



Fist of the Fleet Association

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

NEWSLETTER

Apr 2022

Preserving the Past Providing for Today
Promoting the Future

SPRING EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze



Hitler came the closest . . . by using the air

Recurring attempts to conquer the world bloody the pages of history. Let us tidbit the tale: When the ancient far world landed the middle ocean, the Mediterranean, conquest continued with the Carthaginians and Romans. With the discovery that the earth is round, attempts at world conquest grew in intensity on a widening scale: Philip II, Louis XIV, Napoleon, William of Hohenzollern! Until World War I, battles were confined to the earth's surface. Then came the dawn rehearsal, in Spain, for World War II,



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By: "TREVOR NEVITT DUPUY Col. U.S. Army, Ret.

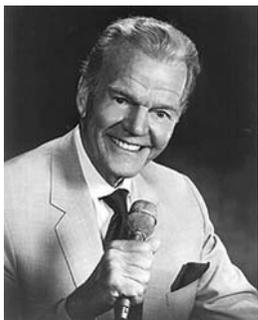
with aviation the dominant factor. "It was the handwriting, set on the wall of Bababara's Palace, but upon the universal die for all mankind to read." This, the first global war, is the birth pain of the human race entering its greatest era, the Air Age. To hasten victory, our entire aviation industry continues to perform miracles of warplane production, but the opportunity will remain after this war, and no more remain discover in it. To that end the Vultee Airline, because the Air Age has just begun.

types, and also the carriers Hornet, Yorktown and Enterprise. I also have an affinity for the B-25. The P-51? Meh. I was 15 when I decided to join the Navy and get on a carrier anyway I could. But I have always been drawn to those classic armor campaigns of North Africa. Even in the 90's when I was doing a deep dive into the great age of sail, 1600-1850, I was building tank models. Heinz Guderian is not the "father of armored warfare". He read works by British and French authors on the subject, studied the use of armor in the late stages of WWI and developed the theory of "all arms" combat. He is the *father of modern warfare*. During both *Desert Storm* and *Iraqi Freedom* the Iraqis resorted to *positional warfare* while the coalition used all the forces at their disposal to wage a highly violent and mobile campaign. Only the technology has changed, the "all arms" concept is just as relevant today as when first postulated in his seminal work of 1937 *Achtung - Panzer!* I've just completed reading the English translation of this book and have come away with a new appreciation of WWI. But my journey began with the 1943 Vultee Aircraft ad at upper left. Thus, as Paul Harvey was so fond of saying at the close of his noon radio segment: "Now you know.... the rest of the story."

~Ricochet~

"The years don't always add wisdom, but they do add perspective." – Paul Harvey

Sept 4 1918 - Feb 28 2009



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 was a beautiful Easter weekend in SoCal and snow came to the Utah ski resorts for a nice finish to a mediocre ski season; but things are quite different in Ukraine. But on a more pleasant note, we have received word that the Naval Aviation Museum is close to having our Legacy Plaques ready for posting to the Museum's wall. As soon as we have more detailed information from the Museum, we'll schedule a recognition event at the Museum and send out word to all members and families of those that we honored with a Legacy Plaque. Hopefully, any future COVID variant will not interfere with our celebration.

Finally, I want to thank Jerry Fritze for all the time, effort and work that he's done to produce our newsletter over the years. Jerry will be retiring from this post in the coming year and we need to start the search for a new author/publisher to carry on this important role in FOFA. Many of you are retired and have time and squadron knowledge that would be valuable in putting together a great newsletter each quarter to keep your fellow squadron mates informed about the squadron's current activities, our history and our upcoming events. Please give consideration to helping us keep these memories alive and to recognize those that carry on the Fist tradition. We're fortunate to have served our country and developed such close friendships that have endured the test of time.

Best wishes to all of you,

John "Chalks" Chalker



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Blue Angels Tour Dates

MAY 1 Vero Beach, FL	14 /15 Ellsworth AFB SD
25/27 USNA MD	28/29 Jones Beach, NY
JUN 4/5 Chippewa Valley Eau Claire, WI	11/12 Spirit of St. Louis Chesterfield, MO
18 /19 Midsouth Air Show Millington, TN	
JUL 2/3 National Cherry Festival Air Show Traverse City, MI	
9 Pensacola Beach FL	16/17 Thunder Over Michigan Air Show Ypsilanti
23/24 Milwaukee Air and Water Show MI	30/31 Dayton Air Show OH

SKIPPERS CORNER

Greetings!

