

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 VIII, Issue 3 December 2009

F4U-1 Corsair

"...And any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: 'I served in the United States Navy.'"

John F. Kennedy, August 1 1963



UBANGI? **UBETCHA!**

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

2010 REUNION NEWS

I expect by now everyone is aware of the dates and location of our 2010 Attack Squadron Twelve Reunion. But just in case, here are the details.

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.

I was able to visit the Hotel back in June. It is a great place and I am pretty sure everyone will agree. Also, for those that are flying in, there is a free shuttle from Washington National. Those that drive will have free parking.

This is the first attempt at the Reunion Plan of the Day(s). Things could change and hopefully I will be able to post a more accurate agenda in the April 2010 Newsletter. Your comments are welcomed as always. Items in **bold** are locked in.

REUNION 2010 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

I am in the process of contracting with the Tourmobile Sightseeing Co. Their Buses leave from Arlington at 9:00 a.m., and they are conveniently located a few blocks from our hotel, a short ride on the metro. The Tour Bus stops at all of the major sites in D.C. and around the mall. We can hop on and hop off as we wish. Which means we can go to sites as a group, like the Vietnam Wall, Korean War Memorial, etc and we can also spend additional time at things of our own interest. My inclination would be to hit the Memorials on Saturday morning as a group before the Plaque Ceremony and do our personal choice stops on Friday. But tell me what you think. As part of our tour of Arlington Cemetery on Sunday, I would like to see us lay a wreath at the site of

Neal Russo's interment. Neal is the only Ubangi that I know of that is laid to rest there. If anyone knows of other VA12 guys that are there, please let me know.

Bob Fossum will be handling orders for 2010 Reunion Shirts and Hats and I appreciate his help. Bob will have an order form emailed to all who wish to make orders, and he will also have an order form on our webpage in the near future.

TREASURY REPORT

Previous Balance	\$445.93
Dues/Donations	0
SUB TOTAL	445.93
Stamps	88.20
Lables	10.59
Printing	185.28
CURRENT EXPENSES	284.07
NEW BALANCE	161.86

2010 DUES

Please submit your 2010 dues in January. Dues will remain at \$12.00 for the coming year.

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NEW VA12 ASSOCIATION MEMBER

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

Douglas Muzik	81-85
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TATTOOS

Unless you have been living in a cave, you must all be aware that Tattoos have made a huge comeback in recent years. Many of us acquired one or more during a less than sober liberty all of those years ago. Some of us however have waited to the end of life to disfigure our bodies as such.

Ah yes, on the next page that would be Mr. Richard Kichline aka "Kicker". It seems his family decided to get this for him on his last birthday. It's true we never do, really grow up. Nice Kicker, can't wait to see it in person.



THE BLUE JACKET MANUAL

Every one of us will remember *The Bluejacket's Manual*, the basic handbook for United States Navy personnel. First issued in 1902 to teach new recruits about naval procedures and life and offer a reference for active sailors, it has become the "bible" for Navy personnel, providing information about a wide range of Navy topics. The current version is the Centennial Edition, issued in 2002.

Passed along through the e-grapevine by Bob Brooks and Bob Fossum, comes to us this tale of a Bluejacket's Manual lost and then found.

Quoting the e-mail now:

"The first message is **WHAT I WROTE** and explains the backstory. The second message is **WHAT I GOT BACK** and is one of the greatest emails I have ever received.

WHAT I WROTE:

Greetings, my name is Derek Barnett and I recently communicated with your son via Facebook. I have something that I believe belongs to your family. Let me begin by saying that I am in the Navy and was recently selected for promotion to Chief Petty Officer. Transitioning from First Class Petty Officer to Chief Petty Officer is one of the most unique processes in the US military - it involves an initiation process and one of our tasks is that of fundraising (we each have to raise several hundred dollars apiece). I recently purchased, via Ebay, a few Blue Jackets manuals (these are reference books that we are issued during basic training, which discuss all things Navy) from 1940 in hopes of selling them at a greater price to some of the Chiefs (they may task us with fundraising but often contribute to our fundraising efforts by buying what we sell).

However, one of the books was stenciled with the name C W Roesel. I don't want to sell any potential family heirloom so, on a hunch, I looked up that name on the World War II museum registry and came across Charles W Roesel with a son's name listed of Charles M Roesel.

