

ATKRON 12 NEWSLETTER

SQUADRON LINEAGE

1946 VBF-4
1946 VF-2A
1948 VF-12
1955 VA-12

VA-12

PUBLISHED BY THE
VA-12 REUNION ASSOCIATION
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ALL ARE WELCOME TO VISIT

THE WORLD FAMOUS FLYING UBANGIS

AT OUR WEBSITE WWW.VA12.COM



Volume XIII, Issue 2 August 2014

F2H-2 Banshee

VF-12 IN 1949



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UBANGI? UBETCHA!

2015 REUNION

Included with this issue is our Reunion Registration form. Please fill it out and return it to me with your check as soon as you are certain that you will be able to attend or as soon as you can do so. Deposits are coming due and our Treasury needs your \$ to pay for our commitments. The proposed itinerary will be finalized by the December Newsletter.

NEWSLETTER NOTES

As the majority of you have realized by now, this issue is coming to you in a digital format. Many of you have commented that this is your preferred way to receive it. I have resisted this change, maybe because I am somewhat old school, and maybe because I feel like you should have something to show for your dues.

Unfortunately our Treasury can no longer support Printed Copies without an increase in dues. So this issue will be an experiment to see what our membership thinks about it. Some "old timers" do not use the Internet and will continue to receive a printed copy. I would appreciate your feedback on your preference for the next issue. Thank you.

TREASURY REPORT

Previous Balance	\$180.69
Dues/Reunion fees	243.90
interest	.05
SUB TOTAL	\$424.64
*Stamps	19.04
*Printing	58.75
CURRENT EXPENSES	77.79
NEW BALANCE	\$346.85

MY TURN

Mrs. Robbye J. Swann

Recently, the VA has received harsh criticism for delays in medical appointments that sometimes resulted in the deaths of veterans waiting care or, less mentioned but equally troubling, the worsening of medical conditions among those who were finally seen. I sympathize with each of these veterans and their families. However, it is another group of veterans with a very different problem that I represent: the "Blue Water Veterans" (BWV) from the Vietnam Era. My research has approximated the number of these BWV's to be around 434,000, of which fewer than 170,000 are still alive.

My husband Jack is a 20-year Navy veteran as well as a BWV. During the Korean war he served with fighter squadron VF-194 aboard the aircraft carrier USS Boxer. He was then assigned to the heavy photo squadron VAP-62 stationed at NAS Jacksonville, Florida during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Last, he served with Attack Squadron VA-12 aboard the aircraft carrier USS Franklin D Roosevelt during the Vietnam War.

Aboard the USS Roosevelt, he served as the squadron's Ordnance Officer. He and the ordnance crew worked 12 hour shifts that were frequently extended (overtime pay was neither expected nor received). The work they did was accomplished on the flight deck, one of the most dangerous places to work aboard an aircraft carrier. Their responsibility was to load bombs ranging in size from 250 pounds to 2,000 pounds, as well as rockets, flares and missiles. Over the course of this deployment, a total of 6,000 bombs, 297 rockets, 700 flares and 65 missiles were loaded onto VA-12 attack aircraft. Whenever a missile failed to detach, it was declared to be "hung" and the aircraft was deemed to be too dangerous to land on the densely and intensively packed carrier deck. These aircraft were sent to Da Nang where the hung missile could be removed in a land-based hangar isolated from other aircraft.

The Da Nang hangar was an open-ended building located next to the Agent Orange storage hangar. According to servicemen who were there when the barrels filled with this defoliant were loaded onto the aircraft, "the ramp would become awash with puddles of Agent Orange". The planes used to spray jungle foliage with Agent Orange were Air Force C-123s, propeller powered aircraft. Whenever a plane was preparing to taxi to the runway for take-off the propellers would blow all forms of runway debris in their wake. "An orange mist would blow into our hangar covering everything inside the building including our lungs", according to one serviceman present. In other words, Agent Orange was indiscriminately sprayed on people and planes inside the hangar where aircraft with hung missiles were getting maintenance. Once the hung missile had been removed, the Agent Orange contaminated aircraft immediately returned to action aboard the carrier, where maintenance and ordnance crews would promptly perform their duty by checking out the aircraft and reloading it for the next mission. (All facts and quotes were taken from various publications dated 1960s to present.)

