



# Fist of the Fleet Association

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

## NEWSLETTER

Dec 2022

Preserving the Past Providing for Today  
Promoting the Future

### HOLIDAY EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

Time to close out this series of Newsletters after this, the 68<sup>th</sup> edition. First, I would like to share the following video. It is, in my estimation, the most impactful presentation of one of the most socially conscious set of lyrics ever written:

URL: <https://youtu.be/oWJ7p7O0Z2M> It is, I believe, why veterans groups such as FOFA exist. *We are **not** a former pilots "private party club"!* What is a 501(c)(19)? URL: <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/other-non-profits/veterans-organizations>

We do strive to adhere to the two mission statements presented above and below on this page, but the future of the Association is no longer in our hands; it must now shortly pass to the officers and enlisted of the Hornet community. The way forward is never easy, but we have established a solid and stable foundation for all future endeavors. "Honor, Courage, Commitment" are not just words "for the moment". For those who swear the oath it follows us every day of our lives; so let those words guide us all as we move forward.

Page 5 discusses the various rigs of the class of sailing ships known as the schooner. It is the lead-in to Page 6 that I wrote last year, which is a *metaphorical* look at how I view my life in its entirety. The only true statement is that I have been underway in the Pacific, Atlantic and Caribbean, as well as the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, but that's another story.

Lastly, I would like to leave you with the following:

If you have never been on deck at night and have witnessed a ramp-strike, you don't know what real fear is.

If you have never been at flight quarters for so long and with no end in sight, that the galley is forced to send you a late-day boxed meal, you truly don't know what a long day is.

If, on your last day at sea, you haven't walked in to your shop, crawled up on a frame and went to sleep in your flight deck gear, and when you woke up not only is the ship docked, but its been *off-loaded*, you don't understand what exhaustion beyond the limits of your physical and emotional endurance really is.

So, unless you've done these things you have every right to walk in the path we have laid for you, but you can never walk in *my* boots.

It has been my great pleasure to be the editor and content manager of this Newsletter the past twelve and a half years, and my reward has been in the achievement of each edition. My professional life was as a sales representative in the field of information technology, but my life-long passion has been as a writer. I am profoundly grateful that you have allowed me the opportunity to share that talent with you. I am now, have always been and will remain, most respectfully and sincerely:

Aviation Electricians' Mate, Petty Officer Third Class  
Gerard E. "Ricochet Rabbit" Fritze  
United State Navy Mar 74 - Mar 80  
VA-25, USS Ranger CVA/CV-61 Apr 75 - Jun 78

*AND I AM The Fist of the Fleet!*

Later Kids, See ya in Pensacola!



[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

Elections. Yep, it may be the holiday season but even FOFA has to have elections to ensure that we get new, young blood to sustain the organization. Over the past six years since I've been President, we've been pretty lax about it with COVID and canceled reunions upsetting everyone's schedule. But this month we're coming up on the elections for President and Secretary, offices held by myself and Nick Johnson, and we are term limited. Next year, the other four positions are open for election as well. All of the officers and board members are over 70 and it's time to start passing the torch to the next generation of Fist alumni.

Since we're late getting started on this year's election cycle, the FOFA Board of Directors unanimously voted on December 20th to delay the elections until the first quarter of 2023 so we may have some younger/newer members step forward and run for office. If we don't have some volunteers step forward, we have to take that as a signal that there's no interest in sustaining this organization that has done so much to keep old friends together and vivid memories alive. We've hosted reunions, recognized fellow squadron mates for their heroic actions, and kept the rich history of this squadron alive as VFA-25 approaches its 80th anniversary.

The positions and their duties don't take-up much time. The Secretary, for example, just has to update the directory as new members join and old members 'head west'. It's all online. So over the next several weeks myself and other Board members will be reaching out to some of you and asking for your help in running FOFA. Of course, volunteers are welcome and draft movements are acceptable. If you've got a heartbeat and a computer, we want you!!