I then did a Google search for Charles M Roesel and the first link that came up was your son's Facebook account.

As I said before, I do not want to sell a family heirloom and would be more than happy to send the book to you or your son at no cost (simply provide me an address). Of course, if you all already have his Blue Jackets Manual, then please let me know (it's always possible that there was another Mr. CW Roesel in the Navy at the time and I can redirect my search for the rightful owner). While this was initially for fundraising, it was on the assumption that there was no name stenciling; however, after I bought the book and saw the name, I wanted to make sure that I exhausted every effort to get it back where it belongs. I only paid about \$10.00 for it and that's a small price to pay to honor someone who went before me by returning this item to the family. I don't have the book yet (it's currently en route to me) and I'll let you and your son know when it's in my possession. Thank you for your time and I've provided this same information to your son.

Sincerely,
CTRC (Select) Derek Barnett

WHAT I GOT BACK:

Dear Chief Barnett:

What a thrill to receive your letter re: my Dad, Charles W. Roesel, affectionately known to all as Charlie. Charles W. Roesel, AMM/2c served honorably from Jan. 1942 until September of 1945. He was crew chief and top turret gunner on a PV-1 Lockheed Ventura medium bomber based out of French Morocco in North, Africa. They flew anti-submarine patrols over the Straits of Gibraltar, up the coast of Spain and across to Italy. I am in possession of his combat aircrewman wings with 3 battle stars. His service in the Navy was the defining moment of his life. He would not have to have served because he was working in a vital industry and had 3 children but enlisted shortly after Pearl Harbor. I placed his name on the WWII registry in hopes that someone would recognize his name and his service. All of his 4 children thrilled at his stories of serving in the US Navy. All the crew on his plane referred to him as the "old Man" because of wife and kids back home, (he was 24 years old)!! We are in possession of the letter that he wrote to my brother and I as he left to go overseas that is very, very moving. I read it at Dad's committal service at the Tennessee Veterans Cemetery in Knoxville, Tennessee.

The honor guard made up of all WWII Vets in the uniform of their service were in tears. They said that Dad said what they all wanted to say but didn't know how to put it in words.

One of the stories told to us with sadness by Dad had to do with that Bluejacket Manual. Dad was discharged from the Navy and hitchhiked home from New Cumberland, Pennsylvania. It turned out to be a hot September day and Dad got picked up by a long haul trucker who dropped him off in Olean, New York where we lived through the war years. Since it was so hot Dad took off his Pea Coat and folded it up and sat on it in the truck. When he arrived home, in his excitement he left the jacket in the truck. In it was his address book, and his Bluejacket manual. He always lamented the fact that he had lost contact with all his buddies when he lost the address book and wanted to have the Bluejacket manual to keep. He had hoped the truck driver would have returned it to him but it never arrived. So, now you are the one to bring back that manual back into the circle of love and memory of our beloved Dad.

I want you to know that he was a wonderful father to the four of us kids. (My youngest sister Carol was born in Nov. 1944 while Dad was in North Africa and was almost a year old before he held her in his arms.) We were a lower middle class family with a strong work ethic. Dad worked as an auto mechanic most of his life mostly for Lincoln-Mercury and Volkswagen in Santa Cruz, California where we moved in 1950. He was a strong believer in education and put all 4 of us thru private Christian Schools. All 4 of us have a college education. My brother Paul has a doctorate in Education and Carol has a Masters in Nursing. I have a degree in Mortuary Science and owned a funeral home for 30 years in Petersburg, Alaska. All 4 of my kids pursued their education and both my sons graduated from Medical school and one daughter is a Certified Medical assistant and the other is a CPA. Both my brother and I are Army Veterans and my grandson Charles Lucas Roesel is going in the Air Force this October as an Air Force Nurse. He is married and has two kids one of which is Also Charles M.(Micah) Roesel. Luke is carrying on the family tradition of military service that goes back to our ancestor who served with George Washington that terrible winter a Valley Forge.

I am now active in the US Air Force Auxiliary/Ciivil Air Patrol and am proud to serve at my age and still wear the uniform of my country.

I know I have rambled on way to long. I would love to talk to you either by phone of in person and appreciate your contacting us more that you can imagine. I would be more that happy to reimburse you for your expenses and look forward to receiving the manual. Thanks so much

and God bless you.”

