



Fist of the Fleet Association

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

NEWSLETTER

December 2017

Preserving the Past Providing for Today

Promoting the Future

HOLIDAY EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

Here we go again, Christmas! The time when the Season of Hope is brought closer to us by the harmonious efforts of Automobile Dealers, Toy Companies and International Beer Conglomerates. For those of you who may be thinking that FAITH has taken a back seat to Marketing I have news for you: It ain't even in the friggin' car! Moreover, each year they push the season a day earlier so that now we have the first signs of it before Halloween and the "traditional" Christmas television programming airs before Thanksgiving. The longest and loudest arguments I have are about Christmas: Its just for the kids. No it's not. It's just a "church" thing. No it is *not*. Its lost its meaning. No it has NOT. You can't prove that its true. FAITH is believing in something without verifiable evidence to support it. On and on and on. It's an argument that can never be won, and eventually I just throw my arms up in surrender, walk away and get on with my life.

Somewhere, sometimes deep I will admit all of us believe in *something*. Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Wiccan, does it matter? Nope. It only matters that you *believe* and have a strong *faith*. There are billions of people that seek a balanced life; one that is peaceful, purposeful and hopeful. And in their faith they maintain the belief they will obtain that. And all the rest? Well, you saw them camped out at the mall a day before the doors opened for the start of the Holiday sales events, ready to spend their last hard-earned dime on crap they didn't even know they needed or wanted until they saw the ads. For them the true meaning of Christmas is a gluttony of materialism and they will knock someone out to get that last package on the shelf, and of course we will see that on the news *again* because *everyone* loves watching a good train wreck.

However, for me the true meaning of Christmas is and always has been the universal message of HOPE. Even growing up I never understood its then-burgeoning supra-materialistic aspects. We would put up the lights and decorate the tree, and get out all the ticky-tack knick knacks, but then at night I would light pine logs in the fireplace, just sit there alone in the quiet, and wonder why everyone seemed to miss what I'm seeing. Beneath all the glitz, all the noise and all the hustle there remains a quiet serenity and a simple beauty to the meaning of the Nativity. Therefore, once again, this year I challenge you to go and find that for yourself, take its message to heart, and remember always that Hope, and yes Christmas, is for *everyone*.

In the Winter Edition we will profile all of the Squadron's award winners, recap the reunion a little more, introduce the new Command Master Chief and hopefully prep the next Fistory story. So until then have the merriest of Holiday seasons no matter what you believe, and a Safe and Prosperous New Year. Until then, time to spin up some vinyl. Think I'll start with the Ramsey Lewis Trio's Sound of Christmas. Later!

~AE-3 Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze~



www.fistofthefleet.org

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.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Holidays and Season Greetings from Park City, Utah where the snow and chilly temperatures bring the holiday season to life, along with the ski season. Many Fist members recently returned from a great reunion event in Charleston, SC. Although attendance was low, the size of the crowd made for a more personal experience as we had more time to meet and speak with old friends while establishing new friendships.

There were several trip highlights, including a terrific tour of the Boeing 787 assembly line guided by a former Canadian F/A-18 pilot who spent time at NAS Pax River, Test Pilot School, and then decided to remain in the sunny, warmer United States. I won't bore you with all the numbers and details, suffice to say that Boeing extends a warm welcome and offers to host any VFA-25 Hornets who wanted a cross country trip to Charleston, SC. Other highlights included a tour of retired Navy ships at Patriots Point, including the USS Yorktown. And many folks chose to explore downtown Charleston and the many fine restaurants and bars; my favorite was the High Cotton Restaurant and naturally we had the Shrimp and Grits.

One of the big decisions made at the reunion included plans for our next gathering. Given our desire to try and coordinate with the squadron's deployment schedule, we had a choice between another two year cycle going back to San Diego, which the squadron would probably miss due to its deployment schedule, or a three year cycle at Tailhook in Reno, Nevada. After much discussion, and realizing that we weren't getting any younger, the two year cycle in San Diego was selected, and hopefully we can schedule it to coincide with the *Blue Angels* performance at the MCAS Miramar Airshow. Then we can muster some members to join the squadron at Tailhook in 2020.

