



Fist of the Fleet Association

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

NEWSLETTER

July 2019

Preserving the Past Providing for Today
Promoting the Future

SUMMER EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

It's the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing and I learned something new this month. Computer technology took a great leap forward in the mid-60's with the integrated circuit (IC) board and the Display Keyboard (DSKY). The theory of DSKY was simple: enter Verb and a 2-digit code to tell the computer *what* to do and Noun and a 2-digit code to tell it *where* to do it. Enter P and a code and it would run a preloaded program. It could and did display warning codes and handled all the intricate guidance operations, all with only 1.024 MHz of processing power (The iPhone 7 runs at 2.23 GHz). This technology became known as *software-enabled digital fly-by-wire* and guess what, we used it on the A-7 and you're still using it today. The big difference is that instead of using IC *boards* we're using IC *chips (processors)* and touch screens. There were a lot of other practical applications that came out of the space program, with Velcro probably being the most well-known but there is no doubt that the great race to the moon advanced man's knowledge of science across a wide range of disciplines. It was a long journey fraught with peril and death for both America and the Soviets and those continued right through the Shuttle Program. Machines can only do so much in space, and the farther away they are the longer it takes to communicate with them. Only man can act on the spot and avert an imminent disaster whether in space or flying advanced combat aircraft over some God-forsaken desert.



Five years before Apollo 11's historic journey another event occurred which at the time did not seem to be of a great concern. However it would lead to events that would overshadow the Apollo program, lead to world-wide riots, the downfall of world leaders, and cause the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. The date was August 2nd, 1964 and it marked the beginning of the Vietnam War, which would not be declared over until April 30th, 1975 at the final fall of Saigon although U.S. involvement was declared over several days before that, and on May 5th both Time and Newsweek magazines ran special

reports declaring "Hanoi's Triumph" (Time) and "End of an Era" (Newsweek). It was a tragedy that need not have happened. Not many people recall that on the advice of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara President Kennedy was already ordering a draw-down of U.S. personnel with an eye to a complete withdrawal from Vietnam. But November 22nd, 1963 changed the course of the world forever.

~Later!~

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GULF OF TONKIN INCIDENT

WHEN: TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 AT 1:30PM

WHERE: NAS LEMOORE, CA BASE THEATER BLDG 822
MAIN SIDE

HONORING CAPT JOHN NICHOLSON, CDR EVERETT
ALVAREZ, JR. AND LT RON BOCH

Reception to follow at the Oasis Club

Please RSVP on the link below so we have an accurate
count

<https://einventions.afit.edu/inv/anim.cfm?i=460319&k=0667420A7A5E>

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.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's summer and it's hot unless you're by the beach in San Diego where cooler temps prevail. Comic-Con International has come and gone, along with Tom Cruise who was in town to promote the new *Top Gun* movie due for release in 2020. Only in the movies could a Navy Captain get a flying billet as a Top Gun instructor; there must be a bunch of envious O-9s out there right now. Aside from the movies, there are plenty of upcoming events that we want all the Fist members to know about. Let's start with EAA Oshkosh, 2019 which is getting ready to wrap up in Wisconsin this weekend. If you ventured to that magnificent gathering of men and women and their flying machines, I'm sure that you weren't disappointed by the sights. Drop Jerry or myself a few photos or a note with your experience so we can encourage others to attend.

On Tuesday, September 17th, 2019 all are invited to the Commemoration of the 55th Anniversary of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident at NAS Lemoore, CA Base Theatre Main Side. The event will honor Capt. John Nicholson (Skipper Nick), Cdr. Everett Alvarez, Jr. and Cdr. Ron Bach, who all flew sorties that day in August, 1964. A reception will follow at the Oasis Club. You must RSVP with the link included below for security clearance onto the base. Things have tightened up quite a bit with the arrival of the F-35C at NLC. We can also provide information on accommodations as well. It should be a great chance to see old friends. After that event the Blue Angels will perform at NAS Lemoore on the weekend, September 21-22, 2019 so you can make it a doubleheader.

