my explanation that my mind went into MAX OVERDRIVE with the effect that seemed to slow time around me.

Now I am rolling down the deck edge cat, my closest wheel very near the edge with no lights on at full power. For another micro second I consider chopping power and standing on the right brake to spin around. That option quickly passes as I look over to the right near the foul line at all the deck hands looking at me as they are in my way of my quick idea out of my rapid lack of options. Now back to my deck run on the cat track. I am really concerned I will drift off the deck into the cat walk. Another micro second passes and I am looking down the deck into the pitch black night. I am thinking this will never work. I ask myself what the deck looks like. A mental picture instantly forms of the deck in daytime. So you might say I do an Instrument Take Off on the waist cat at night under the bag of my mind's eye for daylight. I catch the flap position as UP. This is normal for a light AD cat shot. I slam the lever and stop it at 1/2 as I try

to maintain my imaginary deck run lineup. As each micro second passes I am assessing aerodynamic options that should be addressed at leisure in a sleepy classroom.

More micro seconds flash by and I wonder if I don't drift into the catwalk will I just fall over into the gun mount at the end of the cat track? Wonderment becomes reality when I feel the main gear oleos extend as the deck ends. I grab the gear handle to the stowed position. As the seconds pass and I don't feel the bone crushing crash into the lower 5 inch gun mount I get my first glimmer of hope.

My sole flight reference is now the instrument panel in front of me. Prior to flight I always set my altimeter to 80 feet at the height of the deck above the sea. I am watching the vertical speed drift slowly downward. My recollection is that the speed is somewhere between 70-80 knots. Proceeding with my micro second research into aerodynamics I wonder what attitude is proper. The only quick thought is that I should go for the deck angle for a parked AD. I know it is slim but so are my options. I go for the 10-12 degrees deck angle. The vertical speed still slowly drifts past 50 feet. My left hand goes to the throttle to confirm full power and then to the emergency store release handle. Our AD's routinely have two 300 gallon drop tanks attached. Lucky for me the tanks are empty as the flight does not require external fuel. This night the ship is giving max launch wind over the deck too. Just as I start to release the tanks I feel ground effect and the vertical speed climbs to zero and then up. Slowly at first and then clearly the flight path assumes a positive rate. I take my hand off the red T handle and have time to notice the speed is increasing.

My concentration on keeping my AD out of the water has been so intense that my mind has ignored the continual radio calls to me from Pri Fly. When I do notice one of the radio calls I am so frightened I can not speak to respond. I hear the Pri Fly open mike conversations and the crash alarm. I hear someone say in the background "He's crashed." There is a lot of talking going on. One more radio call to me comes in with "FORTRESS, WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM?" I go from stark terror to anger. By this time I am flying and on the departure route to join up on my flight.

I am really mad now. My loud response to the tower is "THIS IS FORTRESS, THEY LAUNCHED ME BEFORE I WAS READY!" Now after all the radio calls from them the radio is silent when they hear from me. I finally get a ROGER...only.

The view of my deck launch from Pri Fly did give them grave cause for concern. They had a view I did not. The PLAT tape replay shows the dark unlighted shape of my A1 dragging the launch bridle down the deck edge in a shower of sparks.

I pick up the flashing lights of my division at the rendezvous. I remember now to turn my running lights on. They are already on squadron tactical and unaware of my major scare at launch. I can't recall if my late join up or launch was a conversation. The rest of the flight was

routine as was the recovery except for a request for my aircraft condition and if I had drop tanks.

Back at the ready room I had not even taken a chair for debrief before a replay of my takeoff was on the PLAT monitor. I viewed almost detached from the event. The shower of sparks as I slowly progressed down the deck fascinated me. I was amazed to be back in the ready room watching the tape.

For a few days I went about my duties in a minor shocked condition. In a main passage I nodded as a captain recognized from the admiral staff walked by. As he passed he commented "nice job of flying the other night."

If anyone was on that USS *Ranger* 1962-1963 cruise remembering my incident please feel free to give another view. That night of events is branded into my memory with clarity to this day some 51 years later.

Long after that cruise, long after the U.S. Navy and years into my career as a Captain with American Airlines my experience instantly came back one night in a training simulator. It is now early in the 1980's. The FAA is concerned about take off and landing crashes associated with wind shear. They mandate training for wind shear recovery. I am now flying Captain on the Boeing 727. I am in a recurrent training simulator period at the first takeoff of the session. It takes a short time to get used to the simulator. Anyway at liftoff the vertical speed starts up and then hangs. The airspeed begins to bleed off. I look around at the engines and flight instruments and we are normal except for the climb and airspeed. I comment to the simulator instructor that I think something is wrong with the simulator computer. He tells me to just keep flying. As the speed bleeds back to 100 knots I think that this pig iron is going to end up slapping the ground. I narrowed in on the attitude indicator and my mind reverted to that dark night back on the ship in 1963. I held 10 degrees attitude and jammed the throttles to the firewall. A short time later the aircraft climbed normally and we cleaned up the aircraft for the session. I turned around and asked what happened? The instructor said "Congratulations you just flew out of the crash scenario of Pan American at New Orleans.

F. Scott McIntosh
VA95 1962-1965

LIFE IN VIETNAM

In my five year Air Force career I don't have many scary events to relate. My Aircraft had no guns. My only "weapons" were radios and radar. As a result I doubt if I directly harmed anyone.

