



Volume VI, Issue 2

Atkron 12 Newsletter

va12.com



June 2007

Ubangi

Reunion Plans

I had hoped on being able to report registration information for the 2008 Reunion in this issue. However, we have hit a few snags along the way and do not have a hotel secured at this point. I believe it will all work out and the exact site will be announced by the September Newsletter. Most likely it will be known before that date, and we will post it on the webpage, so keep an eye in that direction. We are still planning for Chattanooga, TN and our dates will be May 22-25. This is the Memorial Day weekend next year, and will allow for an extra travel day for most folks.

VA12.com

For those of you that have not visited our webpage recently, you will notice there have been many changes. Our new webmaster, Terry Nies, has done a terrific job of transferring most of our old site information to the new site. The new site is on a secure service that blocks pop-ups and is much easier to navigate. Please take a look the next time you are on your computer. Thanks Terry for all of the time and energy that you have put into our new home.

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Ubetcha



**Gee!! If I
were a
Ubangi I'd
be going to
the
Reunion!**

Don't just think about it!!

Do It!!

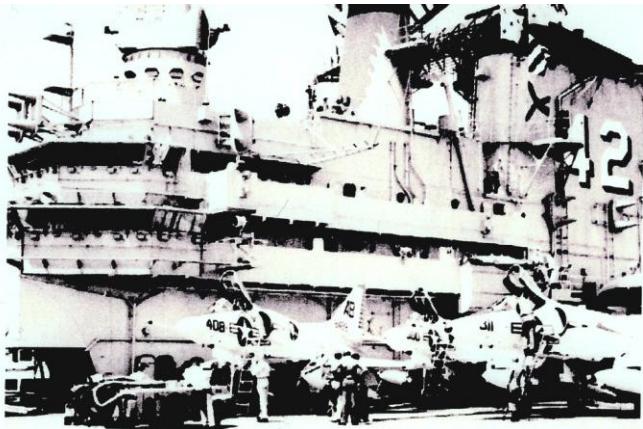
**Chattanooga, Tenn
2008**

Compliments of John Gynan 66-69

Editors: John Larch
Joe Kyle (this issue)

It Really is a Small World

A neighbor was walking his dog a few weeks back and stopped me as I was picking up my mail. He says to me, is that a Flying Ubangi decal on your van. I says yes sir it is, what do you know about the Flying Ubangis? He says to me, well I served on the FDR back in 64, and your squadron was on board at the time. I smiled and said no shit. I had not met the gentleman before as he lives on the other side of my subdivision, but a few days ago he stopped by and gave me some old photos he had from his tour of duty on the Rosie. Here is one of your birds in front of the island. Anyone know who flew 408 in the summer of 64?



Poem

Written by a World War Two Sailor

Come gather round me lads and I'll tell you a thing or two; About the way we ran the Navy in nineteen forty two.

When wooden ships and iron men were barely out of sight; I am going to give you some facts just to set the record right.

We wore the ole bell bottoms, with a flat hat on our head; Always hit the sack at night and never "went to bed."

Our uniforms were worn ashore and we were mighty proud; Never thought of wearing civvies, in fact they were never allowed.

Now when a ship puts out to sea I'll tell you son it hurts; When suddenly you notice that half the crew is wearing skirts.

And it's hard for me to imagine, a female boatswains mate; Stopping on the Quarter deck to make sure her stockings are straight.

What happened to the KiYi brush, and the old salt-water bath; Holy stoning decks at night cause you stirred old Bosn's wrath!

We always had our gedunk stand and lots of pogey bait; And it always took a hitch or two, just to make a rate.

In your seabag all your skivvies, were neatly stopped and rolled; And the blankets on your sack

had better have a three-inch fold.

Your little ditty bag, it is hard to believe just how much it held; You wouldn't go ashore with pants that hadn't been spiked and bellied.

We had scullery maids and succotash and good old SOS; And when you felt like topping off, you headed for the mess.

Oh we had our belly robbers but there weren't too many gripes; For the deck apes were never hungry and there were no starving snipes.

Now you never hear of Dave Jones, Shellbacks Or Polliwogs; And you never splice the mainbrace to receive your daily grog.

Now you never have to dog a watch or stand the main vent; You even tie your lines today, back in my time they were bent.

