

ATKRON 12 NEWSLETTER



PUBLISHED BY THE
VA-12 REUNION ASSOCIATION

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Volume VIII, Issue 2 August 2009

F6F Hellcat

UBANGI?

FROM 1945 TO 1986, PROVIDING:

FLEET DEFENSE	MAYHEM	DOGFIGHTING
DAMAGE	STRAFING	CUSTOM BOMBING
GENERAL PURPOSE & CUSTOMIZED LIGHT ATTACK		

"Kiss this load a' Mark 82's, dirtbags"



UBETCHA!

**MAKE PLANS TO JOIN
US AT THE 2010 REUNION!**

Memorial Plaque

For those of you that have not heard, we have reached our goal and paid for the Memorial Plaque. The Plaque will be placed on the Memorial Wall at the Navy Museum in D.C. on June 26, 2010 as part of the Ceremony held in our Squadron's honor. I want to thank all 42 individuals that made contributions to make this happen. It is something that will remain there to honor our service for decades to come. Hopefully our grandchildren, and their grandchildren will visit the museum someday and feel the pride as we will when it is placed next year.

Reunion 2010

It is official, our next VA12 Reunion will be held in Washington D.C. from Jun 23 to Jun 26, 2010. Contracts are being signed and a block of rooms are reserved for us at the Crown Plaza in Chrystal City very near Reagan International Airport. Free Shuttle service will be provided. A registration form will be available soon and posted on our website, it will also be mailed out with the December Newsletter. The Reunion registration form is required for all attendees. Details about cost and room reservations will also be posted on the webpage. I am expecting this to be our best reunion yet and I hope that those who have attended in the past as well as those that have not yet attended will find their way to D.C. for this Historic event.

Conference and Familiarization

I recently had the privilege of attending a Con/FAM event in Washington D.C. sponsored by the Military **Reunion Friendly Network** of which I am a member. Con/FAM is almost totally funded from hotel vendors making my registration fee only \$50. My out of pocket expenses other than airfare were negligible. It was a wonderful experience where I met many reunion planners and picked up lots of Reunion Planning ideas. In addition these Con/FAM conferences are held around the county about 12 to 14 times a year. It is like a 4 day mini-vacation, with tours and excursions, not to mention all meals included. And the meals were fantastic. Therefore, I am going to suggest that we establish the practice of voting for future Reunion sites at each Reunion. We could take written suggestions from everyone interested and vote on those, then have a run off ballot to decide the top two locations. Then two of us would attend the Con/FAM conference nearest to the

locations in 2011 to determine the final spot. I am making this up as I am writing so we can always refine it between now and the 2010 reunion. It's just an idea at this point.

Sea Story

Check this out. This guy was accidentally ejected through the canopy of his A-6 and the pilot had to land on an aircraft carrier with his buddy hanging halfway out of the plane.

Lieutenant Keith Gallagher's Account:

Murphy's Law says, "Whatever can go wrong, will, and when you least expect it." (And, of course, we all know that Murphy was an aviator.) Murphy was correct beyond his wildest dreams in my case. Fortunately for me, however, he failed to follow through. On my 26th birthday I was blindsided by a piece of bad luck the size of Texas that should have killed me. Luckily, it was followed immediately by a whole slew of miracles that allowed me to be around for my 27th. Not even Murphy could have conceived of such a bizarre accident (many people still find it hard to believe), and the fact that I am here to write about it makes it that much more bizarre.

