

ATKRON 12 NEWSLETTER

VA-12

PUBLISHED BY THE
VA-12 REUNION ASSOCIATION

WE INVITE YOU TO VISIT THE **WORLD FAMOUS FLYING UBANGIS** ON THE INTERNET AT WWW.VA12.COM

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Volume IX, Issue 1 April 2010

F8F-1 Bearcat

"I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast for I intend to go in harm's way."

John Paul Jones, November 16, 1778



UBANGI?
UBETCHA!

**MAKE PLANS TO JOIN US
AT THE 2010 REUNION
IN WASHINGTON, DC!**

2010 REUNION NEWS

The Reunion Plans are in full swing now. I have received 30 registration forms at this point. If you are planning on attending, please, please send in your Registration form and check by the middle of April. There are a number of things that need to be paid for in advance, so it is essential that I know who is coming and have the money to pay everything required. Here again is the Hotel information that was printed in the Dec 09 Newsletter.

Our hotel is the Crown Plaza Washington National Airport in Arlington, VA. The dates are June 24 through June 27, 2010. Yes that is 4 nights. We were able to secure a very good rate of \$89.00 per night. **IMPORTANT**, you must indicate that you are with the Attack Squadron Twelve (VA12) Reunion when you phone for reservations. The number is 703-416-1600

REUNION 2010 PROPOSED PLAN OF THE DAY

Thursday June 24th	Check-In	3:00 p.m.
	Ice Breaker	5:00 p.m.
Friday June 25th	Tour D.C.	9:00 a.m.
	Return from Tour	TBA
	Dinner Out	TBA
Saturday June 26th	Tour D.C.	9:00 a.m.
	NM Plaque Ceremony	1:30 p.m.
	Return from Ceremony	TBA
	Banquet	7:00 p.m.
Sunday June 27th	Tour Arlington Cemetery 12:00	
	Return from Arlington	TBA
	2012 Reunion Vote	5:00 p.m.
	Dinner Out	TBA

Details above may change slightly, and the final Itinerary will be published on our web site the first week of June.

WHITE HOUSE TOUR

We may have the opportunity to tour the White House while we are in D.C. Bill Heck is working on this. We do not have a day or time yet, hopefully if we get our request in soon they will be able to clear all of us for the tour. The Secret Services requires certain information. Please use the Registration form listed on our web page, it contains the details that are needed.

NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter Editors continue to struggle with finding enough interesting or valuable information to make this effort worth doing. When we first started this thing we had lots of people sending in articles. Now it is rare to get anything. I am attaching a list here of Newsletter subscribers that have not yet submitted something for the benefit of the Newsletter. A simple bio, a photo, an old sea story or remembrance would help us to keep our publication going. Please consider doing this. Thanks.

Still waiting to hear from:

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Eddie Annibale | Larry Davis |
| Rod Dunlap | Paul Englert |
| Ed Fennell | Rich Forristall |
| Dennis Gierahn | Gary Hall |
| Gerald Hoover | Ted Huzak |
| Robert Kaplan | Jack Leach |
| Edward Lewitz | Jack MacBain |
| Dennis Masters | Joe McFadden |
| Johnny Miller | Frank Osborne |
| Robert Parker | J.D. Rogers |
| Dave Smith | Darren Whitehead |
| Harmon Winborn | |

TREASURY REPORT

Previous Balance 1/1/10	815.10
Dues/Donations &	403.11
Reunion Fees	1575.00
SUB TOTAL	2793.21
Stamps	89.25
Envelopes	19.04
Printing	249.60
CURRENT EXPENSES	357.89
NEW BALANCE	2474.36

NEW VA12 ASSOCIATION MEMBER

Here are the names of our newest members joining our ranks since the last newsletter.

Johnny Miller	82-86
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ON THE COVER

Grumman F8F Bearcat

The Grumman design team's aim:

1. Find the largest engine available.
2. Stuff it into the smallest, lightest airframe that will hold it.

Compared to its Grumman predecessor - the F6F Hellcat - the Bearcat was 20% lighter, had a 30% better rate of climb and was 50 mph faster. It was also considerably smaller in size, as it was designed to be operated from small escort aircraft carriers, something the big Hellcat rarely did. Thus the F8F Bearcat was intended mainly as a replacement for the obsolete F4F Wildcat, still the mainstay fighter of the many wartime escort carriers.