During my 6 month TDY assignment in Viet Nam, part of our welcome to the country meeting contained the warning "do not drink the water from any tap or faucet. Only drink bottled water". Our aircraft had a crew of eighteen; 7 officers and 11 enlisted. The officers were billeted in a local hotel in Saigon, all 7 of us in one room on cots. Once again we were cautioned to only drink the bottled water provided by our house boy. That worked fine until one day we returned early from a mission and caught the house boy filling our water bottle from the sink faucet. We still drank the water and I don't believe any of us suffered any ill effects.

A rather eerie sensation was on a day with no mission scheduled, having lunch at the REX on the 10th floor, we would be treated to the "Real" war by watching exploding shells across the river.

One maybe scary story was the day my aircraft CO, George, and I went for a walk, probably heading for the REX. I was about three paces behind him when I saw a young Viet Nam man brush George on his left shoulder and deftly remove his sun glasses from his shirt pocket. I reached out and grabbed the man's wrist and called to George that he had his glasses. He regained his glasses from the man and we quickly left the area, not knowing if there were more than one crook about.

Don Merucci
USAF

4000 HOURS IN A "CONNIE"

My only military aircraft, other than flight training, was the Lockheed Constellation. I flew this aircraft more than 4000 hours in just four years and almost half of that asleep. The Connie was an AEW&C, an airborne early warning aircraft, as well as a mobile radar station. The mobile radar concept was tested by landing at the Half Moon Bay airport one day and tracking traffic. I saw "action" off Cuba during the missile crisis, out of Iceland tracking fighters flying home over the North Atlantic and of course in the tranquil South East Asia.

In Nam, on our way out to our mission area, we would wave at the sailors lining the carrier flight decks. Our flight altitude of 50' made it easy to see their incredulous expressions. One day we picked up an F-4 pilot during a fuel stop in DaNang. The F-4s were our fighter cover while we were in the Gulf. He wanted to see what we did for those 8 hours. We were the ultimate multi-taskers. Our job was to be a Mig watch, a radio relay, monitor the location of the air tanker, provide assistance to any pilot in immediate harm's way and guidance to rescue personnel. All this was at 50', 175 knots, door and over wing hatches open, heat exchangers at full capacity and still about 100 degrees F. in the aircraft. The F-4 driver, as he left the aircraft, vowed to warn any and all to keep away from us. We were crazy. There is a Connie, tail number 555, in the United States Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, that I actually flew several times. That aircraft is credited with the first airborne directed intercept in Vietnam.

POSTSCRIPT:

This reminds of something that happened on the *Hornet* a few years ago. A Russian cruiser made a port call in SFO. Four, young Russian crew members visited the *Hornet*, two spoke excellent English. I took them to the CIC and was explaining to them my connection to the CIC area with the Connie. I was going along quite nicely when a thought hit me. It would have been their grandfathers I was looking for. I didn't tell them that.

Don Merucci
USAF

PLAN A, B, and C

During our tour in Viet Nam, we would spend one week in Country and then fly an airplane back to Tainan, Taiwan for maintenance and tune up of the radar, radio and other electronic equipment. This usually took a week, so we got the R & R there before our next week in country. There was one airplane that was a continuing problem with No. 2 engine. Shorted secondaries is what the flight engineers called it. We were told to see if we could get one more mission out of the bird and then fly it to Tainan, Taiwan. We took off from Saigon in the late afternoon and headed toward our mission destination which was over the Gulf of Tonkin. Sure enough, just as we reached our mission destination, No. 2 engine started misbehaving.

Our mission wasn't that critical that it required a sick aircraft with its crew of 18 to remain on site. So it was time to revert to plan B or C. We couldn't return to Saigon. They didn't have any room for us. So we went into Danang. Since our mission was to ultimately return to Tainan, we had extra mechanics and repair parts on board and they thought that they could put a fix on the engine.

Just after we arrived at Danang the VC attacked the Marine base at Monkey Mountain to the south. The dark sky lit up with flares and the sounds of gunfire could occasionally be heard. It was the only time we unlocked the few weapons we carried with us.

The mechanics did a masterful job of replacing the suspect parts of the sick engine, the plugs and leads on all 36 cylinders. The equipment and aircraft was buttoned up, our clearance was filed for Tainan and off we went. Just as we passed through 5,000 feet good ole #2 engine gave a belch, shuddered and quit operating.

It was here that plan C came into play. Keep on going to Taiwan on three engines. That trusty 'Connie' got us home with all three engines purring like a Swiss watch. Once safely in Tainan a new engine seemed to satisfy the bird and she gave no more complaints.

1st Lt. Don Merucci, USAF
Co Pilot

MID AIR

It was a warm, sunny day in Guam on the 17th of January, 1956. I was assigned to Fighter Squadron VF-142, which was part of Air Group Fourteen aboard the USS *Boxer*, CVA-21. The ship was returning from an 8-month Far East deployment with Task Force 77 and had been diverted to the Island of Guam to conduct tests of the operational capabilities of NAS Agana for handling a “modern” carrier Air Group.

Air Group pilots were happy to have the opportunity for some flight time, since we had not conducted flight operations since early December. During the interim, we had made a port call to Hong Kong and spent time in the yard at Yokosuka having the flight deck replaced.