Now for the next BIG event on your flight schedule; the squadron has been planning a celebration for its 75th Anniversary for Friday, January 19th at NAS Lemoore. Hopefully all of you have received an invitation by email and I know that many have already made plans to attend this great event as we salute the squadron's grand history and its members, both past and present. Skipper "Meat" Dentzer says that it's gonna be a fine party. Past FOFA President "Dome" Kerans is building a list of attendees and we will distribute that to everyone before the event as a means to build support for greater attendance. We hope that many of the past Skippers and XO's will join us and relate some of their past squadron experiences to those presently serving in VFA-25, the "*Fist of the Fleet*".

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Chalks

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Blue Notes

Commander Eric C. Doyle assumed the leadership role of the world's finest flight demonstration team on November 11th, 2017.



SKIPPER'S CORNER

Greetings FOFA,

Since our last newsletter, the Fist of the Fleet has been busy. We completed a major maintenance inspection as Strike Fighter Wing Pacific took a look at how we conduct maintenance and how we maintain our maintenance programs. We received an above average score from the inspection team however there were several lessons learned that will no doubt help us as we continue to operate these awesome machines into the future. From there, the squadron traveled across the Pacific Ocean to work with the 199th Fighter Squadron and the Hawaiian Air National Guard operating the F-22 Raptor out of Hickam AFB, Honolulu. Two plus weeks spent on the beach, in the water, on hikes throughout the island of Oahu, and of course going up against the best the USAF has to offer was a fantastic experience for all. Upon our return, the results from the latest Navy-wide advancement exam were released prior to Thanksgiving and I am proud to say Fist of the Fleet promoted 22 Sailors! This is a big moment in their naval careers and much more will now be asked of them. I look forward to seeing them succeed in the new ranks they have earned through hard work and dedication.

I am pleased to announce that the Fist of the Fleet 75th anniversary celebration is starting to take shape. You all should have hopefully received an invitation through evite. It will be held on January 19th at hangar 2 mod 2 (Fist spaces) along the Lemoore flight line. The ceremony will be held at 1000 and there should be plenty of opportunity to visit the spaces, see a Super Hornet up close and personal, and get into one of our simulators. The party at the club will be at 1700. Look forward to meeting many of you and hearing your outrageous stories about naval aviation's past.

As we enter the holiday season, I want to wish every member of the FOFA and your families a Merry Christmas. I continue to think upon how thankful I am to be the Commanding Officer of such a squadron rich in history. Proud of our Sailors, proud to serve, and of course...

Damn proud to be a Fist!

Skipper



Tanking en route to Hawaii



Frocking Day



FROM THE COCKPIT By: LT Gerald "Soul Patch" Anderson

Over the past few months, Fist of the Fleet has continued to excel during their high operational tempo. As 2017 comes to an end, it is impressive to look at what the squadron has accomplished over the year. In 2017, VFA-25 executed over 2,000 flight hours, 79 embarked flight hours, 31 carrier landings, six detachments, ten SFWT advancements, and a 93 percent sortie completion rate. This could not have been done without the hard work and determination of every Sailor within the command.

Detachments

From November 1st through November 16th, VFA-25 detached approximately 90 Sailors and four aircraft to Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. During the detachment, the squadron's main focus was fighter integration (FI) with the 199th FS. Like the previous FI detachments, our pilots gained valuable experience working with the Hawaii Air National Guard and their fifth generation F-22 Raptors. Over the course of two plus weeks in Hickam, VFA-25 executed various missions from FI defensive counter air (DCA) and offensive counter air (OCA) to dissimilar air combat training (DACT). Each of those mission sets is unique, and requires vast knowledge of the F/A-18E Super Hornet systems not to mention understanding how to operate effectively in the joint environment.

End of 2017

Coming back from detachment to Hawaii posed another challenge that VFA-25 had to overcome. With inspections due towards the end of the year, the squadron quickly went down to two full mission capable aircraft. Despite the limited resources, the maintenance department has done an outstanding job providing NATOPS up-and-ready aircraft for the squadron as the squadron's focus shifts to Navy schools and individual training. 2018 will pose new challenges and VFA-25 will no doubt rise to the occasion excelling during work ups. VFA-25 will no doubt be ready for deployment and continue to fight and win prompt and sustained combat operations from the sea or on land.



Plane Captains and Troubleshooters preparing aircraft 403 for the next sortie



The 199th Fighter Squadron presenting CDR Dentzer with a detachment lithograph at Hickam AFB, Hawaii



LT Wickware leading an F-22 into the tactical overhead at Hickam AFB



Fist of the Fleet over Oahu

Have you paid your 2018 Dues?