Charles. M. Roesel, Maj US Air Force Auxiliary

THE AERIAL BATTLE PLAN

Submitted for your enjoyment, and as a reminder that there are other great, magnificent flyers around besides us. This came from a gent who runs a 2000 acre corn farm up around Barron, WI, not far from Oshkosh. He used to fly F-4Es and F-16s and participated in the first Gulf War...

THE LESSON: If you're forced to fight, give no quarter. It's good to have back-up from your mate though.

I went out to plant corn for a bit to finish a field before tomorrow morning and witnessed The Great Battle. A golden eagle - big bastard, about six foot wingspan - flew right in front of the tractor. It was being chased by three crows that were continually dive-bombing it and pecking at it. The crows do this because the eagles rob their nests when they find them.

At any rate, the eagle banked hard right in one evasive maneuver, and then landed in the field about 100 feet from the tractor. This eagle stood about 3 feet tall. The crows all landed too and took up positions around the eagle at 120 degrees apart, but kept their distance at about 20 feet from the big bird. The eagle would take a couple steps towards one of the crows and they'd hop backwards and forward to keep their distance. Then the reinforcement showed up.

I happened to spot the eagle's mate hurtling down out of the sky at what appeared to be approximately Mach 1.5. Just before impact the eagle on the ground took flight, (obviously a coordinated tactic; probably pre-briefed) and the three crows which were watching the grounded eagle, also took flight thinking they were going to get in some more pecking on the big bird.

The first crow being targeted by the diving eagle never stood a snowball's chance in hell. There was a mid-air explosion of black feathers and that crow was done. The diving eagle then banked hard left in what had to be a 9G climbing turn, using the energy it had accumulated in the dive, and hit crow #2 less than two seconds later. Another crow dead.

The grounded eagle, which was now airborne and had an altitude advantage on the remaining crow, which was streaking eastward in full burner, made a short dive then banked hard right when the escaping crow tried to evade the hit. It didn't work - crow #3 bit the dust at about 20

feet altitude.

This aerial battle was better than any air show I've been to, including the warbird show at Oshkosh! The two eagles ripped the crows apart and ate them on the ground, and as I got closer and closer working my way across the field, I passed within 20 feet of one of them as it ate its catch. It stopped and looked at me as I went by and you could see in the look of that bird that it knew who's Boss of the Sky. What a beautiful bird!

I love it. Not only did they kill their enemy, they ate them.

HAMILTON McWHORTER

The exploits of a Navy Hero before and during his time with VF-12

First F6F Hellcat Ace

Fighting Squadron 9, *USS Essex*; later Fighting Squadron 12, *USS Randolph*

Shot down 12 enemy aircraft over the Pacific in World War Two

Commanding Officer VF12, August 1953 – October 1954



Lt. Hamilton "Mac" McWhorter III was the first F6F Hellcat ace of the US Navy. He attended the University of Georgia and Georgia Tech, before entering the Navy's flight program in August, 1941 and was commissioned at Pensacola in Feb., 1942. He flew the F2A Brewster Buffalo in training at Opa Locka, and sympathized with the Marines at Midway who had to go into combat with them.

The pilots of Fighting Nine carrier-qualified with the F4F Wildcat in 1942, on *USS Long Island*, the small carrier that had carried the first Marine fliers to Guadalcanal. The young Georgian first saw combat with VF-9, flying the Wildcat from *USS Ranger* in strikes against Casablanca (as in the Bogart movie), where he did a lot of strafing, but met no aerial opponents (nor Rick Blaine).

On its return from North Africa, VF-9 was slated to convert to the new F4Us in January 1943, but Vought hadn't produced enough to equip all the planned squadrons. So, Fighting Nine took delivery of the Grumman F6F-3 Hellcats that month, the first operational squadron to do so. Even Grumman's Hellcat program could only deliver a few planes a week to the squadron at NAS Oceania, near Norfolk, Virginia. The fighter was so new that there no pilot handbooks were available. Compared to the F4F, the roomy F6F was a big improvement: 60 mph faster, a better rate of climb, and more ammo capacity.

