



# Fist of the Fleet Association

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

## NEWSLETTER

Jan 2021

Preserving the Past Providing for Today  
Promoting the Future

### WINTER EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

Let's start the New Year off with a bang, shall we? *I had intended that this would be my last year as the editor of the Newsletter*.....pregnant pause while that seeps in.....I still have one more bit of Fistory to cover and at the conclusion of that I shall retire as editor, so plan on the December 2022 issue as my absolute last and final edition. What does that mean for the immediate future? It means someone should think of stepping up now and start making their plans on what the Newsletter will be under their watch. It takes hours, days, or months to do research to put together historical stories, and days reading articles and deciding which is relevant to present in this periodical; so the new editor should be someone who enjoys "looking stuff up". When the time comes I will send you a flash drive with all my pic and doc files, including all the Newsletters from my first in August of 2010. Sign up ASAP for the daily news feed from [USNI.org](http://USNI.org), I have found it to be a real treasure trove of useful material. The Newsletter is created with Serif PagePlus X9 however Serif was purchased by Affinity and the product was discontinued so you will need to look for an alternate desktop publishing software. I cannot stress enough being totally prepared for this by at least three months prior to your first issue. In the summer of next year Michelle and I are bailing out of Wisconsin and going back to rural America where we can live underground, sorry, the modern term is "off the grid", but for now *status quo*.

When I first told Bob Kison in 2010 I could do a Newsletter I had already spent a great deal of thought about it for several months prior to that phone call. Most, if not all of us, receive magazines, other periodicals and web feeds from a host of sources dealing with a great many things. However, these each tend to deal with only one, or at best two aspects of a particular subject and often leave you looking for more. It's the old "*For further reading on this subject.....*". So I asked myself "what do I want to see?", thinking that if something was relevant to me it would be worth discussing in detail for others. So I began by pouring over squadron records and outlining stories. *Everything* that I have done these ten years was outlined in that autumn and winter of 2010-2011. I created a master plan, and I stuck to it. At that point it was only necessary to dive deeply into the details and fall back on Creative Writing 101 and ask who, what, when, where, how and why. For every who there was a who else? For every what a what else and so on until I had amassed enough detail in advance. As soon as an issue was published I jumped into the next one and got as much done as possible right away; *then* I could kick back for six to eight weeks.

I'll admit to being highly self-critical when it comes to writing. As an example I have tweaked and re-tweaked the last two paragraphs on page seven every morning this week and I wasn't satisfied with them until today (23<sup>rd</sup>). I am also utterly intolerant of those who rely over-much on spell checker and proof reader. Those tools do not correct the fact that you don't understand the English language or punctuation, and are using the wrong words. As an example several months ago I was reading an on-line article about a pilot and the author wrote "every morning after breakfast he dawns his flight suit". Of course, there was no way to email this woman and let her know what I thought of her "talent" as a writer. That's why we have *people* proofread our work before it gets published and the same goes for this periodical. Eighteen months from now I will expect that someone has stood up to take this job on and is laying out their own outlines for the future and planning on how to make the Newsletter their own. There is a very solid foundation here and half the Newsletter is prepared by other people which will free up your time for the nose-to-the-grindstone research. But if you get stuck, if you're not sure what you're doing is making sense, or you need ideas or perspective I will be a phone call away. For a while anyway.

~Later!~

It all starts right here:

<https://www.history.navy.mil/research/archives/command-operations-reports/aviation-commands/vfa-strike-fighter-squadrons/vfa-25.html>

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

The holidays have come and gone and now most of us wait in line hoping to receive the sharp end of a needle with the latest COVID vaccine. It's a big change from the days when we dreaded the thought of running the gauntlet as we received three, four or even five shots courtesy of Navy Medicine as we prepped for a deployment or just the arrival/input medical at Pensacola. But things are looking up and the possibility exists of a good reunion at Tailhook 2022; we'll know more in late spring as the COVID case numbers will tell us if such a gathering is permissible, much less wise. In the meantime, we've been updating the website, getting more photos 'on board' and looking forward to awarding more educational grants and the annual Sailor of the Year and Harry Jones Awards.