Annual Dues: \$25/YR

Life Time Dues \$200

Mail dues to Financial Officer:

Chuck Webster 2441 Lock B Road North Clarksville TN 37043

Only Voting Members receive a copy of the Directory

Become a Voting Member!

Visit the Base Exchange at

www.fistofthefleet.org

FROM THE HANGAR DECK

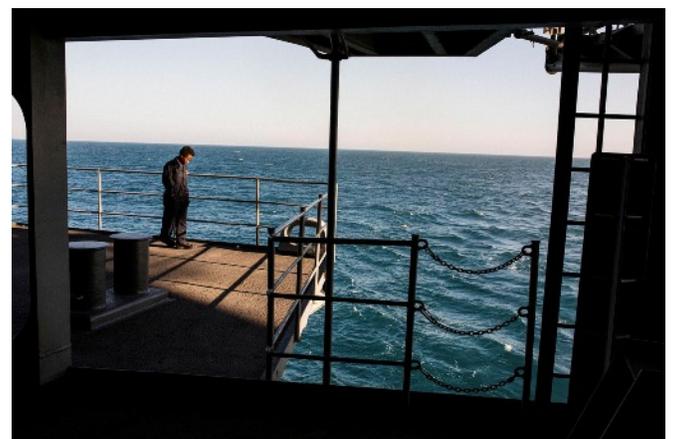
Hello there Fist of the Fleet Association,

I am AT3 Villarreal. I was born and raised in Mission, TX and joined the Navy in September 2015 at age 23. I made the decision to enlist because I knew I would be afforded the opportunity to travel the world and finish my degree. Being in VFA-25 as my first command has granted me that opportunity and I am grateful for all the places I have visited and experiences I been a part of during my time here. From my recent deployment that provided me the pleasure of exploring ports like: Croatia, Bahrain, Greece and Dubai, to the even more recent detachments to Hawaii, Alaska and TOPGUN. Alaska stands out as my favorite place to visit thus far. The exceptional glacial hikes, waterfalls and witnessing the Northern Lights with my own eyes are experiences I will not soon forget. Attached is a picture of a moment that I remember fondly, the awarding of my Enlisted Air Warfare Specialist by former Skipper Gerber



Throughout my short time as a FIST I have learned so much. Soon after checking in, I was sent straight to the shop and skipped the line shack. I still was able to obtain my Plane Captain qualification as well as all my shop qualifications and still do school work. I really enjoy my AV/ARM team who supported me in being so successful. To name a few, Chief Conrad and Chief Bell are always willing to help anyone that has issues or need advice while fostering a good attitude. I also contribute to the positive attitude among my peers, giving my fellow FISTS "high fives" and saying, "Good job!" to everyone because they are family. The most significant lesson I've learned has to be that once a FIST, always a FIST! Or as my Commanding Officer would put it, I'm damn proud to be a FIST.

The pics below are from a 2016 Det. Photos by Matt Lutton



DEPARTURE NOTIFICATIONS



Gene Melvin Stover, of Parkville, MD passed away on Saturday, 18 November 2017. He died of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and heart failure and was eighty years old. Gene was born in Decatur, Alabama on 26 November 1936 to Jesse Lucille and Milton Lile Stover. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Engineering from Auburn University and served for nine years first as an A-1 "Skyraider" pilot with VA-25 and then as an A-4 "Skyhawk" pilot during the Vietnam War. He received several citations for his service, including the Navy Commendation Medal and Air Medal. He spent the rest of his career as a land-use planner in Tulare County, California.

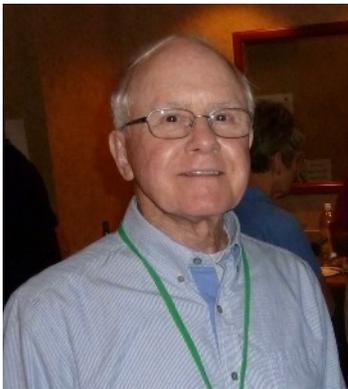


Throughout his life, Gene had a strong sense of integrity, duty and selflessness. His sense of obligation to others was constant and evident throughout his life, and he gave without expectation of reward or recognition. He is survived by his son Gene of Seattle, son Jason and daughter-in-law Karen Bendersky of Baltimore, and mother of his children, Ann Stewart, of Poulsbo, Washington.