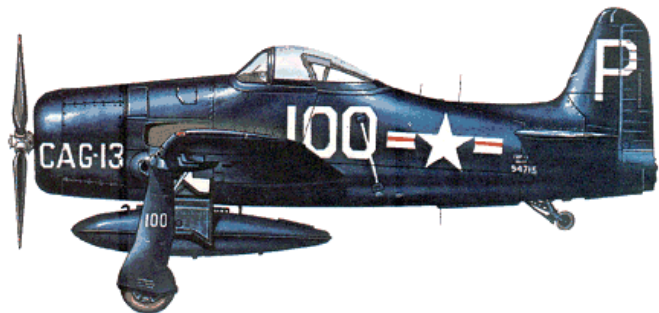
F8F-1

Prop	4-Blade
Engine	Pratt & Whitney R2800-34W Double Wasp 2,100 H.P.
Max Speed	434 MPH
Max Altitude	38,700 Ft.
Max Range	1,105 Miles
Rate of Climb	4,570 Ft/Min

F8F-2

Engine	Pratt & Whitney R2800-30W Double Wasp 2,250 H.P.
Max Speed	455 MPH
Max Altitude	40,800 Ft.
Max Range	1,105 Miles
Rate of Climb	6,300 Ft/Min

The Flying Ubangis of VF-2A (renamed VF-12 in August 1948) flew the F8F-1 and -2 and the F6F-5P Photo-Reconnaissance Hellcat from May 1947 until September 1950.



The following are excerpts from a book about A4's in Viet Nam, sent to me by one of our pilots Bob "Bolter" Brooks.

'ROSIE'S' WAR

Although it had been in service since shortly after the end of World War 2, USS *Franklin D Roosevelt* (CVA-42) had never seen combat. It had spent most of its time plying the Atlantic and Mediterranean. However, the increasing tempo of Vietnam operations showed that the number of ships normally dedicated to the Pacific Fleet was not enough, or that those carriers assigned to Task Force 77 (CTF 77) were in need of rest and repair. Therefore, the Atlantic Fleet was occasionally tasked to provide carriers to augment the war effort.

'FDR', or 'Rosie' as she was sometimes known, and her CVW-1 made a one-time combat cruise commencing on 21 June 1966. Among the air wing squadrons were two A-4E units, VA-12 and VA-72, and one A-4C squadron, VA-172. VA-72, normally assigned to CVW-7 aboard *Independence*, had replaced VA-15, which had been flying the veteran A-1 Skyraider and was transitioning to the equally elderly A-4B.

CVW-1 flew its first missions on 10 August. 'Rosie' stayed on the line for a month, then began a port visit to Yokosuka, Japan. The second line period did not start well, as the carrier's No 1 screw lost a blade, requiring the ship to head back to Yokosuka for repairs. 'FDR' eventually returned to *Yankee Station* on 20 October.

During the first line period 'Rosie's' squadrons had seen much action, with VA-72 losing two jets in two days. On 21 August, Lt AR Carpenter was flying an armed reconnaissance mission near Thanh Hoa. His section attacked a railway target, and as he began his second run, Carpenter heard an explosion and turned for the sea. However, the A-4E (BuNo 151109) burst into flames and he ejected to be picked up by a Navy helicopter.

Lt Carpenter was not so fortunate three months later when he was shot down by flak while attacking a SAM site on 1 November. This time he was captured, despite an intense SAR effort that saw the rescue helicopter and its escorting A-4s all suffer damage from enemy ground fire.

The day after Carpenter's 21 August mission, fellow 'Blue Hawk' pilot Lt Ken Craig had the frustrating experience of running into debris from the salvo of 2.75-in rockets he had just fired at a junk. The engine of his A-4E (BuNo 149992) ingested parts of the rockets, which quickly resulted in a loss of power and control - there is conjecture that rocket debris may have also downed Carpenter's jet the previous day. Craig ejected and was picked up by a Navy helicopter.