I've also come across some more great aviation trivia questions, stuff from the modern era for yo-young sticks to check your knowledge. Here goes:

1. True or False. There are no American helicopters powered by three engines?
2. Who was the first U.S. President to fly in an airplane?
3. Which one of the world's major airports is below sea level?
4. A Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird is in a 30 degree banked turn at 85,000 feet while maintaining a true airspeed of 1,800 knots. What is the aircraft's turn radius?

So as not to keep you in suspense, here are the answers.

1. False. Look at the Marine Corps Sikorsky CH-53K King Stallion.
2. President Franklin D. Roosevelt flew to Casablanca during WWII in a Boeing 314 seaplane, the famous "Pan Am Clipper".
3. Amsterdam's Schipol Airport is 10 feet below sea level.
4. The turn radius is 82 nm; that makes for a 217 nm track to complete a 180 degree turn.

Take care, stay safe and healthy and hope to see you at Hook '22.

Chalks

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## ***Blue Notes***



Based on the flight testing with VX-23, the Super Hornets destined for the Blue Angels are receiving specific modifications to get the jets ready for airshow performances:

The control stick has been modified with a spring that forces the pilot to constantly exert pressure, even in level flight. This assists with smooth formation flying.

The M61A2 20 mm Gatling gun that is found in the nose of the Super Hornet is being replaced with a smoke system.

The landing gear is being altered to let the pilots fly with gear extended at faster-than-usual air speeds of up to 300 knots and with more G loading.

An inverted fuel system is being added so that the jets can fly upside-down for longer periods than stock Super Hornets

The aircraft's avionics software is being modified to customize the information shown to the pilot on the cockpit displays.

Since the team often takes VIPs and Media up for rides, the classified information found on the cockpit displays is also being removed.

Navigation equipment on the aircraft is being modified since the team spends much of their time flying to and from civilian airports.

## THE SKIPPER'S CORNER

Happy New Year from the FIST OF THE FLEET! Hope this finds everyone healthy and safe as we embark on another year, happy to have the chaos of 2020 in the rearview mirror.

On that note, COVID vaccinations have begun for the squadron. The Navy has made the vaccine optional, and unfortunately the take rate hasn't been what we hoped - with only about 70 Sailor's opting for the vaccine thus far. As someone who received the first shot (of two), no side effects to report other than a sore arm for one day.

The squadron is currently in Fallon, NV executing a ULT A/A detachment. The flying here is just as I remember – world class. The squadron continues to complete syllabus flight events – making us one of the most qualified squadrons on the flight line. Couldn't be more proud of this team, from the ready room, to maintenance, to our admin support.

The squadron is scheduled for a boat detachment this spring. It will be the first time we've seen the carrier since our fly-off from deployment one year ago. As we look forward to calling the ball again, our focus will also shift towards preparing for MPA, a large maintenance inspection conducted by the Wing.

Keep healthy and safe. Wishing everyone a wonderful and blessed start to this New Year.

Talk to you soon.

Cheers!

V/R,

CDR Jake "SMiR" Rose



## FROM THE COCKPIT

By: LT Chris "Meat" Honeycutt

Week one of our Fallon detachment is coming to a close with lots of excellent training and comradery already in the books. As a JO who checked in to VFA-25 after the squadron completed Air Wing Fallon, this is my first experience operating in the FRTC and interacting with N7 (TOPGUN) and N5 (STRIKE). I understand now why people say the best flying in the world occurs here. It is awesome launching right into the airspace and typically having gas to execute an alternate mission post the KIO. As a squadron, we are making great progress on our qualifications. I am working through SFWT Level IV and CDR Rose, CDR Hansen and LCDR Farkas are all getting close to completing their SFWT Level IV Instructor qualifications. As we take a brief pause to enjoy a fun weekend skiing in Lake Tahoe before hitting it hard again next week, we wish clear skies and tailwinds to LCDR Nicholas "Gherkin" Len who has departed the pattern to become a father and rejoin civilization. Congratulations on an outstanding tour with the Fisties and best wishes! As always, Damn Proud to be a Fist!