Meanwhile, we are working with the squadron on their plans for an 80th Anniversary celebration and later a probable reunion in November, 2023 in Pensacola, FL to coincide with the Blue Angels final airshow of the season.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

John 'Chalks' Chalker

President, FOFA



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United States Naval Academy "The Midshipmen" football player #94 DE Justin Reed who represented VFA-25 in the Army Navy game! If you didn't watch it was an entertaining contest based *entirely on the running game!* Very "Old School" football with Army winning in double OT.



## Blue Notes

Blue Angels Announces First Female Jet Pilot By: Heather Mongilio July 2022 USNI

Lt. Amanda Lee will be the first female demonstration pilot for the Blue Angels, the Navy announced. Lee, who goes by the call sign "Stalin," is among six officers that will join the Blue Angels for its 2023 show season. Lee is currently assigned to the "Gladiators" of Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 106, which is stationed at Naval Air Station Oceana. Lee enlisted in the Navy in 2007. She worked as an aviation electronics technician before participating in the seaman-to-admiral commissioning program and was commissioned in 2013. As a naval aviator, Lee participated in a 2019 all-female flyover honoring the first female Navy jet pilot Capt. Rosemary Mariner at her funeral. While Lee is the first female jet pilot to be accepted into the Blue Angels, she is not the squadron's first female pilot. That honor belongs to Marine Major Katie Cook, who joined the Blue Angels in 2015 and flew the squadron's KC-130, "Fat Albert" logistics aircraft.



## SKIPPERS CORNER

Happy Holidays former Fisties!

Team Fist has been quite busy since my last update in the Fall. In October we helped prepare CVW-17 for their upcoming deployment by providing Red Air presentations during COMPTUEX. While supporting COMPTUEX we were dual-tasked to take part in exercise Neptune Falcon participating in large force employment with our Air Force counterparts.

As soon as we wrapped-up NEPTUNE FALCON we packed-up and shipped out to Tyndall, AFB to participate in NWSEP and another Air Force exercise – Checkered Flag. They love their exercises. This time we focused mainly on Defensive Counter Air with our 5th gen platforms (F-22/F-35). We certainly learned a lot about how the Air Force operates and we are definitely better off for it. They have some eye-opening capabilities but believe me when I say, I'm glad I'm in the Navy.

We came back from Tyndall and started SFARP lectures and simulator events the following Monday. We took a brief tactical pause for Thanksgiving then shipped out again to NAS Fallon, NV for Air-to-Surface SFARP training. Nowadays they split SFARP in two. The Air-to-Surface portion being in Fallon and the Air-to-Air portion in Key West, FL. We are learning a ton from our Weapons School instructors and getting better every day in our preparation for deployment. We'll RTB to NAS Lemoore just in time to break for Christmas and New Year's.

That's all for now! Our people and aircraft are doing phenomenally and we're excited to get 400 into the paint shop so we can kick off 2023 with our 80th Anniversary paint scheme. Again, happy holidays and take care!

V/r,

CDR Mark "IROC" Tedrow



## FROM THE HANGER DECK

By: AO2 Middleton



Hello all, I am VFA-25's very own AO2 Middleton. I am originally from Meriwether County, Georgia. I partially grew up in Atlanta, Georgia and I have an immense amount of love for that city. I traveled a lot as a child due to majority of my close family members being in the Marine Corps and the Army. A few of my favorite places to visit as a child were San Antonio, Orlando, and Cancun. The River Walk there is very gorgeous. I spent many summer vacations in Orlando visiting Disney World and Universal Studios. I think my favorite vacation was Cancun due to the beautiful beaches and weather.

One factor in my life that led me to joining the Navy was college. I was enrolled at the University of West Georgia as a Business Marketing Major. As a young, bright-eyed student I felt as though college had so much to offer but I became unsure about my major. My first two years of college were amazing, with many lessons learned. I had an awesome group of friends I am in contact with still today that helped to guide me through life.