During 'FDR's' second line period, on 20 October, VA-172's Lt(jg) Fred Purrington was shot down while on one of the innumerable armed reconnaissance missions that filled aviators' flight logs during the war. It was a catchall phrase that included everything from individual attacks on targets of opportunity to scouting out activity on roads and waterways. Hit by flak, his A-4C (BuNo 147775) was badly damaged and its cockpit filled with smoke, at which point Purrington ejected into captivity.

Two other VA-172 aviators were killed in action, both on 2 December. CO, Cdr Bruce A Nystrom, was the section leader for a night armed

reconnaissance with Ens Paul L. Worrell. Fifty miles south of Haiphong, the two A-4Cs were tracked by a SAM battery. Worrell told his leader and Nystrom in turn called for evasive manoeuvres. However, other crews in the area saw two SAM launches, followed by flashes. The Skyhawks had disappeared. Ens Worrell's remains were returned by the North Vietnamese in 1985.

Two A-4Es from VA-12 were involved in a mid-air collision on 12 November, and although they were returning from a mission, the loss of the two pilots – squadron CO Cdr Robert C. Frosio and Lt(jg) James G. Jones – was not as a direct result of combat.

'Rosie's' last A-4 combat loss came on 14 December, just before the carrier prepared to rotate home. Lt Claude D. Wilson of VA-72 was on an *Iron Hand* mission, which was part of a larger raid. He had become separated from his flight lead and was hit by a SAM. Reportedly, the young pilot kept flying level following this first impact, instead of jinking, although he might have been injured. A second missile quickly found his A-4E (BuNo 151068) and the Skyhawk disintegrated. The North Vietnamese returned Wilson's remains in 1989.

After 33 days on the line, 'FDR' headed for home on 27 December. After calling at Hong Kong, Subic Bay and Cape Town, in South Africa, the vessel returned to Mayport, Florida, on 21 February 1967. It had been a long and eventful cruise. *Roosevelt* would not be the only 'ringer' to make an early war cruise.

It had been a dozen years since the Korean War, and even though the Navy had been deploying carriers, and their air wings, throughout the world with appropriate training cycles and new aircraft, there was nothing like the shock of real combat to point out the system's faults.

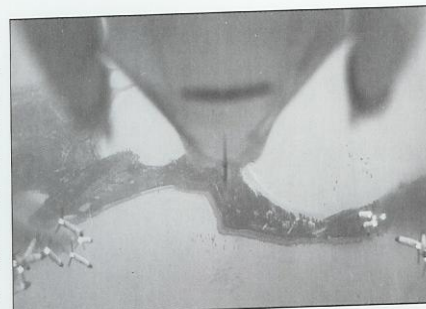
Besides the realisation that it was facing another oriental enemy whose take on life was drastically different, the Navy (as well as the rest of the US military) quickly found that it did not have sufficient assets to easily rotate units in and out of the combat area. After Korea, the Navy thought it had the luxury of fielding different types of carriers that could specialise in such things as ASW or the more traditional role of attack and power projection. The smaller, older *Essex*-class 27C conversions were given the ASW role, embarking air wings made up of helicopters with specialised sonar gear, as well as S-2 Trackers – twin-engined, highly capable aircraft from Grumman that carried the latest radar and appropriate weapons for hunting submarines.

A few of the 27Cs – *Hancock*, *Ticonderoga*, *Oriskany* and *Bon Homme Richard* – kept their CVA attack role, but others such as *Yorktown*, *Kearsarge*, *Intrepid* and, much later, *Shangri-la*, morphed into hybrids, sending their ASW aircraft to the beach and taking on modified wings of A-4s and F-8s, all to augment the hard-pressed traditional ships.



Signalling all is ready, a crewman gets out of the way before a VA-12 A-4C launches from 'FDR' on 6 September 1966. The 'Charlie' carries two 300-gallon fuel tanks and all its bombs on the centreline multiple ejection racks. Note the striking 'Kiss of Death' squadron insignia on the fuselage (Neal Crowe)

The American response was swift, although not as decisive as would be hoped, especially in view of the North Korean high-jacking of USS *Pueblo* (AGER-2) on 23 January 1968 and the internment of its crew until December of that year. Probably emboldened by the lack of US action following the *Pueblo* incident, the North Koreans had



A Skyhawk fires 2.75-in rockets at a target in South Vietnam. These small unguided missiles were used a lot in the first half of the war, but could pose problems for the aircraft that fired them. Indeed, a handful of A-4 pilots had to eject after flying into the field of rockets they had just fired (via Lou Mortimer)

tweaked the tail of the 'US tiger' again. TF 71 was reformed, and four carriers and their battle groups were detoured from their normal assignments in the South China Sea to the colder climes off Korea.

