



# Fist of the Fleet Association

a non profit 501 (c) (19) military organization

# NEWSLETTER

December 2014

Preserving the Past Providing for Today

Promoting the Future



## HOLIDAY EDITION



Once again that season of miracles and perpetual hope is upon us. It seems like just a dog-watch ago the we were packing up last Christmas and now here it is again. Hopefully we will be able to enjoy some serious down-time as the year ends. Normally, as the year progresses I focus on the work for the Newsletter, taking compliments and corrections in stride as I plan out succeeding issues and not worry over-much about what I put out there. But this fall something astounding happened. Jay Stone sent copies of the Lang Vei story over to Col. Paul Longgear, and Dave Stockwell, the author of "Tanks in the Wire." When Col. Longgear expressed his very positive feelings over the articles I was floored. And when Dave Stockwell said he would like to use my work in his forthcoming rewrite of his book I was rendered speechless. Now, as you all know I do a good amount of research and always cite my sources as I try to create credible, and as factual as possible story-lines. That no one has ever really questioned anything is to me a sign that I have done my homework well and am as close to the mark as possible. But, to have a Lang Vei survivor, one of the officers commanding say he "loves my stuff" is almost to much to wrap my head around. To have another author call it "superb" and want to use it? Almost beyond what I can handle. It is for me, as a writer, one of the highest honors of my life, but my hands seem too small to hold it. As it is not within my make-up to believe in coincidence then this is miraculous indeed.

It is another honor and very exciting to introduce the final piece of the Newsletter that has been missing, the article "From the Hanger Deck" which will be submitted by one of the FIST enlisted men and woman. Too often, it seems, we forget that the survivability of this country rests in the hands of, and squarely on the shoulders of young people who, maybe a year or two ago, were stressing over what to wear to senior prom. Often they are the ones paying the price for freedom daily in sweat, blood and tears; and sometimes by laying down their lives for those around them. We don't do enough, by half, to recognize them. So each Newsletter we will get to meet one of them, and we will get to put a face on freedom, and they will never be forgotten. I had criteria for this initial article, which FIST command graciously met, and so I would like this moment to introduce you to Aviation Electrician's Mate, Petty Officer Third Class, Elizabeth Bush, whose article begins on page 5.

*Wishing you all a Merry Christmas, a Happy Hanukkah and a Blessed New Year. See you in Dallas!*



*~ Ricochet ~*

### Mission Statement

Perpetuate the history of Naval Aviation Squadrons VT-17, VA-6B, VA-65, VA-25 and VFA-25,  
Remember deceased veterans and comfort their survivors,  
Conduct charitable and educational programs,  
Foster and participate in activities of patriotic nature,  
Assist current active squadron members, and  
Provide assistance to family members in times of emergency.

## President's Message

The dates for our Fist 15 Reunion are now set beginning Thursday Oct 29 thru Sunday Nov 1. Thursday will be for check-in and hospitality in the Big Bass Suite, which Embassy Suites Hotel has graciously reserved for our use during our stay. Friday we will be heading to the Lockheed/Martin F-35 plant in Fort Worth for a briefing and tour of the assembly line. Friday night is scheduled for a casual reception with finger food, cocktails and sea stories at the hotel. Plans for Saturday are still being finalized. We are considering a tour of either AT&T Cowboys Stadium, the Frontiers of Flight Museum at Dallas Love Field or the Cavanaugh Flight Museum in Addison. Our Fist Banquet will be held Saturday night with a cash bar, sit down plated dinner and program. A business meeting will be scheduled on either Friday or Saturday after we have firm times for the planned day activities. Further details will follow after the first of the year. The registration fee will be calculated based on the cost of the dinners, tour transportation and projected hospitality expenses. You will then need to register with FOFA on our website and pay the necessary fees. We'll keep you updated via email and postings on our website. Please make sure we have your current contact information.