I was flying the Grumman F9F-6 “Cougar,” which was the first swept-wing fighter in US Naval service. It was “trans-sonic,” but only if you climbed to 40,000 feet and split-essed at full power. Even so, we were the only ones in the Navy who could break the speed of sound at that time. It was not a great airplane for landing on straight-deck carriers, but that was all that there were at the time. The USS *Boxer* had WWII H-4B hydraulic catapults, and they needed 36 knots of wind across the deck to launch our Cougars.

We launched from the ship on January 16, and took the opportunity to fly over the Islands of Saipan and Tinian, of WWII note. You could still see the runways used for launching B-29 raids on Japan, including those on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We landed at NAS Agana, which had a 7000 foot runway that had a hump in the middle and began on a cliff on the western side of the Island. My four-plane Division managed to get two more flights in that day, making up for the 35-day layoff that we had experienced since leaving Task Force 77.

The next morning, I took off on a two-plane “Type Instrument” flight and experienced a hydraulic failure in my aircraft. That meant that I had to make a no-Flap, no Flaperon approach to NAS Agana, but all came out well. Lateral control in the Cougar was done with spoilers on the upper surface of the wing called “Flaperons.” To bank either way, when you moved the stick to the side a small flap-like airfoil would rise out of the top wing surface and reduce lift on that wing, thus causing roll around the upper wing tip rather than the center of the fuselage. This was not noticeable to a pilot flying formation with other Cougars, but the difference between this design feature and conventional ailerons was very noticeable if you happened to be flying wing on an aileron-equipped aircraft. In the case of a hydraulic failure, there was an air bottle that gave you some 20 operations of “Flaperettes,” which were smaller segments of the Flaperons. When the air ran out, all you could do was kick rudder for highly asymmetric turns.

My second flight that day was as one of a three-plane “mini-Division” taking off at around 1400. We were all LTJG’s out to get some more flight time. Almost immediately after take-off,

we were “bounced” by another Division from the squadron who were burning down fuel in preparation for an FCLP (Field Carrier Landing Practice). This proceeded into a 7-plane hassle, where we were all trying to get gun camera film of each other’s tail. The Division eventually broke it off and departed for their FCLP’s, and our original three set up a rendezvous.

The original leader set up a Port (left) orbit over Apra Harbor, which is on the west coast of Guam, at 20,000 feet. I was the first to join as number two on his right wing, although I had been number three when we took off. The original number two slid across the orbit and joined on my right wing, and I slid under the leader to balance the formation on his left wing, in my original number three position.

What I didn’t know at the time, was that number two had only sat on my right wing for a few seconds and had then done a roll around the formation to balance it—at the same time that I was sliding under the leader. We were both focused on the leader, and the timing was such that we did not see each other. As we both approached the same point in space on the leader’s left wing, the leader yelled on the radio “you guys are too close.” At that point, I looked left and saw another Cougar climbing into the cockpit with me!

As the two aircraft got close to each other, “Bernoulli effect” drew them together, and they started banging at each other. I saw my nose take off one of his wings and break off while his tail section knocked everything aft of my cockpit off and broke my canopy—resulting in some scratches on my flight helmet which I found later. The loss of engine caused my aircraft to decelerate more quickly than the other one, both separated and things got very quiet.

I was in a state of shock by this time and reacting from training more than rational thought. I knew that I had to get rid of the remaining canopy rail to arm the ejection seat, but I did not know what altitude I was at—since I had been flying formation and not looking at my instruments. The ejection seat that we had at that time operated by firing a pyrotechnic shell, and its propellant was calibrated to apply the maximum acceleration that the human body could take in the vertical direction—about 18 “Gs.” Unfortunately, this was not enough to get you out of the airplane below about 1000 feet (current rocket seats can safely eject at ground level).

So, I found the emergency canopy lever, pulled it and then pulled the facecurtain out of the seat headrest over my head to fire the ejection seat. It gave me a big wallop in the butt, and I and my seat were soon tumbling in the air. Nothing in the set-up was automatic in those days, and my next activity was to unlatch my seat belt, kick away the seat and look for the ripcord for the parachute. Had I known that I was still at 20,000 feet and flying through the air at about 250 knots, I would have waited to slow down and free-fall to a warmer altitude, however, the main concern in my mind as to get the chute open before I was too low—so I pulled the ripcord immediately. This resulted in a second large shock to my body as the parachute opened at the high velocity, which actually gave me bruises from the parachute harness.

All of a sudden, things became very quiet and very cold, and I was swinging back and forth under what looked like a very small parachute—it actually was 28 feet in diameter. As I looked down, I could see pieces of airplane spinning down toward the water below. I could also see whitecaps, which indicated that a fairly strong wind was blowing—my next problem. It was about this time that I had my first rational thought, which was probably typical of a Junior Officer, “did I fuck up?”

I could see one of our aircraft flying circles around me, and I waved him away frantically. I was swinging back and forth far enough that the edge of the parachute canopy would curl under, and I was afraid that it might collapse if it got caught in jet blast. That however, was the least of what I should have been worried about. At that time, 50% of bailouts that successfully deployed their parachutes over water did not survive, so I knew that the whitecaps signaled problems for my landing.

About this time, I saw another parachute open at a much lower altitude than me—the other guy knew his altitude and had sense enough to free fall before opening the chute.

I could see mountains on the island that I knew were around 1300 feet high—I found out later that I had been about 8 miles off the coast. Our parachute harness at that time had three buckles—one on each leg and one at the chest. We were told in training to undo the buckles and hold ourselves up in the harness prior to water entry, however, there was no way that I could undo either leg buckle with my weight in the harness, but I was able to undo the chest buckle. We were also supposed to pull our life raft out of its pocket in the seat pack and hook its lanyard to our “Mae West” life preserver, but I was not about to take a chance on losing the raft.