VF-9 was assigned to and qualified in F6F's aboard *Essex* in February, 1943, and deployed from Norfolk to the Pacific on *Essex* in May. Most pilots flew more than 50 hours in the new F6Fs. Many accumulated another 30 before entering combat, but 80 hours was unusually low compared to later wartime standards when many pilots had 300 hours in the Grummans before flying in combat.

That summer in Pearl Harbor, VF-9 got a new skipper, Lt. Cdr. Philip H. Torrey, and went aboard *USS Essex*, the first of the new class of fleet carriers that would win the naval war in the Pacific. They embarked on a "training raid" against Marcus Island in late August, the first use of the Hellcat in combat. The Marcus raid was fairly uneventful and no Japanese planes sortied to fight them.

In mid-September, 1943, the Navy put together, for the first time, a task force of six carriers, including *Essex* and its VF-9. When four of these carriers struck Wake Island on October 5-6, the Hellcats saw their first significant aerial combat. Half an hour before dawn on the 5th, each of the four carriers launched three fighter divisions, 47 Hellcats in all. When they were still 50 miles out from Wake, the Japanese radar detected them, and 27 Zeros intercepted. In the ensuing dogfight, Fighting Nine's skipper, Phil Torrey, shot down one Zero,

then evaded two more by dodging in and out of clouds. Lt. Hadden, while watching a shared kill fall into the ocean, was jumped by two Zeros, and was lucky enough to make it back to *Essex* with most of his engine oil emptied out through several 20mm holes. Lt. (jg) McWhorter dove into a gaggle of Zeros, when one serendipitously appeared in his gunsight. He fired a short burst and exploded the Zero - his first aerial victory.

The raid showed that the new Hellcats could more than hold its own against the Zeros. They destroyed 22 of 34 aircraft at Wake, and 12 American planes were lost - 6 to the Zeros and 6 to AA gunfire.

He destroyed two more Zeros in the Nov. 11 raid on Rabaul. Task Force 50.3 (*Essex*, *Bunker Hill*, and *Independence*) arrived in the Southwest Pacific on Nov. 5, 1943. They began to hear of casualties from the day's raid, so the fliers were a little apprehensive when they learned of the follow-up planned for the 11th. The incomplete intelligence reports that were available did little to ease their trepidation at attacking "Fortress Rabaul."

Just after dawn on Nov. 11, 1943, *Essex*, about 165 southeast of Rabaul, launched her strike planes, including McWhorter's VF-9 on escort. En route to the target, flying at 10,000 feet, a dozen Zeros picked them up and tried to lure the fighters away from their charges. While Blackburn recalled lots of "junk transmissions" coming from the F6F squadrons, McWhorter noted the "excellent radio discipline of our group." (*Funny how, whoever tells the story, it always seem to be "those other guys" who cluttered up the airwaves. - SS*) The *Essex* strike force reached Rabaul without difficulty. As they dove into the attack, no Zeros appeared, but the AA was pretty heavy.

The Jap warships were leaving the harbor at high speed and McWhorter went after a cruiser, going into his strafing run off the cruiser's starboard beam. It seemed like every weapon on the ship was firing at him and he could actually see the eight inch shells coming at him. When he was 2,500 feet out, he fired a four second burst at the open AA gun batteries, then zoomed over the ship.

Heading back to the rendezvous point, he saw huge World War One style dogfight going on, involving about a dozen Hellcats and over 30 Zeros. He dove into the melee and shot up a Zero that was scoring heavily on another Hellcat. He saw the Zero flame, but couldn't tell if the Hellcat escaped. Suddenly he heard a sound "like when someone throws a handful of large rocks on a galvanized tin roof." He snapped his plane over into a split-S dive and instantly found another Zero in his sights, which he quickly exploded with a short burst. This

combat only lasted about 45 seconds, long enough for McWhorter to claim two kills.

Only lightly damaged, McWhorter met up with the F6Fs and escorted the strike planes back to *Essex*. Later that afternoon he flew an uneventful CAP over the carriers. In the evening, the torpedo-bomber and dive-bomber pilots, who usually had little use for "hot shot" fighter pilots, came into the ready room, laden with gifts for their protectors: cigarettes, gum, candy, etc.

