



Fist of the Fleet Association

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

NEWSLETTER

Jan 2023

Preserving the Past Providing for Today
Promoting the Future

WINTER EDITION

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Lots of big news for upcoming events. For starters, the squadron is planning an 80th Anniversary celebration to occur sometime in late summer/early fall in Lemoore, CA. Skipper Mark "IROC" Tedrow and his staff are working up a party plan and we'll have more details for you in the near future. The FOFA board has wholeheartedly endorsed the skipper's efforts and we encourage your attendance if the calendar permits.

Our second big event focuses on the Fist '23 Reunion in Pensacola, FL set for November 2-5, 2023. This will include a visit to the Naval Aviation Museum to view the Legacy Plaques honoring former squadron members and special seating for the Blue Angels Airshow. We're already talking to several hotels for room discounts and meeting space along with a great dinner program. We may set the theme to focus on Operation Enduring Freedom (2001-2021) and the squadron's contribution to those operations flying the F/A-18 Hornet. We hope to hear some great stories from the Hornet drivers that participated in those operations. If you'd like to share some experiences, please shoot me an email to jchalker@lmcapital.com.

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Finally, we expect to be ready for an election in February to select a new President and Secretary. We'll have a special announcement by email so everyone can participate in the vote.

Meanwhile, the snow is great in Utah but it's damn cold, too damn cold to ski on some days. So buckle up if you're a skier or enjoy your fair weather if you're in a warmer climate.

Regards,

John "Chalks" Chalker

President, FOFA



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.

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ FINANCIAL REPORT \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

The financial health of the Association is still on solid ground. As of 31 December 2022, the Association has a balance of \$11,279.84 in savings and \$7,737.86 in checking with the Navy Federal Credit Union for a total of \$19,017.70.

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 year with annual members Kevin FitzGerald and Michael Lanfranchi paying their annual membership. New Life Members are William Youngblood, Rick Powell, Claire Clark, and Darren Lessien.

During 2022 the educational committee received only one request for Educational Grants from the squadron. The Association paid an Education Grant for \$91.89 to a squadron member. The squadron has not advised the Association of the names for the 2022 Sailor of the Year or the Ltjg Harry Jones awardee.

The Association did receive two gifts during the year for a total of \$1100. Those gifts were not restricted in any way, so they were deposited in the general fund.

Respectfully Submitted:
Chuck "Pooh" Webster

SKIPPERS CORNER

Happy New Year FOFA!

Hopefully everyone had a great holiday season and is ready to kick off the New Year with a bang! The squadron had a outstanding holiday leave period and finally got some much needed R&R after a busy year.

We kicked off this year with a quick deck certification for the USS Carl Vinson. We re-qualified 4 pilots on the carrier and helped the Vinson get back on timeline after being in the yards for a while.

Next up is another CQ detachment on the Vinson in February followed by Air-to-Air SFARP at NAS Key West, FL. Additionally, we are expecting two brand new aircraft to be delivered from the Boeing flight line I the next few weeks, which will bring us to our total of 10 F/A-18 Block III aircraft.

We have a busy year with almost the entire work-up cycle ahead of us. We are fired-up for the 80th Anniversary and are having special patches made along with a special paint scheme for our CAG bird – 400. We're also trying to figure out a date in the Summer or Fall to open up the flight line to properly celebrate the 80th. That's all for now.

Take care and fly safe!
V/r,
CDR Mark "IROC" Tedrow



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

When CBS47 Fresno meteorologist and Central Valley heartthrob Liv Johnson told me that nine atmospheric rivers were headed to California in the month of January I heard only one thing: the drums echoing tonight. For reasons known only to doctors, LT Cam "Hatfish" Schneider's hair can only grow when fertilized by rainwater, and alas has been famished by the previous year's drought. Soon after Liv's forecast, raindrops fell on his shiny dome, but his parched root structure smartly prioritized quick hair growth above his upper lip only.

Fast forward past 3 weeks of monsoons, and now California is the land of milk and honey. The rains purged Lemoore's usually murky atmosphere clear of sin and dissipated jet fuel. From the VFA-25 flightline, Mount Whitney rises like Olympus above the Serengeti. Clear eyes, full hearts, can't lose: I seek to cure what's deep inside. The clear air has given me clarity of mind to focus on my two New Year's resolutions with renewed vigor: bench 2 plates and achieve a valid guns employment on LCDR Brawny, the VFA-25 Training Officer. As of this writing, both are still works-in-progress. Unfortunately, the sharply focused environmentalists have been having unforeseen implications in the BFM arena. While you might think clear air allows for ease of keeping sight, I instead find myself distracted taking in the unmasked scenery of Central California. Resultantly, I'll lose tally of Brawny, who masks himself in the background clutter of rejuvenated flora and fauna. Luckily, I can always count on reacquiring tally as he reappears at my six and I make a timely transition to defensive BFM. On other flights with more opportunities for sightseeing, the views have been breathtaking. From 25,000 ft off the coast of Monterey, the view is a miniature terrarium of California: you can see downtown San Francisco, the snowcaps of the Sierra, and the ragged Big Sur coastline all in one panorama. One would like to take in the view in peace, but the silence is often interrupted by a hingey flight lead prioritizing training over topography.