We were all two-fisted drinkers and no one thought you sinned; If you staggered back aboard your ship, three sheets to the wind.

And with just a couple hours of sleep you regained your usual luster; Bright eyed and bushy tailed- you still made morning muster.

Rocks and shoals have long since gone, and now it's UCMJ; Then the old man handled every thing if you should go astray.

Now they steer the ships with dials, and I wouldn't be surprised; If someday they sailed the damned things from the beach computerized.

So when my earthly hitch is over, and the good Lord picks the best; I'll walk right up to HIM and say, "Sir, I have but one request.

Let me sail the seas of Heaven in a coat of Navy blue; Like I did so long ago on earth way back in nineteen-forty-two.

Compliments of Chuck Drescher 77-78

VA12 Association Members

Here is the name of a our newest member that joined our ranks since the last newsletter.

James Polk 73-77

IS A CAREER IN EDUCATION LOOKING FOR ME?

I am nearing retirement with my employer and one of the guys asked me one day what I was thinking of doing after leaving the job.

Well, I am a big fan of museums where they try to preserve things from our common national

history. Especially military history. Plus there is a lot of talk from a group in Portland, OR about trying to buy CV-41 USS Ranger and turning her into a floating museum along the lines of the Intrepid in New York, and the Midway in San Diego.

So I told my coworker that one of my favorite daydreams is to become a tour host for visitors to the Ranger after she becomes a museum piece in Portland.

Photo # NH 97686 USS Ranger at sea in August 1961



And he says, "Ranger? THE Ranger? What's the Ranger?"

I was caught off guard by that, I think I mumbled something out load about it being an aircraft carrier, but the truth was I was pretty speechless by this small conversation.

Well of course, I mistakenly presumed that everyone knew a little something about aircraft carriers, and even if you had never served on that one, or any other, even as a civilian you knew a little bit about them and had at least heard that name tossed around before. Or others. Shangri La.

Saratoga. Oriskany. Bon Homme Richard.
America. Independence. Eisenhower.
And then again, maybe someone has never heard
of the USS Ranger and innocently enough merely
needs a bit of an education.
And even though I never served on that vessel, or
trod on her decks, or saw the vessel in person until
a year and a half ago, or ever knew anyone who
openly acknowledged serving on board, she's an
aircraft carrier and dedicated men in hot, cramped
spaces did their level best to keep the ship
underway. And jets flying.
My brothers. I guess I want to let people know
about the efforts of my brother sailors.
I want to let people know about the sweat and the
steam and the sickly-sweet smell of burnt JP5
wafting across the flight deck.
I want to let people know about the smell that a
certain type of turbocharged diesel can put out at
idle and how even today, this gives me flashbacks
to the smell of the exhaust of a flight deck tractor.
About folding up my dungarees and shirt and
putting them under my pillow in my rack.
About the guy in AIMD Shop 2 who routinely
bench pressed over 400 pounds. He was
absolutely ripped, and one time someone asked
him if he got by on 3 square meals a day, and he
said no, he ate 4, he'd hit the rack and set his
alarm for 2300 so he could sleep for a couple
hours and then get up and eat midrats, and then hit
the rack again until 0600.
About sneaking up to vultures row with some ear
protection and watching the flight deck show.
About standing out on Sponson 2 on the
Independence, to have a couple smokes, and
watching the sea froth past so close by
underneath, and having to keep an eye out forward
for the occasional rogue wave that would drench
everyone standing out there.
About rollers and sliders.
About walking up the gangway to the ship's brow
and saying
"Request permission to come aboard SIR!"
About hearing the anchor go at Barcelona, and
then out of an open hangar door seeing the city
itself so far away still, wondering why did we
anchor out here, feeling that we were still miles
away from the beach (which we were!).
About playing those pranks on AT1 Longbotham
on his first tour of sea duty after 14 years, and the
outraged old salty seamen E2s and E3s, and the

tied and trusty sea dog PO3s who saw him as fresh
meat for torment.
About 12 on and 12 off.
About working so hard on that damned box to find
out why it wouldn't work, realizing within a 2
minute span that the admission of idiocy (I'm a
moron, what a f#@ing idiot!) can lead to a
stunning breakthrough (I GOT IT! The low-
voltage power supply is bad).
About Acey-Deucy tournaments.
And trying to keep track during Eddie Pratt's
favorite, SASQUATCH Poker (5-card draw, with
Treys, Jokers, and One-Eyed Jacks wild, highest
Spade takes half the pot).
Someone needs to volunteer for this duty, so even
today I feel called to serve.
John Larch 76-79

New Navy Website

Many of you probably already know about the
new Navy site dedicated to connecting and
keeping contact with old shipmates. It is the best
of its kind and I highly recommend you computer
users to check it out.