As mentioned in an earlier email to the membership, we have signed the contract with the Embassy Suites Dallas-DFW Airport North Outdoor World where Fist 15 will be based. The hotel can now accept reservations from those planning on attending. The special web address attached below will take you to their website where you can make your room reservation for Fist 15. The room rates are \$119 for a King Suite and \$129 for a Double Queen Suite. These are excellent rates based on the surrounding hotels. There are further upgrades available if you so desire. Each two-room suite includes a complimentary full hot breakfast each morning and a complimentary cocktail gathering each evening. The hotel is situated just north of DFW Airport and there is complimentary van service available to and from the hotel. If you are driving you can self-park free of charge. This particular Embassy Suites is an upgraded John Q. Hammons property and has accommodated numerous military reunions in the past. Please make your hotel reservation as described below. We currently have a block of 50 rooms set aside for Fist of the Fleet.

You can click on the link below or copy the website address and then paste it into your browser. This will take you to a dedicated website for your Fist 15 hotel reservation at Embassy Suites DFW. If plans change later you can always cancel your reservation. This information is also located on our FOFA website under the Reunion page. We will post periodic updates there also. Please email or call me with any questions or suggestions. Looking forward to another great Fist get-together.

Gary Kerans [domeaz@me.com](mailto:domeaz@me.com) 928 925-5099



<https://aws.passkey.com/event/12612398/owner/76856/home>

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**Fist of the Fleet Association - Navy Reunion (29-Oct-2015 to 01-Nov-2015)**  
**Embassy Suites Dallas - DFW Airport North Outdoor World**  
**2401 Bass Pro Drive, Grapevine, TX, 76051 972-724-2600**



## Blues Notes

One of the Blue Angels flight team skidded off a runway and got stuck in mud Dec 5th. The F/A-18 Hornet was flying to the former Brunswick Naval Air Station to promote and plan for the 2015 Great State of Maine Air Show and was taxiing when it slid on a patch of ice, spun around and ended up sliding backward off the runway. The two pilots were unharmed but the jet's landing gear became stuck in the mud, and it had to be towed back onto pavement.

The team dispatched a C-130 with mechanics from Pensacola to check out the plane and make sure the landing gear wasn't damaged.



AM2 Derek J. Robb,  
VFA-25 Troubleshooter

Skipper Snowden,

It is with great pleasure that I forward the enclosed grant award check from the Fist of the Fleet Association (FOFA) Educational Grant Fund to AM2 Derek Robb. The check is in the amount of \$226 for reimbursement of book expenses for his recent three course completions.

It is admirable that the young men and women who serve so diligently to defend our great country, even with the increased workload and deployment schedules, still find time to pursue their educational goals. FOFA is here to assist them as they continue their studies to better both their personal and professional futures.

## THE FIST OF THE FLEET ASSOCIATION

IS PLEASED TO AWARD  
THIS EDUCATIONAL GRANT TO

**AM2 DEREK ROBB**

IN RECOGNITION OF HIS  
CONTINUING EDUCATION PURSUITS  
CONGRATULATIONS AND WELL DONE  
ON BEHALF OF THE ASSOCIATION

**GARY L KERANS**

PRESIDENT, FOFA

### **FIST OF THE FLEET ASSOCIATION OTHER NEWS**

New Annual Member David Randolph, VA-25 '68-'70 and new Life Member Gene Stover, Spad Driver in the '60's

### *Departure Notification*

David B. Dixon

October 26, 1938 ~ November 1, 2014  
He was drafted by the Cincinnati Reds in 1956 during his senior year at Sonoma High School. Dave married his high school sweetheart Arlene Metcalf in 1960. After graduating from San Francisco State, he joined the Navy and received his wings in 1962. He served three tours during the Vietnam War: two aboard the USS Midway and another aboard the USS America. After his Navy years, he settled with his family in Monterey, CA where he formed lasting memories. He retired to Sonoma in 2007.