We were the overhead tanker, one third of the way through cruise, making circles in the sky. Although the tanker pattern can be pretty boring midway through the cycle, we were alert and maintaining a good lookout doctrine because our airwing had a mid-air less than a week before, and we did not want to repeat. We felt we were ready for "any" emergency: fire lights, hydraulic failures and fuel transfer problems. Bring 'em on! We were ready for them. After all, how much trouble can two JO's get in overhead the ship? After my third fuel update call, we decided that the left outboard drop was going to require a little help in order to transfer. NATOPS recommends applying positive and negative G to force the valve open. As the pilot pulled the stick back I wondered how many times we would have to porpoise the nose of the plane before the valve opened. As he moved the stick forward, I felt the familiar sensation of negative "G", and then something strange happened: my head touched the canopy. For a brief moment I thought that I had failed to tighten my lap belts, but I knew that wasn't true. Before I could complete that thought, there was a loud bang, followed by wind, noise, disorientation and more wind, wind, wind. Confusion reigned in my mind as I was forced back against my seat, head against the headrest, arms out behind me, the wind roaring in my head, pounding against my body. "Did the canopy blow off? Did I eject? Did my windscreen implode?" All of these questions occurred to me amidst the pandemonium in my mind and over my body. These questions were quickly

answered, and replaced by a thousand more, as I looked down and saw a sight that I will never forget: the top of the canopy, close enough to touch, and through the canopy I could see the top of my pilot's helmet. It took a few moments for this image to sink into my suddenly overloaded brain. This was worse than I ever could have imagined - I was sitting on top of a flying A-6! Pain, confusion, panic, fear and denial surged through my brain and body as a new development occurred to me: I couldn't breathe. My helmet and mask had ripped off my head, and without them, the full force of the wind was hitting me square in the face. It was like trying to drink through a fire hose. I couldn't seem to get a breath of air amidst the wind. My arms were dragging along behind me until I managed to pull both of them into my chest and hold them there. I tried to think for a second as I continued my attempts to breathe. For some reason, it never occurred to me that my pilot would be trying to land. I just never thought about it. I finally decided that the only thing > that I could do was eject. (What else could I do?) I grabbed the lower handle with both hands and pulled-it wouldn't budge. With a little more panic induced strength I tried again, but to no avail. The handle was not going to move. I attempted to reach the upper handle but the wind prevented me from getting a hand on it. As a matter of fact, all that I could do was hold my arms into my chest. If either of them slid out into the wind stream, they immediately flailed out behind me, and that was definitely not good. The wind had become physically and emotionally overwhelming. It pounded against my face and body like a huge wall of water that wouldn't stop. The roaring in my ears confused me, the pressure in my mouth prevented me from breathing, and the pounding on my eyes kept me from seeing. Time had lost all meaning. For all I knew, I could have been sitting there for seconds or for hours. I was suffocating, and I couldn't seem to get a breath. I wish I could say that my last thoughts were of my wife, but as I felt myself blacking out, all I said was, "I don't want to die." Someone turned on the lights and I had a funny view of the front end of an A-6, with jagged plexiglas where my half of the canopy was supposed to be. Looking down from the top of the jet, I was surprised to find the plane stopped on the flight deck with about 100 people looking up at me. (I guess I was surprised because I had expected to see the pearly gates and some dead relatives.) My first thought was that we had never taken off, that something had happened before the catapult. Then everything came flooding back into my brain, the wind, the noise and the confusion. As my pilot spoke to me and the medical people swarmed all over me, I realized that I had survived, I was alive. It didn't take me very long to realize that I was a very lucky man, but as I heard more details, I found out