I became very unsure halfway through achieving my degree about what I really wanted for my life, so I looked towards joining the Navy due to all the good benefits. I can truly say that being enlisted in the Navy for almost 5 years has been a life-changing and eye-opening experience from beginning to my nearing end. I have met many wonderful people that encouraged me to keep going even when I didn't want to. I have traveled all over the world to see places I have never even heard of.

Life as an AO in the Navy can be very challenging at times, but we are taught to overcome and adapt. The brotherhood and sisterhood of the AOs are unmatched. We take care of each other like treat each other like family and I think that is important. Our job is very fast paced and requires a lot of movement, but it is also very rewarding.

I became interested in the field of sonography after I had a thyroidectomy and I am currently enrolled in Cypress College working towards a radiology technician certificate. The Navy has given me the chance to decide what I would like to do with my future and for that I am very thankful. I will never forget being a part of the Fist of the Fleet!

**Have you paid your 2023 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)**

## Pioneers and Pilots in The Blizzard of Oz

"I'm dreaming of a White Christmas" are the famous last words of both VFA-25 and The Donner Party, two groups whose December expeditions from Fallon, Nevada to Lake Tahoe, California began derailed in the desert and ended submerged in the snow.

In the Fall of 1846, The Donner Party was taking a "shortcut" from the main Oregon Trail via the California Trail, aiming for California's picturesque Central Valley. The Donner Party's choice to rough it in covered wagons on unmarked trail is baffling when a surer path to the Central Valley is available: join the Navy and request orders to Virginia Beach. The Donner Party had been traveling for months when they reached a section of the trail known to pioneers as the "Forty Mile Desert" and to pilots as the "Fallon Range Training Complex." The California Trails cuts thru the FRTC at the B-20 target area. In 1846, that section was of the trail was some of the most hazardous, notoriously littered with the remains of humans and animals who had died of thirst and exposure. Now, that desert is equally dangerous due to the number of bullets and bombs being fired on the nearby targets. If today's travelers crossing see a 2-seat F/A-18F overhead, they should quickly proceed to the safest place on the range: the bulls-eye of the targets. After reaching Fallon, NV and finding out the water there is undrinkable, The Donner Party decided to risk it across the Sierra Nevada in hopes of beating the winter snows. Chain laws were in effect, but one wagon decided not to bring them because "they were from snowy Connecticut" and "their ox had 4-hoof drive." Snow fell by the foot, men died by the dozen, and the starving survivors resorted to cannibalism to continue waiting for spring.

In December 2022, a collection of Fistles traced Donner's tracks out of Fallon for a weekend getaway at Lake Tahoe. They arrived well provisioned with the essential supplies: pizza, beer, eggs, and bacon. At 9 PM, snow fell. It did not stop. The clouds were Genghis Khan, and the flakes were his Horde. They inundated the defenses of Lake Tahoe with speed, quantity, and density the likes of which had never been seen before by this VFA-25 member, who even claims to be from Colorado. Out of necessity for protection from the icy winds and plummeting flakes, JOPA quickly convened Dude Soup, also known as the hot tub. On Saturday evening, an emergency all hands meeting was called at the house to discuss the snow and other things. However, Skipper and XO were nowhere to be found. Off premise, they were discussing important matters. So, a brave Uber driver from San Francisco risked his and their lives to deliver them thru the storm to the house. Upon arrival, the Uber became trapped in a snowbank. Luckily, 12 hard bodied war-fighters emerged from the safety of the house to push him out of the snow and down the slippery hill. He was never seen nor heard from again, and anyone sighting a Gray 2006 Kia Soul should contact Lake Tahoe Search and Rescue. VFA-25, now trapped together, ate, drank, and were merry. Sunday morning, snow had been falling for 48 hours, the power was out, the roads were waist deep, and Brawny was cooking bacon. The team was hoping to wait for plows before making their exodus, but Lake Tahoe Rental Properties advised them that check out was 10 AM, and that the maids were on the way. Quickly, they packed and attempted to drive into the blizzard, but a 4-wheel drive car from snowy Connecticut quickly got stuck. Effort unstuck the car, and the team returned to the house to thaw. As the prospects of making it back to work by Monday dwindled, the Hinges became ornery, anxious to get back to a fiefdom where they could execute line-of-sight tasking and other Hingey pastimes. Skipper and XO, men of action, could not wait any longer for the plows and proceeded on foot thru the drifts to seek escape. Fearing the blizzard had claimed them after several minutes, JOPA attempted to assume command. Finally, after many hours, a mighty plow emerged and split the snow like Moses parting the Red Sea, freeing VFA-25 from their icy chains.