While most people have been blessing the rains DOWN in California, I finally blessed my own rains UP over California. Yes, I finally executed my first wee whilst airborne despite extreme stage-fright. I finished the feat on a night currency flight, which entails burning circles to gain NVG time. Thus, I had plenty of time to figure out the operation. Here's a brief summary of the steps: 1) Give pep talk to self 2) Fumble open piddle pack without dropping the little sani-wipe 3) Loosen straps, unzip 4) Update steering away from pesky F-35s 5) Aim true 6) Sanitize 7) Secure zippers and DO NOT drop the bag of slushy lemonade 8) RTB. After hearing how our 2000 hour OPSO exploded a live piddle pack a few months ago, I was quite nervous to make the attempt. To gain some confidence beforehand, I stopped our XO along the way, hoping to find some old forgotten words or ancient melodies. He turned to me as if to say, 'hurry boy, it's waiting there for you.'



"Piddle Pack"



The great San Joaquin Valley from altitude.



LT Cam Hatfish Schneider keeping his head warm



New Beginnings

My name is Alejandro Brito and I am an AME3. It was a great surprise to learn that I was going to write an article for the Fist of the Fleet Association newsletter. I was born in Los Angeles, California, a city full of culture and people from all walks of life. From a young age, I knew that academics were not on my list of interests. Within the Los Angeles community, there is a variety of economic lifestyles. Coming from parents with humble beginnings, I grew up in a Hispanic area with great values, but gangs and nefarious activity influenced the youth. As an impressionable young teenager, the most accessible activities that satisfied my rebellious spirit were those of gangs. Thanks to my supportive family, I graduated high school after being expelled once and involuntarily befriending a parole officer.

After I graduated high school, I worked as a cook full-time for about three years. I moved out of my parent's home and rented a room at a coworker's house. When the pandemic hit, everyone was out of a job, and suddenly I had all the time in the world and no real sense of purpose. Every day was Groundhog Day, and it dawned on me that my job was not secure, nor did it challenge me physically or mentally. Although the people around me were family to me, I could see my future through them, and I knew my current life was not for me. My sister had been bugging me to no end to follow in her footsteps and join the military. The pandemic finally pushed me to start a new chapter involving adventure and new challenges. Joining the Navy would allow me to be part of something bigger. I've always been about working and learning with my hands rather than learning with books. With the abundance of careers the Navy provides, I knew I could pick up a rate and gain knowledge while on the job. Within the two weeks of leave my sister took off work, she helped me study to get a high ASVAB score. We completed the entire ASVAB for Dummies while PT'ing daily. Before I knew it, I struck AME and was on a plane to Great Lakes.

Boot camp was shocking against everything I had experienced up until then. The amount of mandatory discipline, physical requirements, and mental challenges were significantly rewarding upon completion. After my rate schooling, unfortunately, I did not get the orders to San Diego that I wanted, but I was still lucky and got orders to stay on the West Coast. So this brings me to Lemoore. Initially, I wasn't a big fan of the line shack, but my AME LPO encouraged me and insisted it would be a great experience. He also added that I would learn more about our block 3s. Everything was challenging because I was in an entirely different environment as a trainee. However, once I gained more knowledge and familiarized myself with our equipment, I completed my qualifications and became a plane captain. I was very proud of myself.

Life in Lemoore has been surreal. I went from living where I limited my interaction with people because of gang-related "rules" to making awesome friends from all walks of life and different backgrounds. Not only are they great friends, but they are also people I can count on both at work and outside of work. When I'm not at work, I enjoy going back home to see my family or going to Fresno to spend time with my cousins. I also like to go to the gym and relax with my military friends.

Overall, joining the military has changed my life. Before the Navy, I didn't see a fulfilling future ahead of me. Now, I have accomplished things I did not even imagine I would achieve. As a result, my outlook on life is different, and my mindset has immensely shifted for the better. There isn't anything I can't do as long as I set my mind to it. I am thankful for God and my family, who have been there for me no matter how far I went astray. I am also full of gratitude for my leadership, who have always pushed me past my limits and continue to encourage my overall growth by not letting any mistakes I've made in the past define me. I can't wait for what the future holds in my personal and military life.



2021 Aggressor paint scheme

2022 SQUADRON HONORS



SAILOR OF THE YEAR – AD2 MILLER



SENIOR SAILOR OF THE YEAR – AD1 WILLIAMS



PLANE CAPTAIN OF THE YEAR – AD3 MURRAY



BLUE JACKET OF THE YEAR – AO3 ALCANTAR



JUNIOR SAILOR OF THE YEAR -- YN2 EWING