Dave is survived by his wife Arlene, happily married for 54 years; his two children: Joy Westermeyer (Richard), and David Dixon, Jr. (Lora) and his four grandchildren: Jamie and Katie Westermeyer and Gavin and Quinn Dixon. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in his name to: USS Midway Museum, Attn: Development Department, 910 N. Harbor Drive, San Diego, CA 92101-9809



David B. Dixon  
Life Member, VA-25 '63 to '67

**Have you paid your 2014 Dues?**

Annual Dues: \$25/YR

Life Time Dues \$200

Mail dues to Financial Officer:

Chuck Webster 39224 132nd St. Bath SD 57427

**Only Voting Members receive a copy of the Directory**

**Become a Voting Member!**

**Visit the Base Exchange at**

**[www.fistofthefleet.org](http://www.fistofthefleet.org)**

## SKIPPER'S CORNER

Happy Holidays FIST of the FLEET!

While not deployed, it was an exceptionally busy year for team FIST. After a February change of command, we wasted no time resuming a very aggressive training detachment schedule. From air to air training exercises in Panama City and Key West to multiple trips to the Fallon Range Training Complex, as well as carrier operations, the FIST of the FLEET showed up ready to perform and continued to display the levels of professionalism that has become synonymous with VFA-25. As I type this message, we are preparing to get underway with USS JOHN C STENNIS and CVW-9 for a one week deck certification and carrier qualification detachment.

As we look ahead to next year there will be significant changes to our schedule. In January, the squadron will detach from CVW-9 and will join CVW-7 on the east coast. While the squadron will not relocate to Oceana, we will become a part of the CVW-7 and USS HARRY S TRUMAN team. The basic premise of work ups has not changed much over the years, so most of you can imagine the OPTEMPO the squadron will experience in the coming months. I'm here to tell you that every Sailor at VFA-25 is not only up to the challenge, but excited for the adventure that only our profession can provide.

Just last week, I had the privilege of promoting 26 new Third, Second, and First Class Petty Officers. For the fourth consecutive advancement cycle VFA-25 surpassed the Navy-wide average. We truly have remarkable Sailors and I am impressed by the leadership of each and every one of them. They are among the finest young men and women our country has to offer and we are exceptionally fortunate to have them on our team.

I hope this note finds all FISTs of the FLEET well as we look forward to the holiday season. If you are ever in the greater Hanford-Lemoore metropolplex, please don't hesitate to stop by the spaces for a visit.

Very respectfully,  
FIST One

**FROM THE COCKPIT** By: LT Justin "Neuman" Reece

Strike Fighter Squadron TWO FIVE continues to lead the fleet with unmatched leadership, professional tactical performance and the resounding team spirit that is embodied by all members of the Fist of the Fleet, past and present. VFA-25 remained at home base, NAS Lemoore, over the last quarter continuing to execute in all phases of flight from air-to-air, air-to-surface and carrier operations. The squadron has taken advantage of time at home to focus on specific training and aircraft maintenance goals in preparation for the upcoming work-ups cycle in early 2015.

Following the squadron's return from proficiency traps in NIMITZ back in early September, LT Jason "JB" Ely and LT David "MeMe" Newton received their Landing Signal Officer (LSO) Field qualification from CVW-9. The LSO Field qualification was earned after successfully completing a course of instruction in NAS Oceana, demonstrating the ability to safely "wave" aircraft from the field, and demonstrating various LSO responsibilities aboard the carrier. Our new paddles will fill the crucial LSO role in keeping us safe behind the boat as we increase our operations afloat in the carrier environment..

VFA-25 also maintains an excellent reputation in tactical performance. This is accomplished by every member of the squadron from the bottom to the top. Somewhere in the middle lies the pilot who can be found constantly training and sharpening skills so that, when called upon, they can execute with precision and lethality. LT Jason "JB" Ely completed his Strike Fighter Weapons and Tactics (SFWT) Level III syllabus last month. This designates him as a fully qualified Combat Section Lead, a significant milestone in every Strike Fighter pilot's career.