LCDR Nicholas "Gherkin" Len Last Flight

## 2020 HARRY JONES AWARD WINNER



LT Perkins hails from Georgetown, Texas. Growing up in the General Aviation world and competing in the International Aerobatics Club, LT Perkins aspired from a young age to fly jets in the U.S. Navy. After graduating from Texas A&M University and earning his Wings of Gold, LT Perkins checked in to VFA-122 in Lemoore, CA for his FRS syllabus. After graduating with honors, he was patched to VFA-25 right at the start of work ups for the 2019-2020 world cruise. LT Perkins completed his SFWT Level 3 and 4 syllabus while on deployment while also earning his LSO Wing qualification. LT Perkins has follow on orders back to VFA-122 as an FRS Instructor where he will continue to train the next generation of F/A-18 strike fighter pilots.

## FROM THE HANGER DECK

Greetings Fist of the Fleet!

My name is Senior Chief Jeremy Moncier. I've been onboard with VFA-25 since August 2018. My Navy career began back in 1998 in a small town in West Tennessee. Since then I have bounced around the fleet working Tomcats in Point Mugu, Prowlers/Growlers in Whidbey Island, recruiting in Tampa FL, and a school house tour in Pensacola. During that stretch I completed nine deployments to the Mediterranean, Persian Gulf, PACOM, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

But enough about the past. This article is about the present, and that is here at the Fist of the Fleet. Being my first tour in Lemoore, I was initially apprehensive about another new duty station. Furthermore, I was cast into a new aviation community and given the job of Pit Boss coming in the door. The transition was challenging and I'm sure I made my share of mistakes, but what I found here in the Fist was a tight-knit family of motivated Sailors ready to meet the mission and travel abroad to execute with precise efficiency.

After serving in Maintenance during our 2019 deployment onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, I was sure that my time in the Navy was drawing to a close. I was over 20 years and my motivation was beginning to wane. Little did I know, that the greatest and most rewarding challenge was still on the horizon. That challenge came in assuming the job as the Command Senior Enlisted Leader. Although the assignment as the CSEL was meant to be a temporary fill, COVID-19 had other plans. Instead the Navy halted transfers, which resulted in a replacement CMC being delayed for about 10 months. This unique situation allowed me to grow into the job and discover a new calling. As a result, I am reinvigorated and feel as though a new chapter has just begun. I am thankful to Skipper Rose for the opportunity to serve in this capacity and as always, damn proud to be a Fist!



### Have you paid your 2021 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 have access to the Directory

Become a Voting Member!

Visit the Base Exchange at

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

## ***IN MEMORIAM***

Steve "Spider" Webb

Captain USN (Ret) Born 16 February 1943. Died 30 November 2020 in Carmel, IN 46033. Steve passed away peacefully Steve was XO/CO of VA-25, and the first CO of VFA-25. Steve was a Life Member of FOFA, as well as a member of the A-7 Association. Steve is survived by his wife Janet.



CO Webb taken at his outgoing Fist Change of Command with six consecutive COs of VA and VFA-25 (left to right; Spider, Spider, Noodles, Rat, Biter, Bear).



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

The financial health of the Association is still on solid ground. As of 31 December 2020, the Association has a balance of \$16,005.76 in savings and \$6,709.03 in checking with the Navy Federal Credit Union for a total of \$22,714.79. 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 months of 2020 with annual members Gunner Mills, Craig Bechtel, Steve Anderson, Randal Burrington, Mark Greer, Kevin FitzGerald, Alan Kleier, and Guy Vereb paying their annual membership. New Life Members are Stuart Bugg, Steven Helmer and Anthony Kiggins

During the twelve months of 2020 the educational committee received only two requests for Educational Grants from the squadron. The Association paid Education Grants totaling \$287.41 to two different squadron personnel. The Association also paid the 2019 Ltjg Harry Jones Award to Lt. Gerald Anderson for \$500.00, and \$500.00 to the 2019 Sailor of the Year AZ1 (AW) Tyler L. Newell. These awards also include Life Membership in the Association. The Association is awaiting the names for the 2020 SOY and the 2020 Ltjg Harry Jones awardee.

I'm happy to report that the Association received restricted donations of \$1000.00 and \$200.00 ear marked for the educational fund from members of the Association.