The Donner Party traveled at 5 mph while VFA-25 prefers 500 mph, but both these pioneers and pilots had just one thing to say after the Blizzard of Oz: We're not in Kansas anymore! Merry Fistas!



A schooner is a type of sailing vessel defined by its rig: fore-and-aft rigged on all 2 or more masts and, for a 2 masted schooner, the foremast generally being shorter than the mainmast. A common variant, the top-sail schooner also has a square topsail on the foremast, to which may be added a topgallant. Differing definitions leave uncertain whether the addition of a fore course (The lowermost sail on the foremast of a square-rigged vessel; the foresail.) would make such a vessel a brigantine. Many schooners are gaff-rigged, but other examples include Bermuda rig and the staysail schooner.

The schooner rig was used in vessels with a wide range of purposes. On a fast hull, good ability to windward was useful for privateers, blockade runners, slave ships, smaller naval craft and opium clippers. Packet boats (built for the fast conveyance of passengers and goods) were often schooners. Fruit schooners were noted for their quick passages, taking their perishable cargoes on routes such as the Azores to Britain.

Some pilot boats adopted the rig. The fishing vessels that worked the Grand Banks of Newfoundland were

schooners, and held in high regard as an outstanding development of the type. In merchant uses, the ease of handling in confined waters and smaller crew requirements made schooners a common rig, especially in the 19th century. Some schooners worked on deep sea routes. In British home-waters, schooners usually had cargo-carrying hulls that were designed to take the ground in drying harbors (or, even, to unload dried out on an open beach). The last of these once-common craft had ceased trading by the middle of the 20th century. Some very large schooners with 5 or more masts were built in the USA from *circa* 1880-1920. They mostly carried bulk cargoes such as coal and timber. In yachting, schooners predominated in the early years of the America's Cup. In more recent times, schooners have been used as sail training ships.



It is unknown when the rig now termed "schooner" appeared, but there is good evidence of them from the early 17th century in paintings by Dutch marine artists. The name "schooner" first appeared in eastern North America in the early 1700s. The name may be related to a Scots language word meaning to skip over water, or to skip stones. The earliest known illustration of a schooner depicts a yacht owned by the burgomasters of Amsterdam, drawn by the Dutch artist Rool and dated 1600. Later examples show schooners in Amsterdam in 1638 and New Amsterdam in 1627. Paintings by Van de Velde (1633–1707) and an engraving by Jan Kip of the Thames at Lambeth, dated 1697, suggest that schooner rig was common in England and Holland by the end of the 17th century. The *Royal Transport* was an example of a large British-built schooner, launched in 1695 at Chatham.

The type was further developed in British North America starting around 1713. In the 1700's and 1800's in what is now New England and Atlantic Canada schooners became popular for coastal trade, requiring a smaller crew for their size compared to then traditional ocean crossing square rig ships, and being fast and versatile. Three-masted schooners were introduced around 1800. Schooners were popular on both sides of the Atlantic in the late 1800's and early 1900's. By 1910, 45 five-masted and 10 six-masted schooners had been built in Bath, Maine and other Penobscot Bay towns. The *Thomas W. Lawson* was the only seven-masted schooner built.

### Rig types

Various types of schooners are defined by their rig configuration. Most have a bowsprit although some were built without one for crew safety. The following varieties were built:

*Grand Banks fishing schooner*: includes a gaff topsail on the main mast and a fisherman's staysail. In the winter this would sail as a two-masted fishing schooner, without topmasts and their upper sails.