<https://einvitations.afit.edu/inv/anim.cfm?i=460319&k=0667420A7A5E>

Now for a short pilot briefing with answers to follow at the end:

1. Charles Lindbergh became known as "Lucky Lindy" following his nonstop flight to Paris. Why?
2. The world's first scheduled airline flight was operated using a lighter than air aircraft. True or False?
3. Why did many World War II bombs whistle after being dropped?

Mark your calendars for Fist 2020 to be held one year from now in conjunction with Tailhook '20 in Reno, NV. We'll have more details to follow before yearend. The squadron will be back from a tense deployment given the recent provocations by Iran so let's have a great turnout to welcome them back home.

Time for pilots to man your aircraft. Answers follow.

1. Lindbergh experienced weather conditions that were perfect for his flight, including zero crosswind component as he flew across the Atlantic, in other words, net drift was nil.
 2. False, the first flight used a Benoist flying boat on January 1, 1914 on a 23 minute flight between St. Petersburg and Tampa, FL. The Tony Janus Award commemorates this flight.
 3. Whistles were added to many bombs for the purpose of terrifying those on the ground.
- Okay, that's all for now. Hope to see a bunch of you in Lemoore next month. Take care,

"Chalks"

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Blues Tour Dates

Aug 3/4 Seafair Boeing Air Show Seattle WA
Aug 17/18 61st Chicago Air And Water Show IL
Aug 24/25 New York Air Show Stewart ANG Base Newburgh NY
Aug 31/Sep 1 Atlantic Canada International Air Show Greenwood NS

Sep 7/8 Spirit of St. Louis Air Show Chesterfield MO
Sep 21/22 NAS Lemoore Central Valley Air Show CA
Sep 28/29 MCAS Miramar Air Show CA

Oct 5/6 California Capital Airshow Sacramento CA
Oct 12/13 San Francisco Fleet Week CA
Oct 19/20 Fort Worth Alliance Air Show TX
Oct 26/27 Jacksonville Sea and Sky Spectacular FL

SKIPPER'S CORNER

I made two promises at the start of this deployment to the Fist of the Fleet team. The first promise was that we would depart from Lemoore, embark on the USS Abraham Lincoln, go around the world, and then return to Lemoore. The second promise was the Fist of the Fleet along with the carrier strike group team would shape world events. I am sure all of you have been watching the news as events in the Middle East have unfolded, and I can confidently say I have made good on that second promise. Rest assured our team has performed magnificently.

The team received some much needed rest and relaxation as the Abraham Lincoln pulled into Duqm, Oman. Ever heard of Duqm? Me neither, but we've been here twice now. Some of you more seasoned Fists reading the newsletter probably remember the Jebel Ali sandbox, before the Navy made it a staple port visit over the last fifteen years. Duqm brings about the same amount of amenities of that original sandbox. Regardless of the lack of luxury accommodations, the Fist of the Fleet is ready get back on station and continue our maximum pressure campaign as we represent the potential strike energy that underwrites our national strategic goals.

As we anticipate the start of the fifth month of this deployment the Fist of the Fleet continues to stand the watch. Every Fist contributes tremendously to our team effort. What we do out here is not easy. Only the United States Navy, specifically our carrier strike groups, can operate on the other side of the planet providing the global sea presence ensuring our world commons remain safe and peaceful. The Fist of the Fleet Sailors represent an integral part of that global presence. We remain vigilant, well trained to perform what our National Authority demands of us.