CVW-16 was augmented by a third Crusader fighter squadron when VF-51 arrived, taking the place of the RF-8G det of VFP-63. VA-112 was ignominiously sent off to Japan mainly because its A-4Cs were too short-legged to fly with the A-7s. The Skyhawks had been working in South Vietnam at the time, and had seen a fair amount of action, but heading north to an uncertain future, and possible confrontation with a relatively unknown enemy force, was not the time to retain what was becoming an obsolescent aircraft. Predictably, when the crisis eased and TF 71 was reassigned, the A-4s returned to 'Tico' to complete their deployment.

One almost improbable participant in the air war was the old carrier USS *Shangri-la*, now redesignated CVS-38. Commissioned in 1944, it saw action in the Pacific late in World War 2. In and out of mothballs, the 'Shang' usually guarded the vineyards in the Mediterranean. However, the demands on the overall carrier fleet during Vietnam required that the veteran ship make what would be its only combat deployment, carrying CVW-8. The air wing's complement included three A-4 squadrons – VA-12 (A-4C), VA-152 (A-4E) and VA-172 (A-4C).

Shangri-la was not given the affection that usually comes to ageing ships, perhaps because its numerous afflictions and problems left little room for such emotions. Thus, it was with some disbelief that people on and off the carrier saw it sortie from Mayport, Florida, on 5 March 1970, its final destination the South China Sea and the war. System breakdowns, inadequate air conditioning and a general malaise followed the converted CVS, even though its hard-working crew enjoyed what many considered a fine mess and an entertaining movie schedule.

'Shang' eventually checked in on *Yankee Station* on 8 April. CVW-8 soon learned that its main activity would be flying sorties into Laos. The first mission came on 11 April, and involved all three light attack squadrons. The old carrier struggled to keep up speed to provide adequate wind over the deck for launch. The Skyhawks were penalised accordingly, and could only carry three of the normal four 500-lb bombs.



TR Swartz's MiG-killing A-4C BuNo 148609, now assigned to VA-12 and CVW-8 in 1970 for the one combat cruise of *Shangri-la*, departs NAF Atsugi following a short R&R break ashore (Masaaki Hayakiwa)



Arriving over their target and directed by an orbiting USAF FAC, the strikers made their run and returned to the carrier, satisfied with having flown their first mission. However, it was not always going to be so easy, and within ten days CVW-8 had lost its first aircraft – A-4C (BuNo 148484) of VA-172, flown by Lt(jg) John B Golz. In fact, this jet proved to be the cruise's only combat loss. On 22 April, Golz was part of a late-night mission sent to attack trail traffic. In the rising dawn light, the FAC watched as Golz's A-4 went into its attack dive and hit the ground. No flak was seen, but the probable cause was considered to be ground fire or pilot target fixation – an ever present danger in such low-level operations.

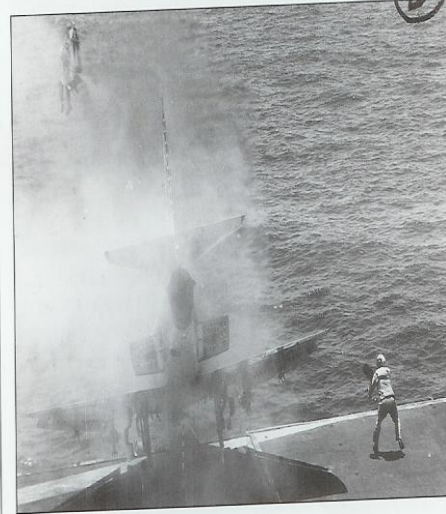
Shangri-la spent the next eight months on and off the line. Its crews contended with the old ship's operational problems, and pilots dealt with flying obsolescent A-4Cs against a hidden enemy. Yet, Jim Reid, the aircraft handler for the cruise, recalls the deployment with guarded enthusiasm. Despite such aggravating problems as contaminated jet fuel, arresting cables that unravelled, failure of the ship's TACAN directional beacon and a host of other daily and periodic headaches, there were moments of dark humour.