The entire squadron enjoyed a balance between maintaining proficiency with high tempo operations while simultaneously taking some time together to recharge. Sailors participated in squadron sports day to build morale and unit cohesion in a friendly competition on the fields and courts followed by a cookout. A few weeks later, Team FIST executed a "surge day." Once per quarter, we test each department's ability to stress the pilots and maintainers by executing 20 sorties over a 12 hour fly window. This day was met without a safety incident and a 100% sortie completion rate, demonstrating the Fist of the Fleet is ready to operate wherever and whenever called.

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Pilot tanks from KC-135 over NAS Lemoore

## From the Cockpit Cont'd

In late October, VFA-25 had the opportunity to complete some unique tasking. The first was to participate in filming for the next generation of U.S. Navy recruiting commercials. Members from Commander, Navy Recruiting Command (CNRC) visited the squadron with a professional film crew. Many of our pilots and Sailors participated in the media event and will be shown in various commercials set to debut early next year. The second tasking involved supporting our local Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS), VFA-122, as they continue to bear the brunt of the F/A-18 community's systemic material condition and logistical challenges. VFA-25 supported VFA-122 with professional maintainers and aircraft involved in Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP) sorties. Each of the student's flown in VFA-25 aircraft were making final preparation for their first night carrier landing as part of their initial CQ in the F/A-18. The sorties were essential in the FRS's mission to supply Replacement Aircrew (RAC) to the fleet.



VFA-25 Sailors pose for Navy Recruiting Photo.

VFA-25 is proud to announce that we have gained many new members over the last couple of months. Among those joining us is a new squadron pilot, LT Stephen Yoo. He was raised in Texas, graduated from Stanford in 2009 and progressed through Officer Candidate School in 2010. LT Yoo reports from VFA-122, where he completed his initial training in the F/A-18 Super Hornet. LT Yoo has much to offer the squadron from a new perspective, and we look forward to his successful tour as a junior officer in VFA-25.

Professional knowledge and leadership are essential to the success of every organization. VFA-25 Sailors proved capable in both aspects last month as we learned the official results from the September Navy-wide Advancement examination. The squadron continues to advance members at an above average rate, successfully frocking 12 Sailors to Petty Officer Third Class, 11 to Petty Officer Second Class, and two to Petty Officer First Class. The achievement of our Sailors is a direct reflection of the dedication and hard work by every member in VFA-25.

As we approach the end of the year, VFA-25 has another occasion for carrier operations in support of USS JOHN C. STENNIS (CVN 74) flight deck certification. Additionally, this will be the last detachment as part of CVW-9 as the squadron officially chops to CVW-7 on January 31, 2015 to workup for an East Coast / Mediterranean deployment late next year. In a rare opportunity to participate in a Large Force Employment (LFE), four squadron pilots flew to NAS Oceana to join in a strike supporting our future boss, CVW-7. The LFE was an overwhelming success and has gotten the transition off to a great start.

## **FROM THE HANGER DECK** By: AE3 Elizabeth Bush

Prior to my assignment as an Aviation Electricians Mate Third Class in VFA-25, the previous two years of my current enlistment were spent at Strike Fighter Squadron ONE TWO TWO (VFA-122). During my tour at VFA-122, I received my initial training operating in the unique operational environment required of a Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS). There, I learned to work the demanding flight schedule to successfully qualify new aviators and maintainers for the fleet. The experience I gained in VFA-122 was extensive; however, my time in Strike Fighter Squadron TWO FIVE has proved essential to my career development. Working in an operational fleet squadron has given me the tools necessary to be successful on the flight line as both a Sailor and as a professional aviation electrician.



When I first walked into VFA-25, I was unsure of what working in a smaller command would require of me. I quickly learned that the Fist of the Fleet could open many doors for me to focus on every aspect of my rate down to the smallest detail. We are able to do this by maintaining a high standard to upkeep our aircraft and equipment which keeps our sortie completion rate above 96%. Every Sailor does their part and works as one cohesive team. FIST Sailors take the time to help each other and overcome challenges unique to working in the Navy. Day to day, it is common practice to see Officers, Chiefs, Petty Officers, and all Sailors mentoring and ensuring the technical experts of tomorrow are ready to perform. This makes our squadron the best on the flight line with regards to teamwork and professional development.