how lucky I was. For example, my parachute became entangled in the horizontal stabilizer tight enough to act as a shoulder harness for the trap, but not tight, enough to bind the flight controls. If this had not happened, I would have been thrown into the jagged plexiglas during the trap as my shoulder harness had been disconnected from the seat as the parachute deployed. There are many other things that happened, or didn't happen, that allowed me to survive this mishap, some of them only inches away from disaster. These little things, and a shot, level headed pilot who reacted quickly and correctly are the reason that I am alive and flying today. Also, a generous helping of good old-fashioned Irish luck didn't hurt. Lieutenant Mark Baden's (pilot) Account of the Incident. As we finished the brief, my BN (bombardier navigator - Keith Gallagher) told me that it was his birthday and that our recovery would be his 100th trap on the boat. To top it off, we were assigned the plane with my name on the side. As we taxied out of the chocks, I was still feeling a little uneasy about all the recent mishaps. To make myself feel better, I went through the "soft shot/engine failure on takeoff" EPs (emergency procedures), touching each switch or lever as I went through the steps. "At least if something happens right off the bat, I'll be ready," I thought. The first few minutes of the hop were busy. Concentrating on the package-check and consolidation, as well as trying to keep track of my initial customers, dispelled my uneasiness. As we approached mid-cycle, that most boring time in a tanker hop, we kept ourselves occupied with fuel checks. We were keeping a close eye on one drop tank that had quit transferring with about 1,000 pounds of fuel still inside. I had tried going to override on the tank pressurization, but that didn't seem to work. My BN and I discussed the problem. We decided it was probably a stuck float valve. Perhaps some positive and negative G would fix it. We were at 8,000 feet, seven miles abeam the ship, heading aft. I clicked the altitude hold off and added some power to give us a little more G. At 230 knots I pulled the stick back and got the plane five degrees nose up. Then I pushed the stick forward. I got about half a negative G, just enough to float me in the seat. I heard a sharp bang and felt the cockpit instantly depressurize. The roar of the wind followed. I ducked instinctively and looked up at the canopy expecting it to be partly open. Something was wrong. Instead of seeing a two or three inch gap, the canopy bow was flush with the front of the windscreen. My eyes tracked down to the canopy switch. It was up. My scan continued right. Instead of meeting my BN's questioning glance, I saw a pair of legs at my eye level. The right side of the canopy was shattered. I followed the legs up and saw the rest of my BN's body out in the windblast. I watched as his head

snapped down and then back up, and his helmet and oxygen mask disappeared. They didn't fly off; they just disappeared. My mind went into fast forward. "What the hell happened?" I wondered. "I hope he ejects all the way. What am I going to do now? I need to slow down." I jerked the throttles to idle and started the speed brakes out. Without stopping, I reached up, de-isolated, and threw the flap lever to the down position. I reached over and grabbed for the IFF selector switch and twisted it to EMER. I was screaming "Slow down! Slow down!" to myself as I looked up at the airspeed indicator and gave another pull back on the throttles and speed brakes. The airspeed was passing 200 knots. I had been looking back over my shoulder at my bombardier the whole time I was doing everything else. I felt a strange combination of fear, helplessness and revulsion as I watched his body slam around in the windblast. After his helmet flew off, his face looked like the people who get sucked out into zero atmosphere in some of the more graphic movies. His eyes were being blasted open, his cheeks and lips were puffed out to an impossible size and the tendons in his neck looked like they were about to bust through his skin as he fought for his life. At 200 knots I saw his arms pulled up in front of his face and he was clawing behind his head. For a moment, I thought he was going to manage to pull the handle and get clear of the plane. I was mentally cheering for him. His arms got yanked down by the blast and I cursed as I checked my radio selector switch to radio 1. "Mayday, Mayday, this is 515. My BN has partially ejected. I need an emergency pull-forward!" The reply was an immediate, "Roger, switch button six." I switched freqs and said (or maybe yelled), "Boss (Air Officer), this is 515. My BN has partially ejected. I need an emergency full-forward!" I slapped the gear handle down and turned all my dumps on (in an effort to get slower, max trap never crossed my mind). The Boss came back in his ever-calm voice and said, "Bring it on in." Checking out the BNAs I watched, the indexers move from on-speed to a green chevron I worked the nose to keep the plane as slow as possible and still flying. The plane was holding at around 160 knots and descending. My BN's legs were kicking, which gave me some comfort; he was not dead. But, watching his head and body jerked around in the windblast, being literally beaten to death, made me ill. I had been arcing around in my descent and was still at seven miles. The boss came up and asked if the BN was still with the aircraft. I think that I caused a few cases of nausea when I answered, "Only his legs are still inside the cockpit." It made sense to me, but more than a few people who were listening had visions of two legs and lots of blood and no body. Fortunately, the Boss understood what I meant. As I turned in astern the boat, I called the Boss and told him I was six miles behind