CDR David Dartez
Commanding Officer VFA-25



FROM THE COCKPIT By: LT Chris "Meathole" Honeycutt

Crossing feet dry on the "Boulevard" I took another look over the lex. Through the haze I couldn't help but notice the similarities between the barren desert scape of Pakistan and the training complex areas over Fallon, Nevada. Continuing up the "Boulevard" on our Executive Officer, CDR Rose's wing, I was nervous and excited to be the first Air Wing SEVEN FNG going into combat. I was briefed to compartmentalize each phase of the flight and not get overwhelmed by thinking of the entire eight-hour mission as a whole. This advice was going through my head as we switched from the airnav portion of the flight to our first tanking evolution. Thankfully, we didn't have to wrestle with the KC-135, lovingly referred to as the Iron Maiden, as we plugged into the fluffy basket of the gentlemanly KC-10. Confident in my training but unsure what to expect, I could feel my heart rate increase and my grip tighten on the stick as we checked in with our JTAC and found our place in the overhead stack. We were immediately talked on to a few different points of interest and tracked targets through the countryside. After a few minutes, I found my groove as the scenario started to feel exactly like my Urban close-air support simulator event in the FRS with my instructor "Cajun." The experience was very exciting and I felt a great deal of pride to be "in-country" supporting our troops on the ground. Time went by fast, and before I knew it we were heading back down the "Boulevard" during sunset. It was time to shift our focus to getting back aboard the boat. Naturally, a foul deck wave-off and a hook skip bolter only slightly delayed my arrival to midrats where CDR Rose and I shared stories with the squadron from my first real mission. Like the many Fist pilots who flew combat missions during WW2, Korea, Vietnam and the recent wars in the Middle East, I will always remember my first combat flight and the hundreds of hours of training and mentorship that prepared me. Damn Proud to be a Fist!



Members of the Fist of the Fleet pose for an award photo with the Commanding Officer and Command Master Chief after the first award quarters of the 2019 deployment onboard the USS Lincoln. Award quarters are normally held onboard the ships forecastle.

FROM THE HANGER DECK by: ATAN Trevor Davis

Hello Fist of the Fleet Association, I am ATAN Davis. I was born in Pocatello, Idaho, but have lived all over the great state of Washington and overseas in the United Kingdom while my parents were stationed there. I decided to enlist after I graduated high school in 2017. My family has always been big supporters of the military with my grandpa and stepdad both serving in the Air Force and Army respectively. I joined the Navy after deciding that college wasn't what I needed at the time, and in order to better myself and set myself up with the skills and work ethic that only America's Navy can provide. After "A" school I was given my orders and told that I would be going to sunny California to a place called Lemoore. I checked into VFA-25 in November of 2018. I showed up at the AT shop on my first day, and was kindly directed to a small hut just outside the hangar called the line shack. While it wasn't what I thought I would be doing when I signed up to be an Aviation Electronics Technician, I've grown to really love the work us "line rats" do. After months of hard work, I recently earned my Plane Captain Qualification and am currently working towards my Air Warfare Specialist.



While I haven't been a Fist for very long, I'm very grateful that this is the first command that I was sent to in the Navy. We stay incredibly busy in the line shack with the flight schedule and wash jobs taking up the majority of our time. My leadership, including Chief Moreno, AD1 Ramone, and AD2 Burciaga have pushed me to do what I didn't think was possible. They showed me what working really hard means and going after what you want. Also, the friendships that I've made within the command are some of the best that I've had in my entire life. I'm damn proud to be a Fist because I know that no matter what happens on this current deployment or in the future, I'll always have a fantastic Navy family who will support me and help me to continue accomplishing everything I can eventually becoming an even bigger asset to VFA-25 and the Navy.



Have you paid your 2019 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

\$\$\$\$ FIST OF THE FLEET ASSOCIATION FINANCIAL NEWS \$\$\$\$

The financial health of the Association is still on solid ground. As of 30 June 2019, the Association has a balance of \$13,142.93 in savings and \$8,656.79 in checking with the Navy Federal Credit Union.

One of the main indicators of the Association's financial health and stability is the continued growth of its dues paying annual members and new life members. This number increased during the early months of 2019 with annual members Gunner Mills, Laurence Woodbury, Craig Bechtel, Stuart Bugg, and Thomas Mundrake payed their annual dues. The Association also received gift of \$50.00 from Mrs. Laura Miller an Associate Member.

The Association paid Education Grants totaling \$212.79 to two different squadron personnel early in 2019. The Association also paid \$500.00 to AE1 Erin K. Daymon the 2018 VFA-25 Sailor of the Year selectee. An expense of \$500.00 was incurred early to determine the feasibility of having the Fist Association Reunion in San Diego during 2019. After a review of the possible high cost to hold the reunion in San Deigo, the Executive Committee postponed the reunion until sometime in 2020.