At one point, shortly before Reid's arrival, the carrier's No 3 elevator had been out of commission for three weeks, requiring a new cable that had actually arrived at Da Nang. The frustrated captain proceeded to con his ship right into the harbour to get both the cable and the shipyard workers needed to make the change!

Beginning in late June, three Skyhawks (two from VA-172 and one from VA-12) were lost during catapult shots. Two of the pilots were retrieved while the third was killed. The problem was traced to the fact that the war-weary A-4Cs had gone well past their safety point and the

VA-172's A-4C BuNo 149498 is also seen in the NAF Atsugi pattern in 1970. This unit was also assigned to CVW-8 for 'Shang's' one-time combat cruise. As with most A-4Cs that survived frontline service with the Navy, this aircraft was sold to the Republic of Singapore Air Force in 1980 and rebuilt as A-4S 991. Upgraded to Super Skyhawk specification in the late 1980s, this aircraft served with No 145 Sqn until the unit retired its A-4SUs in March 2005

Shangri-la during its 1970 cruise. The old carrier was plagued by problems with its systems and aircraft throughout the eight-month deployment, but CVW-8 maintained its mission tempo



On 2 July 1970, VA-152's Lt(jg) William Belden suffered brake failure in his A-4E (BuNo 150127) during recovery, and the aircraft veered toward the port catwalk. The 'Shang's' flightdeck chief, Air Bosun Joe Hammond, grabbed a wing to try to bring the aircraft back on deck, but could not keep the jet from moving over the edge. The young pilot ejected, sending a fuselage access panel into the chief's left shoulder. Belden landed 100 yards from the carrier, where he was rescued by the ship's helicopter. The A-4 was recovered from the catwalk and eventually returned to flight status. Chief Hammond was also returned to normal duty. PH3 Keith Guthrie was on duty to back up the regular automatic PLAT camera that filmed flightdeck action, and he took this celebrated sequence of photographs capturing the incident. In late 1973 it was one of 46 E-models transferred to the Israeli Defence Force/Air Force, where it received the serial number 895. This aircraft is presently in war reserve storage at Ovdá air base

bridle attachment point below the wings had simply failed. The jets were no longer attached to the catapult during the launch sequence and simply dribbled off the flightdeck without attaining launch speed.

Shangri-la left *Yankee Station* in November and made its way back to the US, where the vessel was quickly decommissioned in June 1971. The veteran carrier languished at the Philadelphia Navy Yard until it was finally scrapped in 1988.

INVASION OF LAOS

Beginning in February 1971, *Lam Son 719* was a more concentrated, formalised effort to halt the supply flow south. ARVN units jumped off from Quang Tri province on 8 February and struck into Laos. However, even with an umbrella of US air power protecting the South Vietnamese, the NVA resistance

was stiff, and ultimately the Allied effort, spearheaded by the South Vietnamese accompanied by American forces, was pushed back.

Hancock was on station at the time with CVW-21, which included the last carrier-based Skyhawks in the war. All the remaining A-4 squadrons had either switched to A-7s or been decommissioned. The three units aboard CVA-19 would also be 'decomm'd' within the next few years, but the need for CVW-21 and *Hancock* was immediate, so the A-4s went out again.

VAs -55, -164 and -212 all flew the definitive A-4F, which probably eased the burden of maintenance for the enlisted members. The jets were largely responsible for attacking enemy trucks, as well as for providing support for the Marines on the ground. There was also the occasional retaliatory strike into southern North Vietnam. Working in conjunction with Air Force FACs in OV-10s, the CVW-21 A-4s operated primarily around the three major passes – Mu Gia, Ban Karai and Ban Raving – on the Laos-Vietnam border, sometimes going into the so-called Laotian Panhandle, which was actually Air Force territory, codenamed *Steel Tiger*.