One of my duties in VFA-25 is as a Troubleshooter and Final Checker. At first glance, one might think that means standing in the elements with a cord on your shoulders hoping a jet doesn't break or lugging a toolbox/pouch to aircraft fixing gripes in rapid fashion. However, every maintainer in the squadron takes on the responsibility of keeping our pilot's safe and potentially saving their lives. Occasionally our day to day activities prove to be quite challenging; this is when we all come together to ensure we perform at our best.

VFA-25 functions as much like a family as it does a warfighting organization. As leaders, we encourage and contribute to our shipmate's efforts leaving no room for discouragement or ridicule regardless of the situation. We all understand the difference between friendly competition and unhealthy criticism. As with anywhere in society, every Sailor in VFA-25 is a reflection of their unique life experiences and social norms. What makes us the best on this flight line is how we respond to those differences by focusing on what we have in common to maintain a healthy working environment.

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**HOLIDAY GREETINGS FROM THE FIST OF THE FLEET ASSOCIATION STAFF**



Gary Kerans 1976



Warner Butler (left) assumes command of VA-25 in April of 1978 from J.B. Hamilton (center)



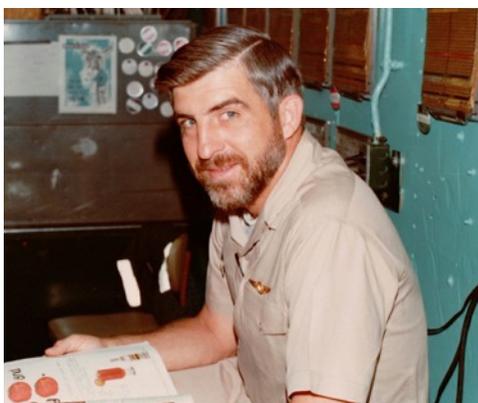
Rosario Rausa circa 1968



Nick Johnson 1976



Bob Schreiber circa 1972



Chuck Webster 1976



Al Gorthy circa 1974



Jerry Fritze 1974

Not pictured: Dennis Laack, Grants Committee



My time as a maintainer, so far, has opened my eyes to the extensive work put into executing an operational flight schedule. To date, the squadron has completed over 26,000 man-hours of maintenance. This does not include time that is undocumented in preparing aircraft for flight or for other operational commitments. This work has contributed to almost 500 flight hours during the months of October to November alone!

I am proud to be a member of the U.S. Navy where all individuals are granted equal opportunity no matter of race, sex, or religion. Males and females take up varying roles in this command, all of which are important for our day to day operations and combat readiness. Administratively and on aircraft, females make a significant impact on the success of the command. Approximately 55 percent of aircraft logs and records are completed by females while an almost equal amount of aircraft maintenance is accomplished by females. As one of the 27 Fistie females in the command, I know that I speak for all of us when I say we are proud to contribute to the Fist of the Fleet legacy and are fortunate to be part of the Fist team.

All in all, I will admit, that reenlistment was not necessarily on my agenda until I came to the Fist of the Fleet. I would recommend this command to any Sailor as an example of excellent leadership and outstanding performance. My experiences as a member of the Fist team have been eye-opening and there is no other squadron on this flight line that could have convinced me that being a maintainer could be so rewarding. From the Fist family, I wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season.



### A CHRISTMAS POEM AT SEA

By: OSLM Ron.O. Aboard H.M.C.S. Cayuga  
December 25, 1959

Christmas comes but once each year  
Bringing happiness and cheer.  
With bright lights, red and green and white  
To brighten up the darkest night.

Sleigh bells ring and spread the joy  
Into the hearts of girls and boys.  
They seem to overboil with glee  
To see wrapped gifts beneath a tree.

Relatives and friends unite  
To sing their carols through the night.  
The city streets are white with snow  
Which sets your heart and soul aglow.