So, I saw that I was lower than the mountain on the island, took a deep breath and hit the water. The parachute did not collapse and was blown by the wind and dragged me along just under the water surface. I almost breathed water while working furiously on unlatching one of my harness leg buckles—which I did get loose just in time and flipped on my back with my face out of water while still being dragged. At this point, the parachute ran into a wave and collapsed, and I floated in among the shroud lines. Waves were washing over me, but I managed to pull the handles on my Mae West and that got my head above the surface.

I tried to get my life raft out of the seat pack, but there were shroud lines all over me which prevented movement. So, I floated there and decided to pull out my emergency knife and deal with the nylon lines. I pulled out the knife and cut away at the shrouds until there were no more around me—and then carefully put the knife back in its sheath, because I was afraid of losing it.

My next task was to get the raft out and inflate it, which I did. It had a fairly short lanyard, which I attached to my Mae West, after which I tried to get in the raft—still with waves

washing over me at times. Every time that I tried to pull myself into the raft, it flipped over on me—because of the short lanyard. So, I floated there and made up my mind that I would have to undo the lanyard even though I might lose the raft. I can remember going through these primitive thought patterns, which must have had something to do with being in shock, but I unhooked the lanyard and pulled myself into the raft.

I was then able to look around, and I saw a helicopter searching around some distance away. I found a packet of dye marker in the raft, which I threw in the water. However, the rough sea state made the dye not very visible, and the helicopter did not turn my way. So my next move was to try and fire a smoke flare, which we carried in our flight gear. These were cylinders about 10 inches long and 3 inches in diameter which had a ring in each end—one for day and one for night (this one had little bumps, “tits,” around the periphery). I tried to pull the day end but didn’t have enough strength because of my state of shock. I kept trying and banged it with my hand and eventually got it lit—giving off very visible orange smoke. As soon as the smoke started, I could see the helicopter turn and head my way.

The chopper, a HUP-2 twin rotor Kaman, proceeded to my location and tried to hover over me and drop a “horse collar” device for me to get into and be pulled up. However, every time that he hovered over me the rotor wash blew me and my raft away. So, I went through another primitive thought process and decided that I would have to get out of the raft and swim to the horse collar. I really hated to leave that raft!

I rolled out of the raft, which was immediately blown away by rotor wash. I managed to swim to the horse collar, put my arms through it and was lifted up for my first helicopter ride. My squadron mate who had also been in the midair was already aboard, and we both were taken to Naval Hospital, Guam. They kept us there overnight and monitored our blood pressure every two hours—because they were afraid that our spleens might have broken loose.

The Guam Naval Community put on a party that night for the Boxer Officers, but we were stuck in the hospital. Late in the evening, two of our squadron mates showed up at the hospital to see how we were doing. They brought along two large soda bottles full of martinis, so all was well. I never did hear what this did to our blood pressure.

We were told later that the area where we landed was the most shark infested place near the island. That was one problem that I did not know enough about to worry. The Accident Investigation Board determined that the accident was caused by the non-standard roll around the formation, which resulted in a Letter of Reprimand for my squadron mate. I figured that we were both very lucky to be alive and did not think that it was very important who was to blame. He died in 2014 at the age of 83.

Bill Nelson
1956 VF 142

A TIMELY WARNING

I was an Ensign assigned to Fighter Squadron VF-142, reporting aboard in August, 1954. The squadron was flying the Grumman F9F-6 Cougar, which was the Navy's first swept-wing fighter and was evolved from the Korean War work horse, the F9F-5 Panther.

The Cougar had no airspeed limitation and could break Mach 1—in a vertical dive from 40,000 feet. However, it had a violent high-speed stall characteristic (known today as a “departure”), and was tricky to fly at slow approach speeds. During its development, it was found that normal ailerons caused control-reversal at high speeds, so a spoiler system called “Flaperons” was installed for lateral control. When the stick was moved toward one side, the Flaperon spoiler would rise from the upper wing surface on that side and reduce lift, thus causing a roll centered around the opposite wing tip. This differed from aileron-equipped aircraft which roll around the axis of the fuselage. The Cougar's swept wings precluded the use of tip tanks, but it had 500 pounds of fuel in each wing bladder that brought it within 600 pounds of the total 6000 pounds carried by the Panther.

VF-142 spent the next several months training in tactics, navigation, aerial gunnery and field carrier landing practice. I joined the squadron with only 23.4 hours of jet time, having gone through jet transitional training in the two-place Lockheed TV-2 (AKA T-33). There was no such thing as NATOPS at the time, and aircraft checkout was done by each squadron individually. For me, it was reading the Pilot's Handbook, a blindfold cockpit check, and five flights for a total of 8 hours. Then it was onward into the training cycle, culminating in carrier qualification aboard the USS *Hancock* (CVA-19) in April 1955. We were the first Air Group to qualify on *Hancock* after Operation Steam, during which they evaluated the steam catapult. The ship still had a straight deck, as did all but *Antietam* at that time, but the steam cat was a great way to get your first jet launches. I managed to get 18 cat shots and 16 landings during that qualification period.