A representative mission at this time was the mid-afternoon sortie flown by VA-55 on 21 November near Cape Mui Ron. With a 6000-ft ceiling, the A-4 pilots spotted trucks and made an unsuccessful attack, dropping some of their Mk 82 500-lb bombs. Several other runs proved inconclusive, the clouds making a textbook run-in difficult.

With most of their bombs gone, the A-4 pilots were thinking of going home when a call came that another flight had some communist trucks bottled up on a nearby road. The 'Garfish' section found the new target and destroyed several vehicles. Calling 'Winchester' to indicate they had expended all their ordnance, the VA-55 aviators headed back to *Hancock*.

SQUADRON REPORT VA-12



A SESSION OF "ERROR ANALYSIS" AND COFFEE FOLLOWS

'MAKES HAY WHERE THE SUN SHINES'



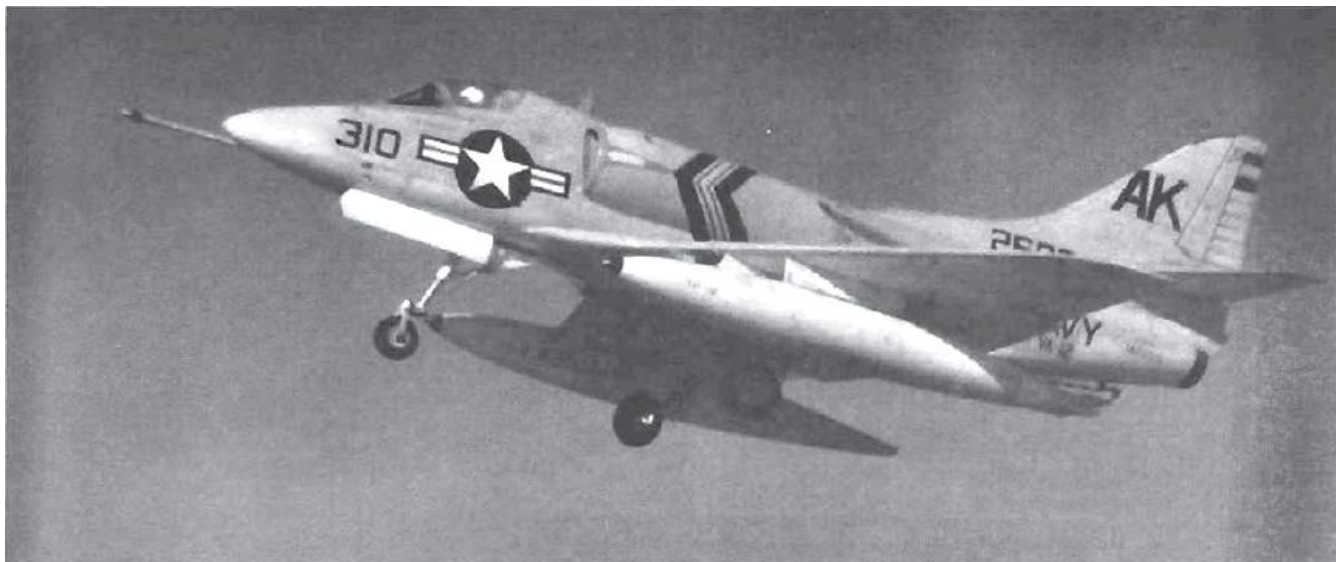
PREFLIGHT BOMBING MISSION BRIEFING IS GIVEN BY LT. McCARTHY, LTJG. FLOYD SYKES ON THEIR WAY TO



McCARTHY TAKES A GOOD LOOK AT INTAKE OF HIS



LTJG. JOHN SLOAN CHECKS BOMB LOAD FOR SECURING



A 'FLYING UBANGI,' RARIN' TO GO, TAKES OFF FROM NAS CECIL FIELD TO JOIN HIS FLIGHT IN A LOCAL

With a full year of concentrated weapons delivery training completed, Attack Squadron Twelve is now at peak readiness as it rejoins CVG-10 for deployment aboard the USS Shangri-la.

Taking advantage of the fate that based them at Cecil Field, Florida, the Flying Ubangis have "rewritten" the competitive bombing record books for squadrons of the Naval Air Force, Atlantic Fleet.