<http://navy.togetherweserved.com/usn/>

Reunion Mementos

Some of you have mentioned to me that you'd like
to see more VA12 items available at the next
reunion. As you may or may not know, having
our emblem placed on an item normally requires a
set up charge plus a minimum number for
ordering. I can probably get almost anything, but
unless we can assure that we can cover the cost it
could leave our treasury depleted. Please let me
know if you believe it is a good idea to order
particular items that would have our logo. For
example, items such as; Belt Buckles, Coffee
Mugs, Nylon Flight Jackets, etc, etc, etc. If you
have other ideas, please email me.

Sea Story

I wish to preface this narrative with one
disclaimer; the events that are described herein
took place some 56 years ago and my memory
ain't as good as used to be. Primarily, I have
trouble remembering the names of all my
shipmates in that era – so you won't see any.

I was transferred from NAS Anacostia, DC to Fighter Squadron 12 (VF-12) at NAS Jacksonville, Florida in the summer of 1949. At that time I was a third class petty officer (Aviation Electrician) with some 2½ years into serving a “kitty cruise” enlistment. The transfer was initiated by me because I had heard that enlisted personnel got an extra \$100 mustering out pay for having had some sea duty. How’s that for financial planning. Up to this time I had only been to aviation training schools in Jacksonville, Florida plus shore duty at NAS Anacostia. My arrival at VF-12 was unremarkable. I went through the usual check-in and assignment to a barracks and then introduction to the Aviation Electrician group in the squadron.

At that time, VF-12 was flying F8F Bearcats. The main thing about working around an F8F was to be damn careful in the region of the propeller when the engine is running. VF-12 migrated from F8Fs to F2H1 Banshees in late 1949 and early 1950. It was pretty exciting to be in a jet squadron, but the Banshee was an electrician’s nightmare. Probably 60% of the systems were electrical. I still contend that the Banshee was the first “fly by wire” aircraft. In the latter part of 1950, the squadron moved into F2H2 Banshees. The only notable difference was that the dash 2s had 200 gallon auxiliary fuel tanks on the wing tips and a little better engine.

It was in the middle of this transition that I received a jolt. My kitty cruise was involuntarily extended for one year by the President due to the start of the Korean War.

In late 1950 the USS Oriskany (CV-34) was recommissioned from being in mothball and in late January of 1951 we took her to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba on a shakedown cruise. The original mission intent was for Carrier Air Group One to do the shakedown cruise and then go to Korea aboard the Oriskany. Unfortunately, during the training exercises the ship bent a propulsion screw shaft and had to return to the Brooklyn Navy Yard for repairs. The Air Group was dumped off at the Leeward Point auxiliary air station at Guantanamo Bay. We operated there for about 3 weeks and then found out the Oriskany’s repair was going to take quite awhile. So we flew to NAS Norfolk

where we were put aboard the USS Coral Sea (CV-43) for a Med cruise.

In March, 1951 the Coral Sea went to the Mediterranean as part of the Sixth Fleet. It was the flagship for Commander, Carrier Division 6 and took part in a NATO exercise called Beehive I. It returned to Norfolk in late October, 1951.

A couple of the more stimulating events on this cruise were:

1. On the way to the Med, the squadron participated in a search and rescue mission in the North Atlantic looking for a downed commercial airliner. Two of our aircraft got lost in fog, ran out of fuel and had to ditch. Luckily, both pilots were found and returned to the ship.
2. A sad event was the loss of an aircraft and pilot due to the failure of the catapult half way through its run for a launch. The aircraft went off the bow and plopped into the water about three or four hundred
3. yards in front of the ship. The ship just went right over it. Didn’t even make a bubble. What made this circumstance particularly sad was that the pilot’s wife had just delivered a baby about three weeks before.
4. Lastly, upon heading back to Norfolk, a hurricane was blowing off Cape Hatteras and the ship steamed around at sea for about 3 days with the captain hoping it would go on up the coast. Didn’t happen. So the decision was made to steam through the storm.