Respectfully Submitted  
Chuck "Pooh" Webster

## DID YOU KNOW: NAVY, MILITARY AND OTHER INFORMATION

### First Female Nuclear Carrier CO Will Command USS Abraham Lincoln

By: Gidget Fuentes USNI December 23, 2020

Capt. Amy Bauernschmidt, a veteran pilot, will take the helm of the Nimitz-class USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72), becoming the first woman to command an aircraft carrier. Bauernschmidt will take command of *Lincoln* this summer after she completes nuclear power, aviation and leadership training the Navy requires of officers assigned to command its 11-ship fleet of aircraft carriers, according to the service.

“I am incredibly honored and humbled to be selected,” Bauernschmidt said in a Navy news release. “I love leading sailors and I take that responsibility extremely seriously.” Bauernschmidt, a 1994 U.S. Naval Academy graduate, was the first woman selected by the major command screening board, *Task and Purpose* reported Dec. 7. She had already marked another CVN first for female officers, according to the Navy: She was the first woman to serve as executive officer during her September 2016 to January 2019 tour aboard *Lincoln*. She’s most recently commanded the amphibious warship USS *San Diego* (LPD-22). She left the ship in October.



Bauernschmidt’s 1994 USNA graduating class was the first whose women were allowed to serve aboard combatant ships and aircraft. A native of Milwaukee, WI., she earned her naval aviator wings in 1996, according to her biography. She has tallied more than 3,000 flight hours in naval aircraft. Assigned to the “Wolfpack” of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light (HSL) 45, an SH-60 squadron at North Island Naval Air Station, Calif., she deployed with the destroyer USS *John Young* (DD-973) and supported maritime interdiction operations in the northern Arabian Gulf. She served as an instructor pilot and quality assurance officer with the “Seahawks” of HSL-41, a Fleet Replacement Squadron based at North Island.

In other squadron tours, she deployed aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Kitty Hawk* (CV-63) while serving with the “Warlords” of HSL-51 in Atsugi, Japan. She served as the executive officer with the “Spartans” of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron 70 including a deployment aboard USS *George H. W. Bush* (CVN-77) in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, before taking command of the squadron June 2011. During those assignments, HSM-70 received the 2011 Admiral Jimmy Thach and Captain Arnold J. Isbell awards for tactical innovation and excellence and the 2012 Battle “E” Efficiency award.

Other assignments included aide-de-camp to Commander, Carrier Strike Group 7, deployed aboard USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN-74); action officer executive assistant to the Director, Joint Staff/J6 at the Pentagon; and senior military advisor to the Office of Global Women’s Issues for the U.S. State Department. Earlier in 2020 *Lincoln* returned home after an extended deployment following a 2019 homeport change and operations in four geographic regions: U.S. 6th Fleet, U.S. 5th Fleet, U.S. 7th Fleet and U.S. 3rd Fleet.



## GREEN TAILS OVER 'NAM: EPILOGUE: LOSSES AND LESSONS

On August 16<sup>th</sup> 1943 the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force launched two deep penetration raids in Germany striking targets in Regensburg and Schweinfurt. Of the 357 aircraft involved 60 were shot down: a loss rate of 17%. In October the 8<sup>th</sup> tried again as 291 aircraft headed for Schweinfurt losing a total of 77 aircraft: 26% of the force deployed. The lesson was clearly rammed home: the unescorted bombers were incapable of defending themselves in the deep raids against Luftwaffe pilots who in many instances were able to land, refuel and rearm for multiple sorties. Once this problem was solved with the installation of 2-108 gal drop tanks on the P-47 and P-51 fighters the bomber formations could range with impunity over Germany.



During the Korean War of 532 B-29s deployed to the theater of operations 116 were lost to all causes: an attrition rate of 22%. Once again the bombers fell victim to Air Force over-confidence.