*Square topsail schooner*: includes square topsails. A version with raked masts and known for its great speed, called the Baltimore Clipper was popular in the early 1800s with two raked masts, gaff-rigged; two square sails; a staysail and two jibs.

*Four masted schooner*: this design spread the sail area over many smaller sails, at a time when sails were hoisted by hand. These were used for coastal trade on the Atlantic coast of North America, the West Indies, South America, and some trans-Atlantic voyages.

*Tern schooner*: a three masted schooner very popular between 1880 and 1920. *Wawona*, the largest ever built, sailed on the West Coast of the United States from 1897 to 1947.

Source: wikipedia

## Ebb Tides

G. Fritze May 27, 2021

I stood upon the beach at eve and watched the west'ring sun  
As the restless waves were cast in green and gold;  
And thereupon my heart beat glad, in my breast lay the longing old.  
So I made my way upon the docks as the sun began to set,  
And the evening star I did espy as it dogged Apollo's steps.

As midnight came I went aboard a sprightly tops'l schooner that gently rocked at  
quay-side with the tide now on the make.  
"Come aboard?" I hailed the anchor watch with my sea bag in my hand  
as the mate came aft and enquired my name to take.  
"Make it Spider Jack", said I. Taking in my rig "An old hand?" he asked.  
"Not yet so old, still I can hand, reef and steer" I replied.  
So I made my mark in the muster book with a winking in my eye.\*

Below I went to find my bunk and greet the crew and the bos'n shook my hand  
"Where from?"  
"Well, near and around these parts for home from 'Frisco to the border south as  
I've been;  
But I've sailed the vast Pacific, Caribbean, and Atlantic too, then around the Horn  
a' time.  
Now, where bound and when?"

"Ebb tide tomorrow, on the evening offshore breeze; sou' by west; then sou' sou'  
east to Valparaiso.  
Lest the devil play hell with the weather then three weeks or so on the way we'll  
be."  
"Our good king Neptune will see us fair, and the devil be damned," laughed I;  
"For 'tis fair this time o' year to sail the southern seas with the trade winds in your eye."

The morning came and the cry went down to rouse us for the day:  
"All Hands to breakfast then make all for getting underway!"  
So we wore the morning out as we finished with the lading;  
And spent the afternoon inspecting all our stores, then every block and every rope,  
Every hatch and every bitt from her keel to her truck 'til our sturdy ship was fit.

The Master and the mate with the bos'n at their side walked the decks  
And checked our work; and gauged the set of the tide.  
"Some hours yet and I've been assured of a goodly breeze this eve", said he;  
"So set the crew to their dinner meal and let them rest and yarn awhile afore the evenings' need."

So it came to pass as we took up stations the mate he roundly cried "Ready to cast off, there, and Stand  
By all"; and the bos'n on the foredeck answered "Haul away, lads, and haul!"  
As the jibs came up the stays it was "Let go for'ard! Let go aft!" and our ship got under way.  
The Master said but "Steady your helm" as the breeze came off the land;  
Then "Make all sail!" as the tide in full ebb eased us out like a lovers' hand.

I stood upon the tops'l yard and watched the west'ring sun  
As the restless waves were cast in green and gold;  
And thereupon my heart beat glad for peace lay in my soul.  
And though never again might I see my home as I sail south, if that's my fate;  
Still, I would not pass this by:  
That if on the ebb tide of my life there's one more adventure I can take.

### *Epitaph*

*So fare all ye well, ye sturdy tars, 'till the day again we meet;  
When we've crost yon quarterdeck o'er that far horizon and have joined the eternal fleet.*

\*When I was a surveyor in the Rockies in '81 my radio call sign was "Spider" as the crew said I looked like a daddy longlegs when I rappelled. For the 31 years I was in call center Information Technologies sales, 12 with one company, 19 with one other, I was "Jack".