Air Group 14 was assigned to the USS *Boxer* (CVA-21) for a Far East deployment starting in June, 1955. *Boxer* had been launched in April, 1945, and had undergone no updating in the interim. That meant that we had to deal with WWII H4B hydraulic catapults, which needed 36 knots of wind across the deck to launch our Cougars. Our first experience with these catapults was off of Hawaii, where the ship operated while undergoing an Operational Readiness Inspection prior to proceeding east.

Our Skipper, CDR Ed Holley, called an All-Pilots-Meeting the evening before our first launch from the *Boxer*. He was a graduate of Test Pilot School and was concerned about the aerodynamics of the Cougar in low-speed launch conditions. He explained to us that the Flaperon system was truly a spoiler that works by reducing lift, which could be a real problem

when close to stall speed. He told us to keep the stick centered and kick rudder if a roll was necessary at the end of a cat shot.

The next day, on my first cat shot on *Boxer*, we had a marginal wind situation. As I left the end of the flight deck, my aircraft slowly rolled to the left until I was in a 90 degree bank. The natural reaction in such a situation is to oppose the roll with the stick in the opposite direction, but I remembered what we had been told the evening before and, somewhat frantically, kicked rudder many times and slewed the aircraft around—meanwhile settling into ground effect near the water. I was able to gradually speed up and rendezvous with the other aircraft, and we proceeded on in to land at NAS Barber's Point on Oahu.

It was determined that this event was caused by one wing fuel cell being empty when I was launched—causing a 500 pound lateral weight mismatch. Our aircraft were always parked with wings folded on the ship, which meant that pilots could not check the wing fuel during Preflight inspections. There was a system of lights in the wing root which refuelers used to verify that tanks were full after pressure fueling, but these obviously were not reliable. After my experience, the squadron instituted a procedure where a crewman climbed on each wing when we taxied up to the cat, opened up the fuel caps and visually checked that the tanks were full.

I thanked the Skipper for saving my life. I was number 4 in his Division, so his timely warning saved him from having to break in a new nugget—and all that messy paperwork.

Bill Nelson
1954 Vf-142

THE NIGHT I TRIED TO KILL THE GOVERNOR

After returning from Vietnam I was employed as a full time flight instructor by the Utah Army National Guard. That gave me the opportunity to fly many types of missions and several aircraft types varying between the most modern rotary wing aircraft to some truly worn out dog tired fixed wing machines.

The night I tried to kill the governor I was flying a UH-1H which was the best aircraft that I was ever fortunate enough to fly. I was well qualified in the aircraft as I had attended instructor pilots school, safety officers school and accumulated several hundred combat hours in the aircraft. In Utah I flew hundreds of hours of Nap of the Earth, night vision goggles and high altitude mountain training so I was very comfortable and confident in the terrain and the aircraft.

The night in question myself and another instructor pilot who was also a two tour Vietnam veteran were selected to fly the Governor, two two star generals and associated support officers. We had a total of eight passengers and a crew chief on board. We were to pick up all of these people off of the front lawn of the state capital and fly them to the former Wendover Air Force Base on the western border of the state.

The flight took us over some very high mountains and some very dark desert and there was a front that would be coming in later. The dark did not bother me as we were supposed to return prior to dark and the front was to pass prior to our departure. We picked up the passengers and headed west as always being quite happy to fly and impressed by the capabilities of the machine.

The flight to Wendover went well except that the wind started to increase as we got further west. This was the front that was supposed to be gone. The only issue was that by the time I landed at Wendover and shut down the wind was blowing hard enough that the rotor blade would not stop. This was the only time in more than 9000 hours of rotary wing flying that I ever had to climb onto the top of the aircraft to catch the blades as they came around to stop them.

The VIPs were supposed to only be a few hours and then we were to fly the same route in reverse. While we were waiting we occupied ourselves sorting around in a lot of artifacts and papers that had been left by the crews training for the atomic drop in 1945. What had been the operations building for the Enola Gay was the recently opened FBO for the airport and little had been removed. I did not mind the delay.

Sometime around 2:00 AM the group wandered out to the airport and said they were ready to return to SLC. It was calm and clear at Wendover and the weather was reported the same in Salt Lake. We took off headed across the desert as that was the most direct route. As we crossed over the mountains on the west side of skull valley we found the cold front that should have passed early in the afternoon.

Crossing the mountain we started to get into fog and snow which did not trouble us too much as we were very used to flying low in poor visibility and 1000' was considered high altitude by most helicopter pilots. As we crossed into the valley we knew we had two more mountain ranges to cross and the weather was getting worse. We then turned a little north to try to find lights on interstate 80 as the valley was totally dark. I crossed another range of hills and it was getting so that I could not see down as well as up. Since we were only about 100' that was not good. You can always tell when things are not good because it gets real quite in the aircraft.

We were right at the point of climbing into it and climbing high enough to get radar contact from SLC approach. I was very reluctant to do that as the Huey had very minimal anti-icing capabilities and I would have had to climb to about 14000 feet as we were in the mountains. About that time I said to my copilot that if it were just a little better I would land but it was too snowy and foggy to even do that safely. We had already slowed down to about 40 knots.

There were not even any cars on the interstate because the weather was so bad. At the last possible moment that I could delay I saw the lights of a semi-truck on the highway. We got behind him and flew rail off the truck at less than 20 knots as he was the only visual point. I am not sure he ever knew we were there. We got to a point about 35 miles west of Salt Lake and the weather cleared up to a bright sky and unlimited visibility so we climbed to about 3000 feet got clearance to cross Salt Lake airport and returned them to the capital lawn.