This was probably the most spectacular boat ride I ever made. The ship was twisting fore to aft and jumping up

and down all at the same time. When lying in my bunk, I had to wrap my arm around the center stanchion to keep from being thrown out onto the deck. I was one happy sailor when we got through that one.

When the squadron returned to Jacksonville, my enlistment commitment was completed and yours truly was mustered out of the regular Navy within two weeks. Oh yes, and I got my extra \$100.

Ted Pugh 49-51



Enlisted men of VF-12 which was taken in the summer of 1951 aboard the USS Coral Sea when we were on a 6th Fleet cruise in the Mediterranean Sea. Unfortunately, I did not write down the names of the people in the photo. I am in the back row second from the left.

THE BALLS OF A BRASS MONKEY

On war ships of old, it was necessary to keep a good supply of cannonballs near the cannon. But the most obvious difficulty quickly turned out to be how to prevent those cannon balls from rolling about the deck. The best storage method devised was to stack them as a square based pyramid, with one ball on top, resting on four, resting on nine, which rested on sixteen. Thus, a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon.

There was only one difficulty with this solution -- how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding/rolling from under the others. The solution was a metal plate with 16 round indentations. This was called a Monkey. But if this plate was made of iron, the iron balls would quickly rust to it. So the solution to the rusting problem, designed

by someone not familiar with the sea, was to make Brass Monkeys. The landlubbers did not realize or take note that brass contracts much more, and much faster, than iron when chilled.

Consequently, when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the iron cannon balls would come right off the monkey.

Thus, it was quite literally cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey. And all this time, you thought that was a vulgar expression, didn't you? John Larch 76-79

Ships Log Book?

In the old days, the only way to determine a ship's speed was to cast a small log secured to a line from the bow of the ship. The ship's speed was calculated using the marked length of the line and timing how long it took for the log to reach the stern. During each watch, the log was cast every

hour, and the ship's speed and compass course was noted in a book so the captain could use it for his navigation.

Boatsailors and Peacoats

by Bob 'Dex' Armstrong

You remember them... Those ton and a half monsters that took the annual production of thirty-five sheep to make. Those thick black rascals with black plastic buttons the size of poker chips. The issue coats that drove shore duty chief petty officers stark raving nuts if they caught you with the collar turned up or your gahdam hands in your pockets. "Hey, you rubber sock, get those gahdam hands outta them damn pockets! Didn't they issue you black leather gloves?"

So, you took your hands out of your pockets and risked digital frostbite rather than face whatever the Navy had in store for violators of the 'No Gahdam Hands In Peacoat Pockets' policy.

There's probably a special barracks in Hell full of old E-3s caught hitchiking in sub-zero weather with hands in peacoat pockets. As for those leather gloves, one glove always went missing. "Son, where in th' hell are the gloves we issued you?" We??? I don't remember this nasty, ugly bastard being at Great Lakes when the 'jocks and socks' petty officers were throwing my initial issue seabag at me and yelling, "Move it!!"

As for the gloves, once you inadvertently leave one glove on a whorehouse night table or on the seat of a Grayhound bus, the remaining glove is only useful if a tank rolls over the hand that fit the lost glove. In the days long ago, a navy spec. peacoat weighed about the same as a flat car load of cinder blocks. When it rained, it absorbed water until your spine warped, your shins cracked and your ankles split. Five minutes standing in the rain waiting on a bus and you felt like you were piggy-backing the statue of liberty. When a peacoat got wet, it smelled a lot like sheep dip. It had that wet wool smell , times three. It weighed three and a half tons and smelled like 'Mary had a little lamb's' gym shorts. You know how damn heavy a late '50s peacoat was? Well, they had little metal chains sewn in the back of the collar to hang them up by. Like diluted navy coffee, sexual sensitivity instruction, comfortable air-conditioned topside security bungalows, patent leather plastic-looking shoes and wearing raghats configured to