While the number of American victory claims on the Rabaul raids were overstated, they unmistakably reduced the Japanese air strength - both pilots and planes. The raids also showed that the powerful new carrier task forces could operate within the range of land-based bombers. The next step was Tarawa in the Gilberts, where VF-9 was assigned to tactical air support for the Marines. He made ace by downing a Pete floatplane off Tarawa on November 18 and a Betty bomber the next day. He only used 86 rounds to down the Betty, earning the nickname "One Slug."

The Americans secured Tarawa and Makin, and aerial combat in the Gilberts tapered off by the end of November. In December, *Essex* participated in the Marshalls strikes that began on the 4th.

The next big action for VF-9 occurred on Jan. 29, 1944 when the new Fast Carrier Task Force (12 carriers!) supported the amphibious invasion of Kwajalein in the Marshalls. Assigned to strafe the enemy airfield on Kwajalein's Roi islet, VF-9 launched 18 planes led by Lt. Cdr. Herb Houck. While Fighting Nine's orders instructed them to avoid combat if possible, many of them were forced to engage. McWhorter shot down two Hamps in this engagement.

Cdr. Phil Torrey 'fleeted up' to CAG-9, and Herb Houck replaced him as C.O. of VF-9 in time for the first great Truk raid of Feb. 19. McWhorter was escorting an SBD strike when he spotted the bogeys in the distance. McWhorter led his wingman in for a closer look; the bogeys turned out to be Zeros that unaccountably hadn't fired on the Hellcats. McWhorter and his wingman got behind the enemy airplanes, and with his typical economical bursts, the 22 year-old Georgian downed two of them. Another Zero came up, which he also dispatched promptly. He was the first carrier pilot to become a double ace.

When VF-9's combat tour finished in March 1944, McWhorter helped to re-organize VF-12 (formerly flying Corsairs) as a Hellcat squadron, on the carrier *Randolph*. He took part in the first carrier raid against Tokyo on Feb. 16, 1945, downing a Zero.

His 12th and last victory came on May 13, when he downed a Myrt recon plane. He was flying morning CAP over Task Force 58, when he was vectored to intercept a high bogey. The IJN C6N Myrt was at 25,000 feet and going away. McWhorter got so close that when he flamed it, its oil got all over his Hellcat. As the Myrt exploded, two parachutes popped out, each holding a modest size box. One young ensign had to investigate and the box, apparently quite solid, smashed the leading edge of his wing. Later that same day, McWhorter led an escort mission for two Vought OS2U Kingfisher that had to rescue a couple pilots downed in Japan's Inland Sea. With some difficulty, and lots of S-turns, the high-powered F6Fs kept pace with the slow Kingfishers. As they approached the area where the downed pilot had been reported, the planes that had been circling above had to depart because of low fuel. In the sea below, a bright yellow dye marker guided the Kingfishers to the downed pilots. As he made the pick-up, one of the OS2U pilots cut his engine. From high above, McWhorter saw the prop stop, and he thought that this was not a good idea, being only 15 miles from a Jap air base. But the rescue plane re-started in a couple minutes and took off safely. On the return flight the Kingfishers, now more heavily loaded with humanity, flew even more slowly. By early afternoon, all hands were back on board *Randolph*.

By the time they landed, McWhorter had been aloft for over five and a half hours, his longest flight of the war. While five hour flights were routine, what really hurt was the survival gear that some "sadist" had decided should be packed right under the pilot's butt, with the emergency water can cutting into them. There was no room in the cockpit to avoid this literal 'pain in the butt'.

VF-12 left the combat zone for Hawaii in June, 1945. McWhorter stayed in the Navy, from which he retired in 1969. He was elected to the Georgia Aviation Hall of Fame in 1989. (Submitted by John Gynan)

Officer: "Sailor, do you have change for a dollar?"

Sailor: "Sure, buddy!"

Officer: "Hey, that's no way to address an officer! Now let's try it again. Sailor, do you have change for a dollar?"

Sailor: "**No, SIR!**"

ON THE COVER

Over the course of its service life, the F4U Corsair experienced a large number of modifications, enhancements, refits, and alterations. The three major variants were the F4U-1, the F4U-1D, and the F4U-4.

F4U-1 & FG-1

Prop 3-Blade
 Engine Pratt & Whitney R2800-8 2,000 H.P.
 Max Speed 417 MPH
 Max Altitude 37,000 Ft.