Chuck "Pooh" Webster



USS Bon Homme Richard CVA-31

AUGUST 2ND, 1964: 19°42'N 106°46'E IN THE GULF OF TONKIN

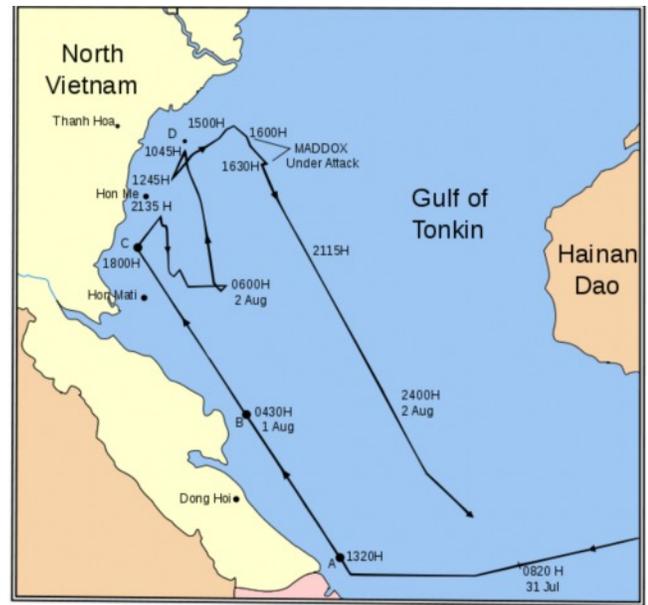
The Gulf of Tonkin Incident occurred during the first year of the Johnson administration. While President John F. Kennedy had originally supported the policy of sending military advisers to South Vietnam's President Ngo Dinh Diem, he had begun to alter his thinking due to what he perceived to be the ineptitude of the Saigon government and its inability and unwillingness to make needed reforms (which led to a U.S.-supported coup which resulted in the death of Diem). Shortly before Kennedy was assassinated in Nov '63, he had begun a limited recall of U.S. forces. Johnson's views were likewise complex, but he had supported military escalation as a means of challenging what was perceived to be the Soviet Union's expansionist policies. The Cold War policy of containment was to be applied to prevent the fall of Southeast Asia to communism under the precepts of the domino theory. After Kennedy's assassination, Johnson ordered in more U.S. forces to support the Saigon government, beginning a protracted United States presence in Southeast Asia. A highly classified program of covert actions against North Vietnam known as Operation Plan 34-Alpha had begun under the CIA in 1961. In 1964 the program was transferred to DOD and conducted by the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam Studies and Observations Group (MACV-SOG).

Daniel Ellsberg, who was on duty in the Pentagon the night of Aug 4, receiving messages from the ship, reported that the ship was on a secret electronic warfare support measures mission (code-named "DESOTO") near Northern Vietnamese territorial waters. On Jul 31 '64, USS *Maddox* (DD 731) had begun her intelligence collection mission in the Gulf of Tonkin. Captain George Stephen Morrison was in command of local American forces from his flagship USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CVA-31). *Maddox* was under orders not to approach closer than eight miles from the North's coast and four miles from Hon Nieu island. When the SOG commando raid was being carried out against Hon Nieu, the ship was 120 miles away from the attacked area.

In Jul '64, "the situation along North Vietnam's territorial waters had reached a near boil," due to South Vietnamese commando raids and airborne operations that inserted intelligence teams into North Vietnam, as well as North Vietnam's military response to these operations. On the night of Jul 30 South Vietnamese commandos attacked a North Vietnamese radar station on Hòn Mê island. According to Bob Hanyok, NSA Historian, "it would be attacks on these islands, especially Hòn Mê, by South Vietnamese commandos, along with the proximity of the *Maddox*, that would set off the confrontation," although the *Maddox* did not participate in the commando attacks. In this context, on Jul 31, *Maddox* began patrols of the North Vietnamese coast to collect intelligence, coming within a few miles of Hòn Mê island. A U.S. aircraft carrier, the USS *Ticonderoga* (CVA-14), was also stationed nearby.