Harlan G. Sanderson (74) passed away in Eastman WI on November 27, 2017. He was preceded by his wife Connie and her parents, Roy and Margaret Peterson, Eastman, WI; his parents Alton and Vivian Sanderson, Ridgeway, Iowa; his sister Virginia (Larry) Gunhus, Decorah, Iowa; and his nephew Bruce Gunhus, Fort Worth, TX

Harlan was born August 29, 1943, in Ridgeway, IA. At age 17, he joined the U.S. Navy and attained 2nd class AO (aircraft ordinance) rank having served from 1961-64, including service on the U.S.S. Midway from 1963-64. He graduated in 1969 from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and married Connie M. Peterson on June 21 that same year. Later, he earned a Master's degree in Library Science at the University of Iowa (Iowa City) and in 1975, a Master's in Audio Visual Media from the University of Wisconsin (La Crosse). He worked in the library at Luther College for 31 years, from 1969-2000, becoming an Associate Professor Media Librarian. Harlan also taught photography courses at Luther and exhibited his work locally. His photographs appeared in a variety of publications. In 1980, Harlan and Connie purchased the Eagle Point Trailer Court on the Mississippi River in the countryside near Lynxville, WI, and they retired to an adjoining property homestead, Eagle Mound, in 2000. In 2010, at the age of 67, he joined the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.



Our brother, dear friend and former skipper Pete Ogle passed away Saturday morning, December 16th, at his home in Portland, OR. His death from natural causes was sudden and unexpected.

Pete was well known and widely respected within the NAS Lemoore and Light Attack/Strike Fighter communities as a leader and as a shining example for junior officers. He helped pave the way for the integration of the A-7 into the fleet as a plank owner in VA-97 making the first combat cruise in the A-7A in 1968. He inspired a generation of young, eager pilots and sailors as the XO/CO of VA-25 from 1974 to 1976. Pete continued to mold the Light Attack community as acting CO of VA-122, Chief of Staff for ComLatWingPac, and he ushered in Strike Fighter operations as the first Fleet Introduction Team Leader for the F/A-18's integration into the fleet.

Not one to "rest easy" following retirement, Pete kept the fires burning in his valiant charge to preserve the USS Ranger (CV-61) as founder and CEO of the USS Ranger Foundation. Many of us who followed Pete while on active duty also followed him in this worthy cause.

Pete was held in the highest esteem not only by those of us who served with him and knew him, but by those who had only known him by reputation. He was deeply respected for his calm demeanor, wonderful sense of humor, and his strong leadership. He was a true Gentleman.

FRUITCAKE-THE OVERLY MALIGNED HOLIDAY FOOD

Fruitcake gets a bad rap here in the U.S., mostly due to the comments of one of the most respected television personalities of the late 20th Century, and I don't mean Cronkite. There are, I will admit, a lot of bad products that are commercially produced, and the really need to be avoided. We have a local bakery up in Wisconsin that produces them only during the Holidays, and they are a fine product but are yearly becoming more expensive. We're going to make our own in the future based on several recipes from Michelle's family. Try to avoid products that have too much fruit, too many nuts or are covered in icings or powdered sugars. The ingredients should be in a proper balance.

Fruitcake is a cake made with chopped candied fruit and/or dried fruit, nuts, and spices, and (occasionally) soaked in spirits. In the United Kingdom, certain rich versions may be iced and decorated. Fruitcakes are typically served in celebration of weddings and Christmas. Given their rich nature, fruitcake is most often consumed on its own, as opposed to with condiments (such as butter or cream).

The earliest recipe from ancient Rome lists pomegranate seeds, pine nuts, and raisins that were mixed into barley mash. In the Middle Ages, honey, spices, and preserved fruits were added. Fruit cakes soon proliferated all over Europe. Recipes varied greatly in different countries throughout the ages, depending on the available ingredients as well as (in some instances) church regulations forbidding the use of butter, regarding the observance of fast. Pope Innocent VIII (1432–1492) finally granted the use of butter, in a written permission known as the 'Butter Letter' or Butterbrief in 1490, giving permission to Saxony to use milk and butter in the North German Stollen fruit cakes. Starting in the 16th century, sugar from the American Colonies (and the discovery that high concentrations of sugar could preserve fruits) created an excess of candied fruit, thus making fruitcakes more affordable and popular.