the boat. I asked how the deck was coming. He asked if I was setting myself up for a straight-in. I told him "yes." He told me to continue. It was then I noticed that my BN had quit kicking. A chill shot through my body and I looked back at him. What I saw scared me even more. His head was turned to the left and laying on his left shoulder. He was starting to turn grey. Maybe he had broken his neck and was dead. Bringing back a body that was a friend only minutes before was not a comfortable thought. I forced myself not to look at my bombardier after that. The front windscreen started to fog up about four miles behind the boat. I cranked the defog all the way and was getting ready to unstrap my shoulder harness so I could wipe off the glass when it finally started clearing. I saw the boat making a hard left turn. I made some disparaging remarks about the guys on the bridge as I rolled right to chase centerline. I heard CAG paddles (landing signal officer) come up on the radio. He told the captain he would take the winds and that he needed to steady up. My tension eased slightly as I saw mother begin to leave her wake in a straight line. Coming in for landing I was driving it in at about 300 feet. I had been in a slight descent and wasn't willing to add enough power to climb back up to a normal straight-in altitude for fear I would have to accelerate and do more damage to my already battered BN. I watched the ball move up to red and then move slowly up towards the center. Paddles called for some rudder and told me not to go high. My scan went immediately to the 1-wire. I had no intention of passing up any "perfectly good wires." I touched down short of the 1-wire and sucked the throttles to idle. The canopy shards directly in front of the BN's chest looked like a butcher's knife collection. I was very concerned that the deceleration of the trap was going to throw him into the jagged edge of the canopy. I cringed when I didn't immediately feel the tug of the wire. I pulled the stick into my lap as paddles was calling for altitude. I got the nose gear off the deck and then felt the hook catch a wire. I breathed a sigh of relief. Testing the spool-up time of a pair of J-52s as I rolled off the end of the angle was not the way I wanted to end an already bad hop. As soon as I stopped, I set the parking brake and a yellow shirt gave me the signal to kill my No. 2 engine. Immediately after that, I heard a call over the radio that I was chocked. I killed no. 1 and began unstrapping. As soon as I was free of my seat (I somehow remembered to safe it), I reached over and safed the BN's lower handle, undid his lower koch fittings and reached up to try to safe his upper handle. As I was crawling up, I saw that his upper handle was already safed. I started to release his upper koch fittings but decided they were holding him in and I didn't want him to fall against the razor-sharp plexiglas on his side. I got back on my side of the cockpit,

held his left arm and hand, and waited for the medical people to arrive. I realized he still was alive when he said, "Am I on the flight deck?" A wave of indescribable relief washed over me as I talked to him while the crash crew worked to truss him up and pull him out of the seat. Once he was clear of the plane, they towed me out of the landing area and parked me. A plane captain bumped the canopy open by hand far enough that I could squeeze out. I headed straight for medical without looking back at the plane. Later, I found that ignorance can be bliss. I didn't know two things while I was flying. First, the BN's parachute had deployed and wrapped itself around the tail section of the plane. Second, the timing release mechanism had fired and released the BN from the seat. The only things keeping him in the plane were the parachute risers holding him against the back of the seat. Wilbert D. Pearson



Keith's body can be seen partially ejected through the canopy of the A-6 aircraft as it touches down on the aircraft carrier for emergency landing. Keith's parachute has deployed and is wrapped around the tail of the aircraft. (navy photo)



Just seconds after landing, Keith is unconscious with his arms outstretched from the wind blast. (navy photo)



Coming in for emergency landing, Keith's upper-body and arm can be seen above the canopy of the A-6 aircraft.

Joke

A Navy pilot walks into a bar and takes a seat next to a very attractive woman. He gives her a quick glance then casually looks at his watch for a moment.