By Aug 1 North Vietnamese patrol boats were tracking *Maddox*, and several intercepted communications indicated that they were preparing to attack. *Maddox* retreated, but the next day *Maddox*, which had a top speed of 28kts, resumed her routine patrol, and three North Vietnamese P-4 torpedo boats with a top speed of 50kts began to follow *Maddox*. Intercepted communications indicated that the vessels intended to attack *Maddox*. As the ships approached from the southwest, *Maddox* changed course from northeasterly to southeasterly and increased speed to 25kts. On the afternoon of Aug 2, as the torpedo boats neared, *Maddox* fired three warning shots. The North Vietnamese boats then attacked and *Maddox* radioed she was under attack from the three boats, closing to within 10nm while located 28nm away from the North Vietnamese coast in international waters. *Maddox* stated she had evaded a torpedo attack and opened fire with its five-inch guns, forcing the torpedo boats away. Two of the torpedo boats had come as close as 5nm and released one torpedo each, but neither one was effective, coming no closer than about 100yds after *Maddox* evaded them. Another P-4 received a direct hit from a five-inch shell from *Maddox*; its torpedo malfunctioned at launch. *Ticonderoga* dispatched four, Zuni-armed F-8E Crusaders to the destroyer's assistance, and 15 mins after *Maddox* had fired her initial warning shots, attacked the retiring P-4s, claiming one was sunk and one heavily damaged. *Maddox* suffered only minor damage from a single 14.5 mm bullet from a P-4's KPV heavy machine gun into her superstructure. Retiring to South Vietnamese waters, *Maddox* was joined by the destroyer USS *Turner Joy* (DD 951). The North Vietnamese claimed that *Maddox* was hit by one torpedo, and one of the American aircraft had been shot down.



On Aug 4 another DESOTO patrol off the North Vietnamese coast was launched by *Maddox* and *Turner Joy*, in order to "show the flag" after the first incident. This time their orders indicated that the ships were to close to no less than 11 miles from the coast of North Vietnam. During an evening and early morning of rough weather and heavy seas, the destroyers received radar, sonar, and radio signals that they believed signaled another attack by the North Vietnamese navy. For some four hours the ships fired on radar targets and maneuvered vigorously amid electronic and visual reports of enemies. Despite the Navy's claim that two attacking torpedo boats had been sunk, there was no wreckage, bodies of dead North Vietnamese sailors, or other physical evidence present at the scene of the alleged engagement. Secretary McNamara at the White House told President Johnson that a U.S. Navy vessel had been attacked and urged retaliation. The President agreed.

At 0127 EST the CO of the *Maddox*, Capt. John J. Herrick sent a cable in which he acknowledged that the second attack may not have happened and that there may actually have been no Vietnamese craft in the area: "Review of action makes many reported contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Freak weather effects on radar and overeager sonarmen may have accounted for many reports. No actual visual sightings by *Maddox*. Suggest complete evaluation before any further action taken". One hour later, Herrick sent another cable, stating, "Entire action leaves many doubts except for apparent ambush at beginning. Suggest thorough reconnaissance in daylight by aircraft." In response to requests for confirmation, at around 16:00 Washington time, Herrick cabled, "Details of action present a confusing picture although certain that the original ambush was bona fide." McNamara decided against informing the president that a new report had been received casting grave doubt on the existence of the incident that was the premise of the president's decision earlier that day to retaliate and McNamara continued making plans for U.S. military retaliation.

At 1800 EST Herrick cabled yet again, this time stating, "The first boat to close the *Maddox* probably launched a torpedo at the *Maddox* which was heard but not seen. All subsequent *Maddox* torpedo reports are doubtful in that it is suspected that sonarman was hearing the ship's own propeller beat" [*sic*]. Within thirty minutes of Aug 4 incident, President Johnson had decided on retaliatory attacks. That same day he used the "hot line" to Moscow, and assured the Soviets he had no intent in opening a broader war in Vietnam. Early on Aug 5, Johnson publicly ordered retaliatory measures stating, "The determination of all Americans to carry out our full commitment to the people and to the government of South Vietnam will be redoubled by this outrage." One hour and forty minutes after his speech, aircraft launched from U.S. carriers reached North Vietnamese targets. On Aug 5, at 1040, these planes bombed four torpedo boat bases and an oil-storage facility in Vinh.