One could assume that trace amounts of Agent Orange were occasionally present in the air, but a much more likely source of constant exposure for BWVs was found in the seawater that went through an onboard

distillation process to remove salt and make the water potable. It was assumed that Agent Orange runoff from Vietnamese rivers and streams would naturally enter the marine waters and quickly diffuse into the ocean, However, a study by the Australian Royal Navy determined that the distillation process aboard Naval vessels stationed off the coast of Vietnam increased the Dioxin concentration by a factor of ten. As a result, they awarded Agent Orange benefits to all Naval personnel who had served aboard vessels within 185 kilometers (about 100 miles) of the coast of Vietnam.

Although the United States fleet served much closer to the Vietnamese coast, the National Academy of Science's Institute of Medicine (IOM) concluded in their report that "There was not enough information for the IOM to determine whether Blue Water Navy personnel were or were not exposed to Agent Orange".

Throughout their deployment, ship personnel bathed in the water, drank it, brushed their teeth with it, ate food that was prepared and cooked with it. They wore clothes and slept in sheets that had been washed with it.

Now comes the unbelievable part. The so-called "Agent Orange Act" was passed in 2002 during one of Congress's budgetary streamlining efforts. This act denied benefits to any serviceman who did not set boots on Vietnamese soil or enter its inland waterways, which effectively precludes the entire Navy fleet. These are some of the veterans who were not welcomed home enthusiastically, who didn't have celebrities encouraging all Americans to "be there for them", who learned that their families had been harassed or taken advantage of in their absence.

I grieve for the loss of veterans who have died while waiting for their country to fulfill the many promises made, and thank their caregivers. Jack is one of the remaining Vietnam veterans, and he suffers from five major Agent Orange related illnesses. Recently he was finally diagnosed as having been exposed to Agent Orange by the VA, and yet he still has no disability benefits. Originally my fight was to secure his benefits, but now I'm fighting for the benefits of all Blue Water Navy veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving their country during the Vietnam War, as well as for their families who suffer equally.

It is time to repeal the Agent Orange Act! Why? Because it's the right thing to do!

Robbye J. Swann, wife of Lt. Jack Swann 66-68

ADDENDUM

Anyone motivated could write to their US Congressmen: "As a constituent from your State, please work to reverse provisions of the AGENT ORANGE ACT, which deny VA benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans. There are Vietnam-Era Navy veterans who have confirmed exposure to Agent Orange."

John Larch 76-79

ON THE COVER

McDonnell F2H-2 Banshee

The Navy needed to enter the jet age, intending to use an aircraft that would better the performance of the then-current Fleet Defense Interceptor, the Grumman F8F-2 Bearcat.

This project started before the end of WW2 and continued on, as McDonnell developed the Banshee into the 3 major models; the F2D-1, the F2H-1, and the most widely used model, the F2H-2.