I don't think I make any bad decisions under the circumstances but I have speculated what the accident report might have read.

John Palmer
US Army Helicopter pilot

A LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE UH-1H

The Huey was the aircraft most associated with the Vietnam War. It was not pretty, it was not fast but it was reliable could pick up the world and was totally loved by all of its pilots. It was an aircraft that did not need to be manipulated, flight operations merely needed to be thought by the pilots as the aircraft was so light and precise on the controls. It had few vices which was good as it was flown by twenty year olds with about 210 hours of flight time when they arrived in their units. A ham fisted pilot could fly it but it totally rewarded the pilot who flew it with finesse.

The night that I came to love it the most was in the Mekong Delta, when I had been in country for just over two months, or approaching 400 hours after flight school. I was flying as the lead aircraft in a flight of three.

The day started early and we flew support missions doing resupply, medevacs, and combat insertions in an area called the Uminh forest. The Uminh was part of the major infiltration routes into the Delta and could always be depended upon to provide entertainment.

At the end of our mission we flew back to our base in Vinh Long which was on one of the mouths of the Mekong river. We went to what sufficed for an officers club and just as we sat down to eat we were scrambled on a tactical emergency. We already had more than eight hours of flying and were ready to put our feet up.

A deuce and a half truck came to pick up the crews consisting of two pilots in each aircraft, a crew chief and door gunner as well. As we had already fueled, done the daily inspections on the aircraft and rearmed before we parked them in the revetments they were ready to go in a matter of minutes. Our briefing consisted of head to Chi Lang and you will be briefed there.

After landing we were met on the refueling pad and our mission was briefed. Chi Lang was right next to the Cambodian border which the politics of the time would not let us cross. Chi Lang also had the only mountains in the Delta. It was normal procedure to land and set your altimeters to zero as the Delta was so flat but Chi Lang had 3000' mountains.

The mountains became the location for a Special Forces out post observing border crossings and activities on the other side of the border. It was also a major radio relay location. Its importance could not be deduced from the relatively few numbers of people manning these locations.

The day this mission started the bad guys figured out the importance of the location and crossed the Cambodian border and climbed the west side of the mountains to attack the special forces out post. Another unit manned by half US and half Australian pilots responded

and was sent out to evacuate wounded and insert support troops onto the mountain top. One of their aircraft was shot down and went down on the steep west side of the mountain and rolled part way down. My job then became to recover survivors and bodies if possible.

We picked up 10 ARVN troops on each aircraft and were briefed to approach the mountains from the west side and insert at the base of the mountain. We were constrained by the proximity of the border so flew in a trail formation then turned into the base of the mountain landing abeam to put the troops in a position closest to the mountain and where they could support each other.

The landing zone was flooded and was close enough to the bad guys that we took fire in the landing zone. Sitting in the rice paddies not moving seeing muzzle flashes to the front and sashes all around gets your attention focused and it looked like a bad zone especially as we had no gunship support.

Mere minutes after departing we were called back to the zone as the troops could not move in the water and the fire off the hill was too intense. For us the problem was that they were closer to the bad guys than where we dropped them. Turning into the mountain we were taking heavy fire and many hits but were determined to get the troops out and we still needed to get the other crew off the side of the mountain.

We made the decision to insert from the opposite side of the mountain and land on the top to let the troops assault down. Among the downsides to this decision was that it was now dark and the top of the mountain was obscured by clouds. We briefed that we would approach the mountain from an altitude below the mountain top but in the clouds. We further decided to make the approach to a point mid-way along the top so we would know which way to turn when we came in sight of the mountain. The aircraft were blacked out but the bad guys were shooting at the sound and the inside of the cloud was illuminated by tracers.

The approach was made in a widely spaced trail formation at about thirty knots, as we did not want to hit the mountain, but below that speed the instruments became unreliable. It was searching for the mountain by feel. Seeing the mountain just prior to impact we made a left turn and continued along the ridge line to the end where we could not find a flat landing spot. We put the right skid onto a large rock still holding the left skid off the ground. It was difficult to hold this configuration while the troops were moving around and jumping off the right side as the center of gravity of the aircraft was changing so much as it teetered with only part of the right skid in contact with the rock.

After the troops were off we could not over fly the other side of the mountain on take off as we knew there were many bad guys there. We did an instrument takeoff vertically out of the top of the cloud and returned to Chi Lang to pick up troops and repeat the process. Each of the aircraft flew three more approaches to the mountain.

When the approaches were complete the night was still not done as I then dropped flares for most of the rest of the night to illuminate the battle for the ground troops. Sunrise still did not bring rest as we then went back on top to evacuate the dead and wounded.

When the night finally ended I had a total of 23 hours of flying time in the two missions that I flew. To me this reflects what a fantastic aircraft the Huey was. I can think of no other machine that could be flown by such relatively inexperienced crews and be versatile enough to fly instruments, heavily loaded insertions into rice paddies and onto mountain tops, complete a flare mission and evacuate wounded, all without reconfiguring the aircraft.

John Palmer
US Army Helicopter pilot

A FLIGHT IN THE MATTEL MESSERSCHMITT

During the Vietnam War most Army Aviators trained in the TH-55. This was a militarized version of the Hughes 300. In this aircraft we learned how to hover, fly emergency procedures including auto rotations, tail rotor failures, and performed hovering auto rotations and contact flying. We learned the basics of air traffic control so that we could fly into and out of airfields. We learned how to do pinnacle landings and confined area operations, cross country navigation and night flight.