Photo # USN 711523 North Vietnamese motor torpedo boats under fire by USS Maddox, 2 Aug. 1964



P-4 Torpedo boat



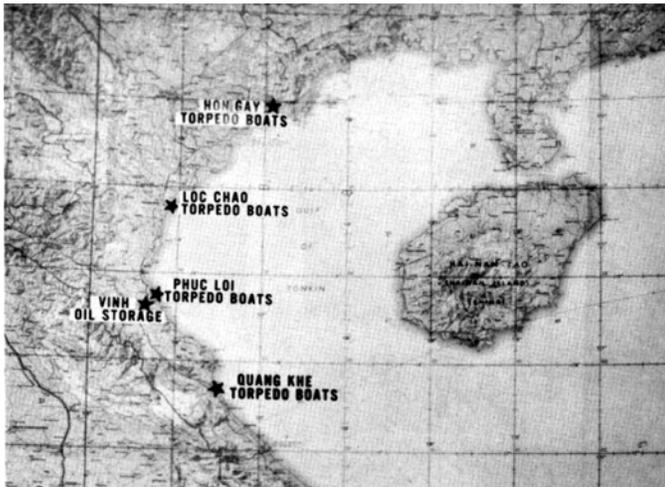
OPERATION PIERCE ARROW

In response to the Gulf of Tonkin Incident U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson ordered Operation "Pierce Arrow" which was conducted on 5 Aug '64. The operation consisted of 64 strike sorties of aircraft from the aircraft carriers USS *Ticonderoga* (CVA-14) and USS *Constellation* (CVA-64) against the torpedo boat bases of Hon Gai, Loc Chao, Quang Khe, and Phuc Loi, and the oil storage depot at Vinh. The U.S. lost two aircraft to anti-aircraft fire, with one pilot killed, Lt. Richard Sather. Another, Ltjg. Everett Alvarez Jr. an A-4 Skyhawk pilot on a strike over Hon Gai, became the first U.S. Navy pilot to be downed and detained during the Vietnam War and spent over eight years in captivity, making him the second longest-held U.S. POW, after U.S. Army Colonel Floyd James Thompson. On the strikes made by the VA-144 "Roadrunners" flying from the *Constellation* was LCDR. John L. Nicholson. future CO of USS *Ranger* (CVA-61)

3:40 AM (3:40 PM, August 5, Saigon time): CONSTELLATION's four A-1s launched at 1:00 AM and its ten A-4s and two F-4s launched at 2:30 AM, strike HON GAY. They report moderate to heavy AA fire. Of the five boats sighted, five are destroyed. The boats do not get under way until after the attack started. Alvarez' A-4 aircraft, the second in column, is shot down while on a second pass against boats at anchor. The attack lasts 25 minutes, with 2.75" rockets and 20 mm strafing attacks utilized.



USS Constellation CVA-64



The initial targets of the Vietnam War



RON BOCH, EVERETT ALVAREZ, NICK NICHOLSON HEADING TO GULF OF TONKIN INCIDENT, NIGHT OF AUG 4TH, 1964



A-4 Skyhawks of VA-144 "Roadrunners"



Ltjg. Everett Alvarez Jr, Prisoner of War

DID YOU KNOW: NAVY, MILITARY AND OTHER INFORMATION

I would like to draw your attention to this link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/archives/command-operations-reports/aviation-commands/vfa-strike-fighter-squadrons/vfa-25.html>

For the years 1943-1945, and the report submitted 27 June 1945, Page 1 Chronology; please note the following at the end of the page:

Commanding Officer of VT-17 was Lieut. Comdr. Frank M. Whitaker*, San Diego, Cal., who was lost in a mid-air collision over Eniwetok. He was succeeded by Lieut. G. N. Owens

Note: A list of citations and awards for personnel in VT-17 from the time of commissioning until the squadron was re-formed 18 April 1944 is not available to this command. What information could be obtained with current records on hand would be inadequate and inaccurate. The same is true in connection with narrative material of the squadron during the period from 1 January 1943 to 18 April 1944.

Complete records of the squadron during that period were not inherited by the command which took over on 18 April 1944 (Italics mine).

Also, to the history of the Squadron as compiled by Scott Smith for 1944:

February Lcdr Whittaker killed in mid-air collision over Eniwetok Island.