F4U-1D & FG-1D

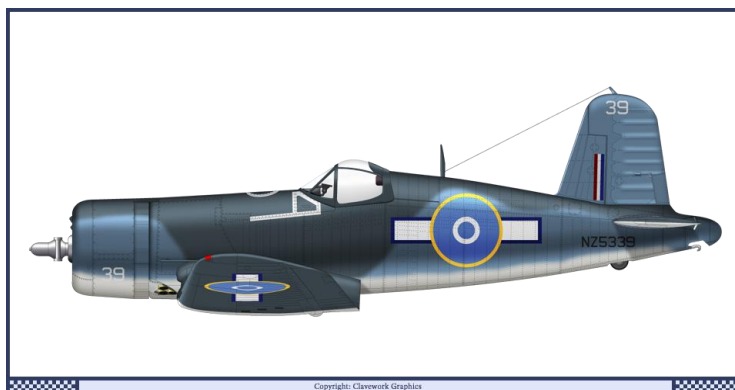
Prop 3-Blade
 Engine Pratt & Whitney R2800-8W 2,250 H.P.
 Max Speed 425 MPH
 Max Altitude 37,000 Ft.

F4U-4

Prop 4-Blade
 Engine Pratt & Whitney R2800-18W 2,450 H.P.
 Max Speed 448 MPH
 Max Altitude 41,000 Ft.

The **F4** versions were made by Vought, the **FG** versions were made by Goodyear. (An F3A version was built by Brewster, I summarize many reviews of this variant as unflyable junk.)

The Flying Ubangis of VF-2A (as we were then designated) flew all five variants from May 1945 until May 1947.



JUST A BIGGER GAS TANK

(Naval Aviation News, April 1959)

The Douglas *Skyhawk*, with 300 gallon external wing tanks and in-flight refueling capability, has particularly adapted itself to carrier life - as, of course, it was designed to do. During recent months, the A4D-2 has been fully evaluated and tested by Attack Squadron 12 aboard the USS *Forrestal* in the Mediterranean. The increased range and "staying power" afforded by the configuration helped account for better than four hour simulated strike flights. For a single-engine, single piloted aircraft, these routine operations broke endurance records for jets. Most encouraging of all, was the relatively small decrease in performance due to replacing the 150-gallon standard equipment by the larger tanks.

In-flight refueling was instituted on an operational basis by VA -12 on all long navigational flights. The Operations Officer, LCdr. W. H. Sells, had pioneered in one other facet of this art-qualifying all pilots in night air-to-air refueling. The progress from "buddy store" malfunctions on almost every flight, which were recorded right after the squadron had embarked in July, was dramatically demonstrated on 7 October 1958. During the NATO Exercise Crescent Hinge, seven out of seven buddy stores performed their functions without a hitch. This reliability continued.

Aboard the *Forrestal*, VA-12 also helped inaugurate the standby tanker, ready to be shot off with a full fuel load to aid an unfortunate cohort sweating out his Charlie time because of a low-fuel state.

But the bread and butter operations were the long-range flights, "As the world's smallest carrier-borne aircraft, the 'mighty mite' more than holds its own in the specialized

light attack field," states the squadron CO. Cdr. C. A. Pendleton. "It's the little bird's ease of handling in the air as well as on the flight deck that has evoked sharp praise from pilots and plane handlers alike." Simplicity of design and an "on the ball" maintenance crew accounted for availability approaching 80% during VA-12's recent deployment as part of CVC-10. However, extra effort usually pays off. During the same month that 705 flight hours were recorded during 16 operating days, the squadron received an AirLant commendation for an above average re-enlistment rate.

THE SOLDIER, THE MARINE & THE AIRMAN

A soldier, a marine, and an airman got into a fight about which service is best. The fight was so heated, that they killed each other.

Soon, they found themselves in Heaven. They see St. Peter walk by and ask, "Which branch of Service is the best?"

St. Peter replied, "I can't answer that. But, I will ask God what He thinks the next time I see Him."

Some time later, the three see St. Peter again and ask him if he was able to find the answer.

Suddenly, a dove landed on St. Peter's shoulder. The dove was carrying a note in its beak. St. Peter opened the note and read it out loud to the three fellows:

"Gentlemen: All the Branches of the Service are 'Honorable and Noble'. Each one of you has served your country well. Be proud of that.

**(signed)
GOD, USN (Ret.)"**