The aircraft was a two seat machine with a reciprocating engine, 30 gallons of fuel and a very low inertia rotor system. That meant that it lost rotor RPM very quickly so you better be right when doing emergency procedures. The advantages of the machine were that it was relatively cheap and simple as the transmission and rotor were driven by 5 V belts. As far as aircraft went it was like driving a moped to a Harley meet- not too impressive but we were flying and on our way to becoming Army Aviators. Normal cruise on the helicopter was only 60 knots. It was said that it could barely kill you.

There was a feeling in flight school voiced as 'what are they going to do- to us send us to Vietnam?'. They kept telling us we might go anywhere, to keep us from thinking too much, but we all knew what we were training for. This led one of my class mates to test his hover skills by hovering on top of a chicken coop to chase the chickens out. As it turned out he was the only one in the class to not go to Vietnam as he was in the Indiana National Guard.

We did this training in West Texas at Fort Wolters in Mineral Wells. Graduation from primary flight school following 110 training hours took us to Ft Rucker Alabama for completion of

instruments, tactical training and transition into the UH-1 culminating in an exercise called TAC-X which took us to the field for a week and flying over a good part of Alabama.

The night of my night cross country found me flying with another warrant officer candidate who came to school with a private pilots license and about 200 hours. He seemed like a good choice. We carefully planned the flight, headings, weather, winds, turn points headings, etc., all carefully plotted onto our maps which was the sole navigation aid in the aircraft, excluding the mag compass.

We took off to the North West at 5 minute intervals to fly to a turn point then turn south towards the town of Breckenridge. Navigation turned out to not be too difficult as all that was necessary was to follow the daisy chain of aircraft on the same route. This made it easier for the instructor pilots flying in an OH-23 which was 20 knots faster to follow us and keep us from ending up all over west Texas.

My stick buddy and I were doing great until the turn at Breckenridge heading back to Ft Wolters. There was a little more wind as noted by the fact the same light stayed beside us for quite awhile. We determined that the best course of action was to fly lower and get out of the wind or we would be spending the night in a pasture. We looked at our sectional and determined a safe altitude then descended. This was below the briefed minimum altitude but at least we would not spend a cold night in a pasture.

After we had been flying at that altitude for awhile and were feeling pretty smug we started seeing something skirting by under the aircraft. Thinking we might be seeing ground fog we turned on the landing light to take a look at it and found fences and bushes passing below at perhaps 30 feet. It scared us so badly that we climbed back to altitude and completed the flight there. We vowed not to tell anyone but never forgot the lesson. We both survived to become airline captains.

John Palmer
US Army Aviator

I WAS A JUNIOR CO-PILOT

I was a junior co-pilot on the C-130. Our flight was from Moffett field to Hickam Air Force Base. Once in cruise the Aircraft Commander went to the back for a little sack time. I liked to listen to KNBR on the bird dog, I was getting a good signal that night and I had the radio in the ADF position. The navigator was getting a check ride. About 400miles out I was still getting a strong signal from KNBR and if the ADF needle was correct we were north of course, and heading further north. I thought I would mention this to the boys taking the star shots. The examiner a senior LT. told me I should mind my own business they had everything under control.

In about another two hours we were in radio range of Ocean Station November. I tuned in their TACAN and their bearing was about 30 degrees of the nose and our tract was supposed to take us directly overhead. I was still getting a strong signal on the ADF and it agreed with what I was seeing on the TACAN. I humbly mentioned this to the navigators. The comment I got was "those guys are never on station, they're lucky if they are within 80 miles of where they are supposed to be". I called them and asked if they were on station, the reply was "yes sir we just took a fix we are on station". I relayed this to the navigators. No reply. When the tacan needle was off the left wing the DME showed 80 miles north of course. I also passed this info to the navigators, again no reply. The A/C came back into the cockpit to relieve me for a little rest. I told him what was going on, he called back to the navigators, how's it going boys. The reply was going good boss right on course.

I came back to the cockpit about 90 mins. later. Soon we were in radio range of Hickman Air Force Base. And sure enough we were way north of course. Before we could call Hickman they called us on the HF and asked us to identify ourselves. We did and they replied we show you entering the Adiz 75 miles north of tract. Turn left heading 210 radar contact. Their next comment was" we were within 2 minutes of scrambling the fighters".

At the De-brief in the O-Club the nav examiner brought all the charts and star shot calculations. He said boss I can't find any errors in our calculations I don't know how we were off course by that far. The A/C said they probably moved the island. Have a beer.

Tony Schoemehl
1966 VR 22

Information regarding abbreviations et al

ADF – automatic direction finder
TACAN – navy version of an omni-directional VOR
VOR – very high radio frequency

DME – distance measuring equipment (bearing and distance)

ADIZ – air defense identification zone

a/c – aircraft commander

Ocean Station November – Coast guard weather ship stationed in the pacific, midway between the mainland and Hawaii

SOUTHERN ACCENT

This covers the use of American English and idiom. Our A-4 squadron had a tactical call sign of Sunglass, followed by the side number of the Skyhawk you were flying. On a bad weather day in 1967 we were diverted from a North Vietnam target to a Marine spotter just south of the DMZ. Due to the fact that our flight lead had a clipped northern accent and the Marine on the ground had a distinct southern drawl we went through the following call sequence...