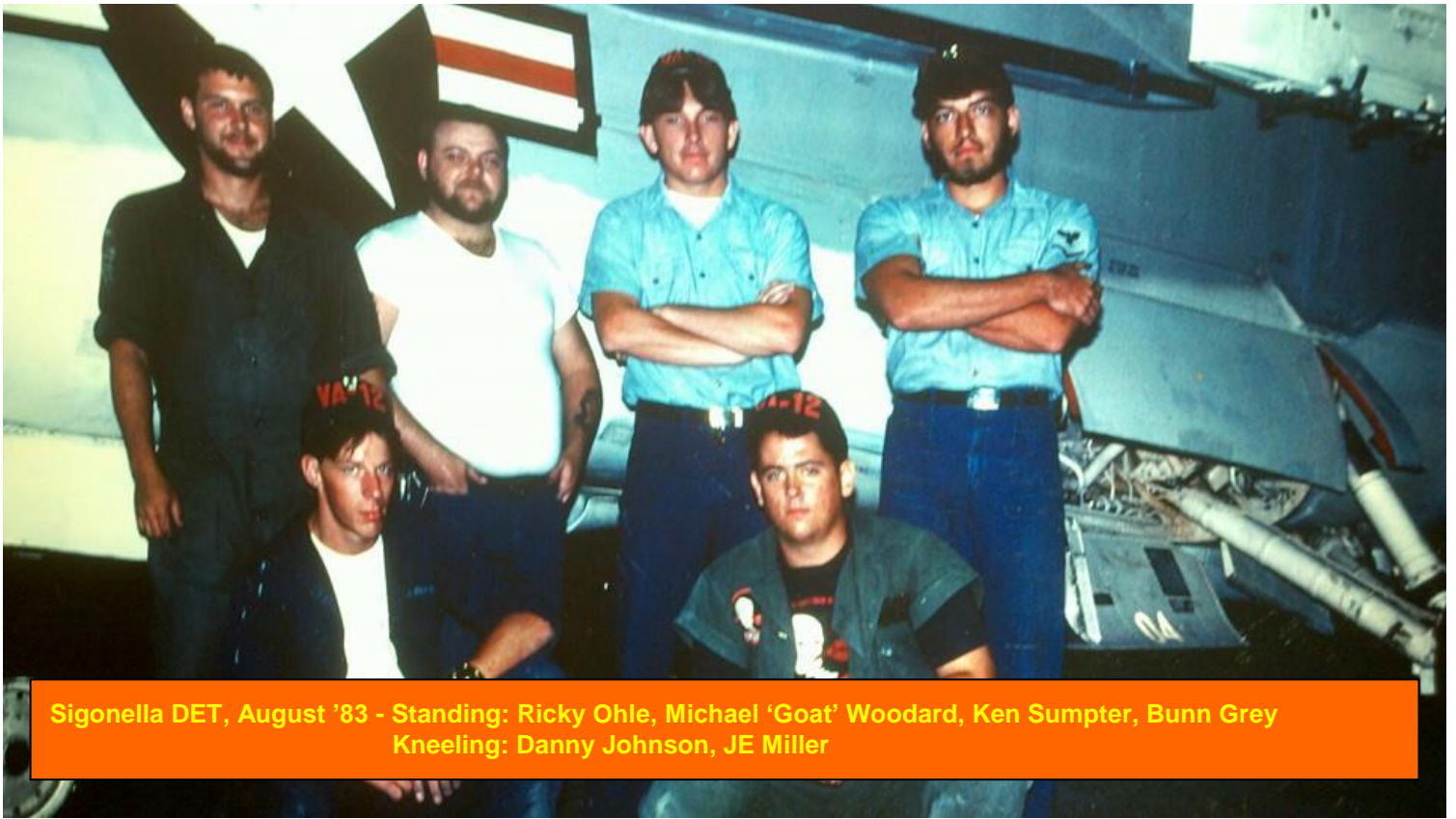
The Navy got what they wanted and needed.

	F8F-2 Bearcat	F2H-2 Banshee
Engine	P&W R2800-30W Double Wasp 2,250 H.P.	Two Westinghouse J34-WE-34 Turbojet 3,250 Lb/Ft Thrust Totaling 6,500 Lb/Ft
Max Speed	455 MPH	580 MPH
Max Altitude	40,800 Ft.	46,600 Ft.
Max Range	1,105 Miles	1,716 Miles
Rate of Climb	6,300 Ft/Min	6,000 Ft/Min



The Flying Ubangis of VF-12 flew the F2H-1 and -2 models during 4 deployments from September 1950 until December 1955:

1951	CVB 43	USS Coral Sea
1952	CV-18	USS Wasp
1953	CV-42	USS Franklin D. Roosevelt
1954/55	CV-41	USS Midway



Signonella DET, August '83 - Standing: Ricky Ohle, Michael 'Goat' Woodard, Ken Sumpter, Bunn Grey
Kneeling: Danny Johnson, JE Miller



Swim Call on IKE, 1980. In the Arabian Sea

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