However, in the 1960's advances in technology; specifically electronic counter measures (ECM) imbued the Strategic Air Command with a sense that finally tactics and technology would mesh to provide secure mission parameters for the B-52 wings. For most of the Vietnam War SAC had been bombing the countryside of Vietnam and neighboring Laos and Cambodia during Operation Arc Light. From 1965 to 1973, B-52Fs provided battlefield air interdiction, including strikes at enemy bases, supply routes and behind-the-lines troop concentrations, as well as

occasionally providing close air support directly to ground combat operations. During this entire campaign only one B-52 was lost. Rarely were SAMs or enemy aircraft encountered as these were primarily concerned with defending the approaches to Hanoi and the industrial centers of North Vietnam, it's ports and its petroleum, oil and lubrication production and supply facilities. When President Richard Nixon gave the orders for Linebacker II every officer and man, pilot and technician was eager for the chance to go "downtown" and show what they could accomplish using SAC tactics. During the run in to target the B-52s flew in three-ship formations with the ECM of each aircraft over-lapping the other two. However, when the Stratofortresses turned off their target runs to start the homeward leg of their mission the ECMs were directed away from enemy radars and the losses began to mount. You can run the numbers anyway you like, and SAC certainly did. They preferred a loss-to-sortie ratio of 24 lost/damaged aircraft to 795 missions for a 3% loss rate. But those 24 aircraft set against a total deployed force of 207 represents the true loss rate of 12%. Of the B-52s deployed the "G" suffered the heaviest as they did not have the most up-to-date ECM equipment installed. Attrition can also be attributed to SAC for failing to alter *any* of the flight paths the first four nights. And, there were simply not enough "Wild Weasel" and "Iron Hand" aircraft available to swamp the air defense network. The North Vietnamese could have quoted Wellington: "They came in the same old way, and we saw them off in the same old way." After the fourth night SAC moved its targets back to the nether regions of North Vietnam where the threat incidents were lower. Tactics had failed and technology had not been adequately employed.



To this very day the argument continues on exactly what air power can achieve. As a strategic weapon it can reduce an enemies' production and storage capacities. As a tactical weapon it has a remarkable influence on the battlefield when striking command and control and transportation; and the close air support mission is one of its finest capabilities. As a *coercive tool*, as in Linebacker II, it can be used to demonstrate one's willingness to engage an enemy directly, wherever he gathers and whatever he gathers together, in order to bring him to terms without the vast effusion of blood required by war. But it is, and always will be a *tool*, and not an answer. Weapons and technology must be coupled with clear strategic and tactical goal-planning, adequate deployment of forces, sound leadership and adaptability to changing conditions in the field. Lessons from the past must be remembered always, or relearned at the cost of many lives whether you are a proponent of air power or not. Air power *must* be coupled with armor, artillery, and the ubiquitous infantry soldier in an "all-arms" effort, or *total victory* can never be achieved leaving you with a bad feeling in the pit of your stomach, and a deep sense of foreboding for the future.

NB: The "all-arms" concept pre-dates the First World War. But it was the invention of the airplane and the tank which would change the nature of war forever. In 1939 Germany began to deploy *mechanized infantry* to assist with its armored divisions. And until General "Stormin'" Norman Schwarzkopf led Operation Desert Storm, more commonly referred to as the First Gulf War, the greatest practitioner of the "all-arms" concept was a man named "The Desert Fox": Generalleutnant Erwin Rommel, commander of the legendary *Afrika Korps*.

From the official squadron command records for 1972 submitted to the Chief of Naval Operations:

We arrived in Subic Bay Republic of the Philippines on 1 December. Spending only four days in port, we departed for five days of "build up" operations off the Philippines, then were off for our first taste of combat for the cruise. Our first missions were combat support in South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

During this time frame, American Air Power was restricted to below 20° North Latitude. The peace talks were in session but no progress was being made, and on 17 December RANGER reported for duty on Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin off North Vietnam. The "Word" wasn't long in coming, That same night we received the news; back to Hanoi and Haiphong, and the "twelve day war" commenced. We flew night "Iron Hand" missions in support of the B-52's bombing Hanoi and Haiphong; a real introduction to combat for the fourteen "nugget" aviators in the squadron. The next twelve days involved air wing strikes, day and night mining of the harbors and water ways, "Iron Hand" missions, and search and patrol for several enemy missile launching patrol boats known to be in the waters around North Vietnam.



On the 3rd of January we departed the line and headed for Subic Bay for eight days of R & R.



References: "The Eleven Days of Christmas" by Marshall L Michael III, Encounter Books 2002; various wikipedia sites regarding Linebacker II, SAC, the B-52 Stratofortress and Air Defense weapons of North Vietnam