"Marine 5 Foxtrot, this is Navy Sunglass 681 with three chicks, loaded with 3 Mark 83's (1000# low drag bombs) each."

"Roger Navy, who?"

"Navy Sunglass 681..."

"Say Again...."

"Navy Sunglass 681..."

"Say Sun what?"

"Sunglasses. Sunglasses. You know.... Shades! Sun shades...."

"Oh! Da Sunglasses! Why didn't ya say so?"

After that exchange he set us on a vector at 10000' and was giving us a countdown to bomb drop. It was still apparent he didn't know who was above him, so as he said four miles our lead promptly called open bomb bay doors....

Followed by a call of, "Who the hell is up there?" from Marine 5 Foxtrot.

We treated him to the sound of 12 Mark 83's hitting in the target area, and he called back in response to our departure message...

"Cool. Cool. You SunShades can come back heah anytime!"

John Suckow
1967 VA 76

RUSSIAN TRAWLER

After returning from a Vietnam combat hop, I was briefing my plane captain on the reasons why Sunglass 691 had two holes in the engine compartment and what they contributed to the flight characteristics of the Skyhawk, when the "Bonnie Dick" (CVA-31 USS *Bon Homme Richard*) began a hard turn to starboard and we still hadn't completed landing the air wing. As I grabbed onto the boarding ladder to steady myself on the now 15 degree slope of the deck, a "Whale" (A-3 tanker) went roaring close overhead in a wave off.

It was "The Red Baron" (Cdr. John Wunche) making a wave off after the duty Russian trawler crossed our path. He continued on line up, at about 100' altitude and just before arriving overhead of the trawler turned on all the fuel dumps the A-3 had for its impressive fuel load. As he roared over the trawler, the JP-4 was glistening off the whole trawler and several of their crewmen thought it prudent to depart the boat via a swan dive. Needless to say, the trawler left us alone for over a week before they tried to disrupt another landing sequence!

John Suckow
1967 VA 76

Ray Waddell

WHY I BECAME A PILOT

I'm often asked how and when I decided to become a pilot. For me, the answer to that is pretty vivid. When I was eight years old, my dad took me to my first airshow at NAS Moffett Field. Dad was a Radioman Chief (RMC) during World War II. At that time RMC's were multi-talented as it were. They fulfilled the roles of airplane radio operator, aircraft electrician, and aviation fire control technician. Modern sailors fall into three rates AT's, AE's and AQ's. Dad did all three jobs.

At any rate, I'll never forget that during the airshow, two performances stuck out in my mind. First an Air Force F-104 Starfighter did a high performance takeoff. The -104 was a very fast and powerful airplane. From a standing start, the Starfighter took off and climbed vertically in half the length of the airfield: wildly impressive. Later in the show the Navy Blue Angels flew their precision show in Grumman F-11 fighters, the first supersonic show aircraft. They also premiered the first 6 plane (delta) maneuvers.

After the airshow, I turned to my dad and said: "I want to do that!!" I set my sights on being a Navy pilot, and here I am!!

Ray Waddell

PROBLEM UPSIDE DOWN!

Most pilots remember their first solo at various stages in training. As a result, I well remember my solo in advanced jet training. We were flying the TA-4J as the squadron had recently transitioned from the F-9. The transition was fairly rapid as we had several Vietnam Skyhawk veterans.

I had completed my basic training in the TA-4J as well as basic instrument flying (a requirement in order to solo). I was cleared for solo, checked out my airplane, and launched on a very nice clear day. We were given a structured flight plan that included a series of acrobatic maneuvers to complete. After completing a series of aileron rolls, barrel rolls, and wingovers, I set up for loops, Immelmann turns and one half Cuban eights.

In order to complete a loop in the TA-4, we set up in a shallow dive at full power. At 450 knots, straight and level, I started a 4 "G" pull up into the vertical. The trick was to maintain the "G" (gravity loading) until well into the vertical and then to intercept a 15 and ½ unit angle of attack over the top. As the airplane came through the vertical the pilot maintains 15 and ½ units until attaining 4 "G"s. Simple. Except for one small detail: the A-4 was designed with aerodynamic leading edge slats. On occasion, the slats had a mind of their own! At odd times the slats would extend asymmetrically. The upshot of all of this is that, for me, on my first loop at about 70 degrees up into the vertical the odd event of asymmetric slats occurred. Yikes! As a result, arriving at 90 degrees up, the airplane began corkscrewing in the pure vertical. I went up like a rocket directly to zero airspeed. I'll never forget noticing that the attitude indicator (AJB3) has a very tiny phillip's-head screw that holds the two sections of the AJB3 together. The other wild thing at this point is that I now have no control over the airplane! I'm a ballistic missile over which I can put in any flight control input to no effect! Great!

Fortunately, I had apparently pulled hard enough initially to generate some momentum going over the top because as I ran out of airspeed and ideas, the plane "flopped" over on its back. Swell, now I'm pointed straight down and observe that the AJB3 has another phillip's-head screw on the bottom half holding the assembly together. Neither of those observations were helping me at the moment, but it's funny what the mind remembers in crisis! At long last, airspeed returns (rapidly) to the plane, allowing me to recover slightly terrified! I carefully practiced my straight and level flying back to the landing pattern. It was a few days before I could perform a loop!

Ray Waddell
Capt USNR