In the UK, fruitcakes come in many varieties, from extremely light to rich and moist. The traditional Christmas cake is a round fruitcake covered in marzipan and then in white royal icing or fondant icing. They are often further decorated with snow scenes, holly leaves, and berries (real or artificial), or tiny decorative robins or snowmen. It is also the tradition for this kind of cake to be served at weddings as part of the dessert course. In Yorkshire, it is often served accompanied with cheese. Fruitcakes in the United Kingdom often contain currants and glace cherries, an example of this type being the Genoa cake. One type of cake that originated in Scotland is the Dundee Cake, a type of fruitcake that does not contain glace cherries. This is a fruitcake that is decorated with almonds, and which owes its name to Keiller's marmalade. Fruitcake was historically referred to as plum cake in England since around 1700.



Typical American fruitcakes are rich in fruit and nuts. Mail-order fruitcakes in America began in 1913. Some well-known American bakers of fruitcake include Collin Street Bakery in Corsicana, Texas, and The Claxton Bakery in Claxton, Georgia. Both Collin Street and Claxton are Southern companies with inexpensive access to large nut quantities, for which the expression "nutty as a fruitcake" was derived in 1935. Commercial fruitcakes are often sold from catalogs by charities as a fund-raiser. Most American mass-produced fruitcakes are alcohol-free, but traditional recipes are saturated with liqueurs or brandy and covered in powdered sugar, both of which prevent mold. Brandy (or wine) soaked linens can be used to store the fruitcakes, and some people feel that fruitcakes improve with age.

In the United States, the fruitcake has become a ridiculed dessert, in part due to the mass-produced inexpensive cakes of questionable age. Some attribute the beginning of this trend with The Tonight Show host Johnny Carson. He would joke that there really is only one fruitcake in the world, passed from family to family. After Carson's death, the tradition continued with "The Fruitcake Lady" (Marie Rudisill), who made appearances on the show and offered her "fruitcake" opinions. In fact, the fruitcake had been a butt of jokes on television programs such as Father Knows Best and The Donna Reed Show years before The Tonight Show debuted and appears to have first become a vilified confection in the early 20th century, as evidenced by Warner Brothers cartoons.

Since 1995, Manitou Springs, Colorado, has hosted the Great Fruitcake Toss on the first Saturday of every January. "We encourage the use of recycled fruitcakes," says Leslie Lewis of the Manitou Springs Chamber of Commerce. The all-time Great Fruitcake Toss record is 1,420 feet, set in January 2007 by a group of eight Boeing engineers who built the "Omega 380," a mock artillery piece fueled by compressed air pumped by an exercise bike.

When a fruitcake contains a good deal of alcohol, it can remain edible for many years. For example, a fruitcake baked in 1878 was kept as an heirloom by a family (Morgan L. Ford) in Tecumseh, Michigan. In 2003 it was sampled by Jay Leno on The Tonight Show. Wrapping the cake in alcohol-soaked linen before storing is one method of lengthening its shelf life. A 106-year-old fruitcake discovered in 2017 by the Antarctic Heritage Trust was described as in "excellent condition" and "almost" edible.



The Secret of the Sea

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Ah! what pleasant visions haunt me
As I gaze upon the sea!
All the old romantic legends,
All my dreams, come back to me.

Sails of silk and ropes of sandal,
Such as gleam in ancient lore;
And the singing of the sailors,
And the answer from the shore!

Most of all, the Spanish ballad
Haunts me oft, and tarries long,
Of the noble Count Arnaldos
And the sailor's mystic song.



Like the long waves on a sea-beach,
Where the sand as silver shines,
With a soft, monotonous cadence,
Flow its unrhymed lyric lines;--

Telling how the Count Arnaldos,
With his hawk upon his hand,
Saw a fair and stately galley,
Steering onward to the land;--

How he heard the ancient helmsman
Chant a song so wild and clear,
That the sailing sea-bird slowly
Poised upon the mast to hear,

Till his soul was full of longing,
And he cried, with impulse strong,--
"Helmsman! for the love of heaven,
Teach me, too, that wondrous song!"

"Wouldst thou,"--so the helmsman answered,
"Learn the secret of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers
Comprehend its mystery!"

In each sail that skims the horizon,
In each landward-blowing breeze,
I behold that stately galley,
Hear those mournful melodies;

Till my soul is full of longing
For the secret of the sea,
And the heart of the great ocean
Sends a thrilling pulse through me.



Count Arnaldos is a very beautiful Romancero, by an unknown Spanish author and written about the year 1500. It appears in the *Cancionero* of Antwerp (1555), and tells how Count Arnaldos, wandering by the seashore one morning, hears the mystic song of a sailor in a passing galley