I hope things are as exciting for you all as they are for VFA-25! We now have four Block III's in our possession and are slowly getting them ready for combat. The Fists go "hook down" for the first time in over two years at the end of April. As the jets come off the ship, they'll go directly to Miramar for two weeks of Jaded Thunder. During the exercise, we'll finally transition back to some real-world training. Working out of four different ranges with numerous types of air-to-surface weapons, we'll build our experience back up in the Close Air Support mission set. Although it will involve night flying (yuck), I am extremely excited for the squadron to receive relevant training while become more comfortable in our new aircraft.

After Jaded Thunder, we'll have all of our maintenance programs inspected by the wing to receive feedback on our compliance and prepare us for the Aviation Maintenance Inspection in August. Our team has been working tirelessly to ensure everything is lying flat. I look forward to seeing positive results from all their efforts. Our maintenance professionals are nothing short of amazing!

We are still planning to travel to Alaska in June to participate in the Air Force's Red Flag exercise, and a potential Key West detachment is on the horizon in July. While the schedule is slammed, I believe it is an excellent way for us to transition out of maintenance phase and into more normal operations. Hopefully, with all our travels, we'll have a bit of fun while doing it!

Best wishes to you all!

Sincerely,

CDR Hansen



FROM THE COCKPIT BY: LT CAM SCHNEIDER

In April we had the opportunity to work with our sister squadron, the Black Knights of VFA-154, providing striker support for a US Army Ranger battalion out in the Fort Hunter-Liggett range (the sunsets over the Central Coast were a plus). This was my first exposure employing the F/A-18 in support of another branch as well as having actual assets on the ground instead of the simulated "blue-force" that we practiced with at the FRS. It was invaluable training to get to integrate with our ground forces that we may be called upon to support in combat one day.

This training exercise was also my first experience executing close air support / armed overwatch with the Block III Super Hornet. The larger display in the cockpit and ability to manipulate the location of certain formats was critical to increasing overall situational awareness as well as decreasing the time it took to receive ground tasking and getting (simulated) bombs on target, on time.

The experience gained from this evolution provided all of VFA-25 with added proficiency as we head down to Miramar to participate in Jaded Thunder, a large force Air-Surface exercise. We are all looking forward to working with our brothers and sisters in other branches and well as international partners. This will be the first time the Block III Super Hornet participates in a large-scale event such as this and we are all excited to show what this incredible jet brings to the fight!

FROM THE HANGER DECK

Hello, Fist of the Fleet Association! My name is AD2 (AW/SW) James “Miller-Time” Miller, originally from York, Pennsylvania. I joined the Navy in March of 2011 because I wanted to join the police force after my service. 11 years later those aspirations have left and I look forward to fulfilling a full 20 year or more career in the Navy. My previous tours were onboard USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, HSC-84, and VFA-122. I’ve been with the Fist of the Fleet since August of 2018. Currently, I am serving as Power Plants Day Check supervisor, leading and mentoring five outstanding Mechs. Being with VFA-25 gave me a lot of perspective from the squadron side of carrier operations. I was a “Blue Shirt” and “Tractor King” on my first ship and always wanted to move on to bigger and better things. My success isn’t achieved alone so huge shout out to my mentors AD1 Williams, AD1 Fortier, and ADC Cassette. Damn proud to be a Fist!



AEAN Perisic and AMAN Lopez removing panels.



CDR Hansen and YNC Ethridge at YNC’s retirement ceremony.

Have you paid your 2022 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

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Visit the Base Exchange at

www.fistofthefleet.org



AD2 Vandermeer being reenlisted by CDR Hansen



AT1 Curtis about to be reenlisted by CWO3 Toth.



Crafting the Newsletter

So, exactly what are the minimum requirements for the Newsletter? In accordance with the Fist of the Fleet Associations' established by-laws a "newsletter" is to be produced twice a year and it is mandatory that both include the Financial Report. Beyond that, additional information *may include*, and is not limited to: a report from a Board Member, usually the President, a report on the activity associated with the Educational Grant Fund, reunion information (upcoming or previous), member status (arrivals/departures) and any other information that may be deemed noteworthy to the membership. That's it. According to this format our newsletter, then, is reduced to the exact same crap as every other reunion organization on the planet.

Bob Kison, in composing our original Newsletter, (Remember the B&W paper issues?) tried to have some kind of input, any kind of input from the active duty squadron and, as I didn't have access to previous newsletters I don't know what success he may have had. However I told him, promised him, in fact, that "*I can do a Newsletter.*" Having read, like many of you, other military- or historic-related newsletters, periodicals, magazines and so forth over the years I had already and *previously* determined that if an opportunity like this ever came my way I would do something entirely different. If you look at the Newsletter Mission Statement on the page one banner under the date you will see that all other publications out there are missing one or two arms of that trifecta. That Mission Statement is the only thing I ever brought to the attention of the Board for approval.