There's one place that we'd like to be  
Of course it's home with families.  
Where friends we know will come and call  
And wish good cheer to one and all.  
But some of us must stand on guard  
And never let our ranks retard.  
It's best that just a few should stand  
Than have cold fear spread through our land.

We should be proud at Christmas time  
To let the bells of freedom chime.  
Our friends at home live joyfully  
While we stand by to keep them free.

So let the Christmas spirit abide  
Among us here who ride the tide.  
It's our turn now, someday we'll go.  
We'll see the days we used to know.

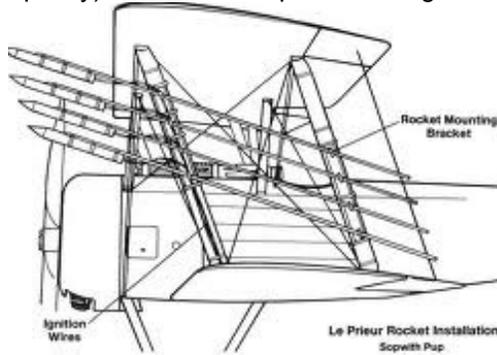
It's better to give than to receive  
And Christmas is no time to grieve.  
So lift your hearts ye men of war.  
Someday our sons will do this chore.



## THE EVOLUTION OF WARFARE: EARLY 20TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars rocket technology grew stagnant and remained a novelty on the battlefield. Stuck in history as a ground-based artillery weapon it would take the outbreak of another global conflict before anyone would attempt anything new, and like many aerial advancements in WWI that someone was a French Officer: Yves Paul Gaston Le Prieur.

Le Prieur was a naval officer, but that didn't stop him from flying. During the First World War he invented the plane-mounted Le Prieur rocket launcher for bringing down observation balloons. This weapon system, which allowed an airplane to fire a single volley of rockets in close succession (the design planned for simultaneous launch, but technical unreliability made it impossible in 1916) was remarkably effective against the German observation balloons, and was only phased out when tracer rounds and incendiary bullets for the on-board machine guns (with similar efficiency and larger ammunition capacity) became widespread among the Allied air forces near the very end of the war.



Robert Hutchings Goddard  
(1882–1945)

After the war rockets again slipped from the minds of most armaments planners, but in the United States Robert Goddard was actively pursuing rocket technology applications. His tests of solid-fueled (or powder) propellants in the 20's would lead directly to the bazooka and during this same time frame he began to experiment with liquid-fueled motors. However, in general, there was a lack of vision and serious interest in the United States concerning the potential of rocketry, and in 1936, the U.S. military attache in Berlin asked Charles Lindbergh to visit Germany and learn what he could of their progress in aviation. Although the Luftwaffe showed him their factories and were open concerning their growing air-power, they were silent on the subject of rocketry. When Lindbergh told Goddard of this behavior, Goddard said, "Yes, they must have plans for the rocket. When will our own people in Washington listen to reason?" The race was on, and Germany had the lead.

The main applications differences between solid and liquid fuels is payload capacity and range. With a solid-rocket motor you can construct a fairly lightweight weapon of modest range with a reasonably effective warhead. The energies released by a liquid-fueled engine are, however, many orders of magnitude greater and are capable of lifting heavier payloads for much greater distances. As such they would find their greatest applications in ICBM's and in the space

industry. And while technology has advanced so that liquid-fuel engines are now more compact, in order to obtain required thrusts they have been for sometime augmented by strap-on solid rocket boosters. The development and applications of the liquid-fueled rocket motors ran parallel to that of the solid-rocket motors during the 30's and as the technology spread by the outbreak of World War Two most of the combatants were using both infantry and artillery solid-rocket weapons. The most famous of these were the Bazooka and Panzerfaust infantry weapons and the Nebelwerfer and Katyusha rocket batteries. However, by 1943 the first air-launched rockets made their appearance, the German R4M, and in the United States the 3.5-inch and 5-inch Forward Firing Aircraft Rocket (FFAR).

## NEXT TIME THE EVOLUTION OF WARFARE: THE ROCKETS OF WWII AND KOREA