look like bidet bowls, the peacoat spec. has been watered down to the point you could hang them up with dental floss. In the old days, peacoat buttons and grocery cart wheels were interchangeable parts. The gear issued by the U.S. Navy was tough as hell, bluejacket-tested clothing with the durability of rino hide and construction equipment tires. Peacoats came with wide, heavy collars. In a cold, hard wind, you could turn that wide collar up to cover your neck and it was like poking your head in a tank turret. The things were warm, but I never thought they were long enough. Standing out in the wind in those 'big-legged britches' (bell bottoms), the wind whistled up your cuffs and took away body warmth like a thief. But, they were perfect to pull over you for a blanket when sleeping on a bus or a bus terminal bench. Every sailor remembers stretching out on one of those oak bus station pews with his raghat over his face, his head up against his AWOL bag and covered with his peacoat. There was always some 'SP' who had not fully evolved from apehood, who poked you with his billy bat and said, "Hey, YOU!! Get up! Waddya think yer doin? You wanna sleep, get a gahdam room!" Peacoats were lined with quilted satin or rayon. I never realized it at the time, but sleeping on bus seats and station benches would be the closest I would ever get to sleeping on satin sheets. Early in my naval career, a career-hardened (lifer) first class gunner's mate told me to put my ID and liberty card in the inside pocket o f my peacoat. "Put the sonuvabitches in that gahdam inside pocket and pin the damn thing closed with a diaper pin. Then, take your heavy folding money and put it in your sock. If you do that, learn to never take your socks off in a cathouse. Them damn dockside pickpockets pat 'cha down for a lumpy wallet and they can relieve you of said wallet so fast you'll never know you've been snookered. Only a dumbass idiot will clam-fold his wallet and tuck it in his thirteen button bellbottoms. Every kid above the age of six in Italy knows how to lift a wallet an idiot pokes in his pants. Those little bastards leard to pick sailor's pockets in kindergarten. Rolling bluejackets is the national sport in Italy."

In Washington DC , they have a wonderful marble and granite plaza honoring the United States Navy

Every man or woman who served this nation in a naval uniform, owes it to himself or herself to visit this memorial and take their families. It honors all naval service and any red-blooded American bluejacket or officer will feel the gentle warmth of pride his or her service is honored within this truly magical place. The focal point of this memorial is a bronze statue of a lone American sailor. No crow on his sleeve tells you that he is non-rated. And, there are further indications that suggest maybe, once upon a time, the sculpturer himself may have once been an E-3 raghat. The lad has his collar turned up and his hands in his pockets. I'm sure the Goddess of the Main Induction nearly wets her panties laughing at the old, crusty chiefs standing there with veins popping out on their old, wrinkled necks, muttering, "Look at that idiot sonuvabitch standing there with his collar up and his gahdam hands in his pockets. In my day, I would have ripped that jerk a new one!" Ah, the satisfied glow of E-3 revenge. Peacoats... One of God's better inventions.

Compliments of Chuck Drescher 77-78

Treasury Report

Previous balance	\$970.84
Dues/Interest since last report	\$ 73.52
Sub Total	\$1044.36
Stamps	\$ 56.00
Envelopes/Plaque	\$ 36.80
Printing	\$163.82
Current Expenses	-\$256.62
<i>New Balance</i>	<i>\$787.74</i>

An Idea

On my way to work this morning I got this idea. A person's mind does strange things at 4:30 AM. I am wondering if any Ubangis would like to put together a "Cruise Book" of sorts that covers the adventures of VA-12 (including VFB-4, VF-2A and VF-12). To do this we would ask for photos and stories to be contributed by each individual to be included in an unofficial history of the squadron. Then we can have it published cruise book or yearbook style with additional pages for later contributions or individual entries. This could become a sort of family heirloom for the Ubangis who want one. I think it should have the personal experiences of those who contribute

rather than that dry crap we downloaded from the Navy. What do you think?

John Gynan 66-69



Museum of Naval Aviation

Thanks to Bob Brooks, Gary Hall and Frank Osborne, we are very well represented at the Naval Air Museum in Pensacola, FL.

Just about a year ago "Ozzie" called me and said he had the guys in his shop make a large medal plate with the Kiss of Death logo engraved on it. He sent the thing to Gary Hall, and Gary painted it. Gary then brought to the reunion last summer. Our man Bolter Brooks had connections at the Museum and was able to donate it and get in on display there. Many thanks to these three Ubangis for there fine efforts to get us hangin high at the Museum.



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