So, now I had a mission. What I did, I did on my own. I didn't "ask permission" from any one for what I had planned, I just went through my own switchology and rolled in hot. I called CDR "Gimp" Westendorff and explained what I wanted. He agreed and so over several, really many, months I would tweak the CO's and PAO's to get *exactly* what I wanted; the Hanger Deck and Cockpit articles in addition to the Skippers', and lots of pics. It did take a while, before all that fell in line. Next, I got then-president Gary "Dome" Kerans to agree with posting the thing on our website and let me bust it out to four quarterly issues, then added the Holiday and Pictorial issues after that.

So, how much work does the editor actually have to do? NOT MUCH! If you consider that other people are submitting the articles then the "editor" is actually a content manager and all you do is assemble and arrange the thing. There really isn't anything else unless you actually want to. And, I wanted, in fact needed to. *I needed an alternative creative outlet* at the time to save me from the tedium and routine of my job; a job that had ceased to be fun, but one impossible to leave. As I dug into the archives I realized there was a tremendous story to be told, and one that is still evolving. However, all that Page One, "Did You Know..." and Fistory stuff is not, and never has been, required in our Newsletter. The honest and brutal truth is, and I mean no disrespect, "*I did it for myself first.*" And in crafting Fistory stories I proceeded from the viewpoint that if I didn't know something, neither did anybody else. Therein lies the kernel for all the back-story articles I did. If all this comes off as more than a bit selfish I can admit to that; but for 12 years I busted my ass to give you the very best I had to offer.

Why the Blue Angels? I did that to honor my first Division Officer Gregory "Rugdancer" Wooldridge, who was Blues CO '90-'92 and then again in '96. He and Gregory McWherter are the only officers with multiple tricks at the helm.

I have showed my willingness to be of assistance to the next Newsletter Editor as a content advisor/creative assistant, and provide a flash drive with all my picture and data files. I only had one hard and fast rule: *Never use the same picture, twice.*" I understand that has only fallen by the wayside on two or three occasions. Two, four, six issues? Your call, no one else's. If you remove a Page One "Editorial Opinion" and drop the Fistory and Did You Know-type stuff you will be left with a five- to six-page Newsletter composed of just the essentials and lots of pics. You notify the president, CO and PAO about two weeks before your publish date, send a reminder the week of, and then it takes a couple of hours on a Saturday to assemble it. You send it to the pres and one other to *PROOFREAD* (currently I use Dome), make the required corrections and then sent it back to be posted. Done. Pretty simple, isn't it?

Breaking Down the Newsletter Mission Statement

Preserving the Past: Using the Newsletter as a forum for the discovery, relation and discussion of past events in U.S. and world naval history.

Providing for Today: A reciprocal process in part accomplished by the Educational Grants fund, and by using the Newsletter as a vehicle to share recognition of current notable achievements of the squadron, her personnel, and her veterans.

Promoting the Future: Accomplished by using the Newsletter as a platform for notification of the status of on-going projects, the activities of those who work for the benefit of the Association to increase membership (including enlisted personnel) and maintain our financial solvency, and also to discuss trends in the navies of the world, and United State Naval Aviation in particular.

The three-point Newsletter Statement runs parallel to that of the five-point Association 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.

FISTORY THE HORNET'S STING: IRAQI FREEDOM, TARGET FOR TONIGHT PART ONE

Target for Tonight, Part One by: G. Fritze with assistance from CDR K. Hansen

In the following account only the weather data and threat assessments are factual. Certain procedures are condensed from NATOPS A1-F18AC-NFM-0001 AUG 06 Changed 15 JUN 07

03078 2015 Zulu Persian Gulf

Sitrep: USS Abraham Lincoln CVN-72 Coordinates: 27.38.40 N 50.38.54 E Course: NNE Speed: 20kts Winds SE: 14kts Sea State: Calm Conditions: Fair, Full Moon set 5:51pm Sunset 6:57pm local (Doha, Qatar)

When the alarm clock went off and you grabbed it, it read 5:15 pm. Well, 5 hours of sleep is better than nothing. You rolled out of your bunk as your roommate was still snoring and hit the shower. When you came out a few minutes later he was sitting up. "You should get something to eat." "Yeah, maybe." "No, really. Go eat". You finished getting dressed and stepped out in to the passage. Other pilots and officers were making their own way to their various wardrooms or duty stations. But the thought of food was like a punch in the gut. You headed down and aft and reached Hanger Bay 3, there to be greeted by the same sights as every other day, or night. Aircraft not assigned to strikes, or under scheduled maintenance chained down and being worked on by the various squadrons' personnel. And of course there were one or two "Hanger Queens" that, no matter what has been changed swapped or fixed, just don't seem to be able to play well with others. So you head back up to the O-2 level and your own wardroom. But you decide to pass it by and make for the Ready Room instead where you know there'll be coffee waiting. Once there you find a seat and start to slam it down hot and black. Reassured by the warm feeling it brings you walk over and pick up a packet with your name and MODEX 404 written on it. You opened it when you got back to your seat and found the hardcopy and data card with the GPS co-ordinates for waypoints, target designations, and copy with call signs for tankers, AWACS and J-STARS, your position as the number four aircraft in the first launch and weapons load outs.