The outstanding target complex in the Jacksonville area and the predominantly perfect flying weather at Florida's Gateway City have given VA-12 ample opportunity to conduct weapons delivery training.

Such training has given VA-12 a definite edge on less fortunately located squadrons. Because the Atlantic Fleet competitions and the "Top Gun" meet at Yuma were tremendous motivations, VA-12 never relaxed its drive to perfect the art of bomb delivery.

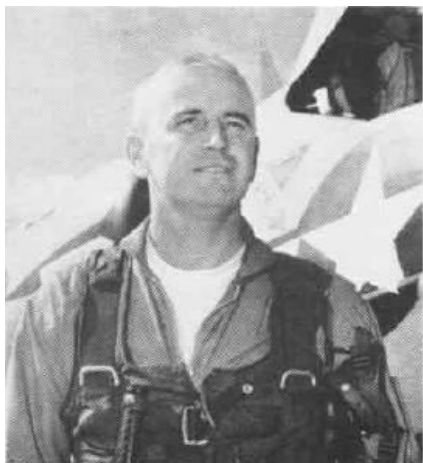
During the 1959 AirLant annual competitive exercises, the Flying Ubangis set records in over-the-shoulder loft delivery, night dive bombing and the profile mission exercise. The 13 pilots who participated in these exercises won a total of 59 Navy E's. Squadron skipper, Cdr. Bill Barrow, won an eight for eight.

After winning the AirLant Weapons

Meet last fall, the five-man weapons team from VA-12 represented the East Coast in the Navy-wide Weapons Meet in Yuma and finished second. In this meet Lt. Joseph Malec, VA-12 weapons training officer, won top individual A4D honors and was awarded the Herman trophy.

Since the Yuma meet, the Flying Ubangis have enhanced their record-breaking spree by establishing the minimum altitude "skip-bombing" record, resetting their own over-the-shoulder record, and breaking previously established records in medium angle loft, low angle loft dive bombing and rocketry. In short, VA-12 "makes hay where the sun shines."

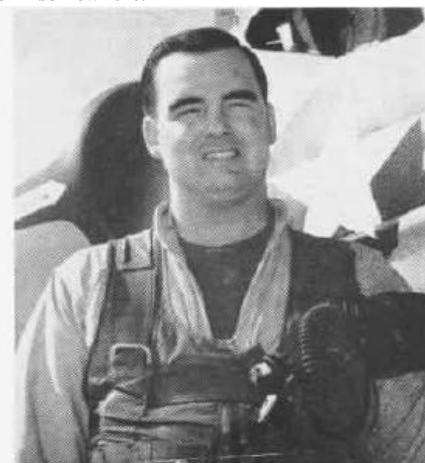
John Gynan 66-68 dug this these 2 pgs up form somewhere.



CDR. BARROW HOLDS 'EIGHT E'S FOR EIGHT'



'TOP GUN' MALEC IS TRAINING OFFICER



'DALY WAS DIVISION RUNNER-UP AT YUMA

FUTURE REUNIONS

I have been trying to come up with a fair way to determine locations of future reunions and so far this is what makes sense to me. If you have another idea, please let me know. I would like to have a board set up in the Hospitality suite for the time we are in D.C. Attendees would be able to write their suggestions for the 2012 Reunion location down. At the banquet on Saturday evening, anyone wishing to speak on behalf of their suggestion would have that opportunity. We will hold a vote, either that evening or Sunday evening and the two locations receiving the most number of votes will then be voted on by those current dues paying members that were not able to attend this year's reunion. Ballots will be mailed to those absent VA12 Association Members with our Sept 10 Newsletter. As always I am open to suggestions or modifications of this procedure. Just let me know before we get to D.C.

REUNION SHIRTS AND HATS

Bob Fossum is taking orders for the 2010 shirts and hats information can be found at our website, or by emailing Bob mfoss@aol.com

This is a photo from Mrs. Swann of Jack's tours of duty.



CHECKS

Just a reminder, when sending me a check for any reason, please make it out to Joe Kyle, not Joseph or VA-12, or any other name that you wish to call me. Thanks.

FLY YOUR COLORS



John Gynan's Truck

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