LT Grady N. Owens became acting commanding officer of VT-17

I have in my possession a fascinating little book titled "Helldiver Squadron" by Robert Olds (no relation to the Robin Olds family), Second Edition, Feb 1945. The First Edition was released in Dec 1944. This book charts the course, from commissioning to post-tour stand down, of Carrier Air Group 17: VB-17, for whom the stories circulate around, VF-17, and VT-17 deployed aboard the USS Bunker Hill, CV-17. The only difference between the two editions is that, for security reasons, in the first edition the carrier is never named. Not a deeply in-depth record of combat activities, neither is it a high-level overview, but rather a factual, firsthand account of the first Helldiver Squadron to see combat in the Pacific Theater as they battle the Japanese alongside their sister squadrons.

Beginning on page 177:

"February 2nd was the last day for Eniwetok and the darkest day in the history of Torpedo 17."

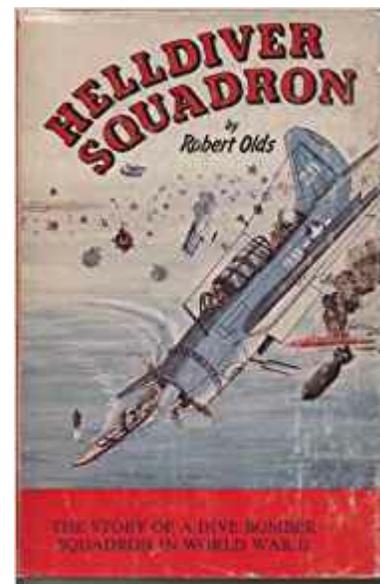
Four paragraphs later on page 178:

"Raymond Clapper, famed Scripps-Howard newspaper columnist, was aboard and had asked Admiral Sherman's permission to fly on a combat mission. The request was granted. During mid-morning he took off in Frank's torpedo plane. The Avengers were to do a little clean-up job on Engebi, glide bombing. It was the carrier's last strike. While Helldivers and Hellcats strafed, the Avengers would slam a few more bombs into the airfield area. Frank's four-plane section began its rendezvous over the lagoon at 1000 feet.

Whittaker started to peel off for another close-up look at Engebi. He banked sharply to starboard. Lieutenant (jg) Edward D. Stack, Shakopee, Minnesota, was flying his TBF just beneath Frank's. The Skipper failed to see him.

"Mid-air collision! Mid-air collision!" Someone called. All pilots stared at the lagoon. Two bright fires burned momentarily on the waves. Then two smoke smudges. Seven men had died."

There is a not inconsiderable amount of information to be gleaned in this book regarding VT-17's first combat tour, and about Frank Whitaker: How he thought, how he trained his men, how he *led* them. In the end, though, whether you say his was death by accident, misadventure or combat it is just another stark reminder that since its *inception* Naval Aviation has been the most hazardous duty in the world. And whether in peace time training for war, or in wartime staring down the enemy all you have is your training, skill and experience to see you through, never knowing if the next mission is the last. And so we live each day as if tomorrow *is* the last, never backing down, facing the challenges and problems in front of us, and remembering the lessons from the hurdles behind us so we never forget where we've been, what we've done, and more importantly, who we are. To do any less is to disparage the lives and actions of those who have come before us and renders us ineffectual, mere transient beings like so many others, worrying about this or that, and over-burdened with our cares. And while that's not *dying*, it sure as *hell* ain't living.



Frank Whitaker, line drawing from the book.



Ray Clapper aboard Bunker Hill

*I have run across several discrepancies, none of which are disconcerting if you think about it. First, I have noticed Frank's last name with both single and double T, but the USNA Memorial website does list it as WHITAKER. Second, his date of death is recorded as Feb 2, '43 but in the obituary for Raymond Clapper (or Klapper) it lists Feb 1, as that was the date in the U.S. when it was recorded, the U.S. being east of the International Dateline. Finally, in "Helldiver Squadron" Frank is listed as Frank L Whittaker, however his middle name is MELrose. As the events in the book were related to the author by the surviving members of VB-17 sometime in mid-1944 the conflict of memory over something as ordinary as a middle name should not trouble any one. Lastly, as a point of reference Engebi is an island on the north side of the Eniwetok atoll.

GREEN TAILS OVER 'NAM: OPERATION LINEBACKER II - THE AIR DEFENSES PART 1: AAA