When you graduated and got your wings your parents were there. To this day you aren't sure what your father really feels. He flew F-8's off the *Bon Homme Richard* over 'Nam in '69. He walked up to you and just jabbed his finger into your wings; and he didn't even blink when he said "Someday, when the shit hits the fan, you'll know what it means to be a Naval Aviator", and all you could say was "Yes, Sir". He retired a Commander but never talked about his experiences and that always concerned you. But it's too late to worry about that now so you just grab another refill, sit down to wait and try to relax for a bit..

03078 2115 Zulu Briefing

The Ready Room is crowded even though only two flights of four are going

out tonight for some of the first strikes. Twenty-two officers can fill a room pretty quickly and tonight they are all here. Many of them will be flying tomorrow night in the big strikes you've heard about. But tonight is something different. Then the briefing began: "A persistent low pressure area situated over the western deserts will continue to generate light winds from the southeast at 10-15 kts through all flight levels. Weather in the planned routes and target areas are expected to be clear and fair. Normal light turbulence will be encountered at the coastal interface to 20000ft, with clean air above, However the low pressure system will generate more moderate winds and turbulence over the deserts west of the projected flight paths from 20 to 30000ft. This system is also responsible for our light offshore breezes from the south-southeast to 15kts. These conditions are expected to persist until approximately 0400 when the typical morning cloud-cover over the coasts and river valleys begin, resulting in partly cloudy skies from 5000 to 15000ft to about 1000 hours when it is expected to burn off."



The Threat Assessment was a little more interesting: "It is estimated that over 200 SAM systems are still operational, with many being the older SA-2s, -3s and -6s, along with over 2,000 MANPADS and large numbers of AAA guns. The majority of the hardware is centered in the Baghdad area. Air Force stealth elements and TLAMs will precede our strikes to eliminate command, control, radar and communications facilities and capabilities. Additionally the Iraqi Air Force still has approximately 130 attack aircraft and 180 fighters. Of these, only 90-100 are deemed to be operational. We do not expect any interference from the IAF. But, just because ground forces may not be able to track us doesn't mean they aren't going to try to shoot at us." This brought a few chuckles from some of pilots, but most were busy taking mental notes. Then the screen lit up with a map of the Gulf States and the route overlay.



"This will apply to both flights. After launch, "Hobo"* flight at about 2045, form up angels 20, establish and maintain right echelon throughout, and proceed on a heading of 310 at 470kts to Al Amarah where we pick up the KC-135 "Skipjack". After refuel we run back on 310 to a point 50 miles beyond Baghdad where we will execute a 180 degree turn to port to a heading of 140 and establish a one mile separation between aircraft. This is the initial point. If we are cleared in from there then we will push to 570kts to reduce our TOT** and strike our targets for tonight. "Hobo", the Republican Guards facilities on the north side of Saddam International Airport, "India" flight, departing 2100, same-same south side of the airport. All weapons GPS coordinates have been assigned and preloaded to the individual aircraft. After bomb release we will close up at 470kts and head for our second gas can "Bluefin" at Al Kut. And, after that, we come back to the boat. Stay out of afterburners unless dictated by *in extremis* situations. Should the need arise there will be an S-3B contingency tanker "Yellowtail" some 20 miles to the southwest of the boat." "So, pretty much a shoot and scoot?" "Near enough. Not long after quarters are called the boat will turn back down the gulf to get the wind across the deck. Keep comms to a minimum and maintain threat awareness. Questions?"



So then it's off to the PR shack where the strike pilots pull gear and get dressed: Flight Suit, G-Suit, Survival harness and equipment. You add a couple of pens and a small notebook, wristwatch and an emergency pen light. Finally you grab your helmet and head back over to the Ready Room. For a few minutes, then, there were conversations about everyday items and concerns. No one posed any questions or concerns about the mission profile. It was all so terribly simple. Suddenly the 1MC came to life: "*Flight Quarters, Flight Quarters. All Hands, Now Flight Quarters. The Smoking Lamp is OUT throughout the ship*". And with that you felt the deck tilt as she began her turn to starboard to bring the wind back down the deck. "People, this is what we train for. Everybody does their job, everybody comes back. Hobo flight: Saddle up."



Historical Weather Data: <https://www.wunderground.com/history>

Threat Assessment: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suppression_of_Enemy_Air_Defenses

**"Hobo" was the Call Sign of the WWII legacy squadron VT-17.

**TOT = Time Over Target