The woman notices, and asks, "Is your date running late?"

"No," he replies, "I just got this state-of-the-art watch, and I was just testing it."

Intrigued, the woman says, "A state-of-the-art watch? What's so special about it?"

"It uses alpha waves to talk to me telepathically," the Navy pilot explains.

"What's it telling you now?" she asked.

"Well, it says you're not wearing any panties.... "

"The woman giggles and replies, "Well, it must be broken because I am wearing panties!"

The Navy pilot smirks, taps his watch, and says, "Damn thing's an hour fast."

Bill Sigmon 73-77

Treasury Report

Previous Balance	\$284.05
Dues/Donations	337.75
SUB TOTAL	621.80
Stamps	87.04
Envelopes	19.07
Printing	132.54
CURRENT EXPENSES	238.65
NEW BALANCE	383.15

New VA12 Association Members

These are the names of our newest members that joined our ranks since the last newsletter.

Paul Englert	66-69
James McBride	72-76
Wayne Scarborough	69-70

In Memoriam

Dr. Robert Scheuch Jr. passed away during a white water rafting excursion on Aug 2, 2009. Bob served in VA12 from 1972-1975.

Word from the West

REPORTED IN THE NAVY TIMES NEWSPAPER: (NOT)

RESURRECTED ATKRON TWELVE TO FLY NEW CRABCATS

Washington, DC (OO,U812IC)

In a stunning two-for-one surprise revelation, the Navy Public Affairs Office, lead by Vice Admiral I.M. Fullashitte, has announced today the successful completion of flight test and development evaluation for the new and highly classified A-8 “Crabcat” aircraft. Topping that revelation is the news that the first operational squadron to fly the fighter will be a re-established version of the World Famous Flying Ubangis of Attack Squadron Twelve.

NEW AIRCRAFT DEVELOPED IN DEEP SECRECY

The new A-8 has been developed for the US Navy in total secrecy, away from the glare of publicity and comment, by a consortium of aircraft manufacturers referring to themselves as the Grumman-Airbus-Boeing Association, or GRAB-ASS. The first operational variant of the new plane will be designated the CRA-8. Owing to its multi-role mission and following standard Navy aircraft nomenclature, the C refers to its transport role, the R for reconnaissance, and the A for attack.

Vice Admiral Fullashitte has been evasive in responding to inquiries regarding the need for such astounding secrecy surrounding the project. “Frankly, no one would have believed it if I had told them, as I stand here today I.M. Fullashitte.”

Serving as the lead manufacturer within the consortium gave Grumman the influence to insist on an aircraft nickname in keeping with their company’s time-honored tradition of including the word “cat” within the aircraft nickname, following in the convention of the

F4F Wildcat, the F6F Hellcat, the F7F Tigercat, the F8F Bearcat, and most recently the F-14 Tomcat. Using cues from the fuselage shape, the GRAB-ASS consortium agreed to proceed using the name Crabcat.

Taking on design elements of stealth and famous earlier experiments with flying wing technology, the CRA-8 Crabcat is expected to transport cargo and personnel to and from Navy aircraft carriers. Unused cargo space allowing for extra on-board fuel supplies offers up a reconnaissance role as well. The cargo space also is also suitable for the internal storage of a wide variety of standard Navy ordnance and weaponry, which allows for the attack mission.

One unique flight characteristic of the aircraft is expected to be its ability to fly sideways.

Pilots recline in the new aircraft, with the pilot on the left of the engine intake, which is mounted along the fuselage centerline, and the co-pilot/RIO/WSO seated to the right.

The CRA-8 flies at ultra-slow subsonic speeds and has a radius of 500 feet. It is capable of flight from 450 feet below sea level up to around 2 feet above sea level.

The omnivorous engine installed in the new plane allows it to be fueled primarily on algae, and any other food, including molluscs, worms, other crustaceans, fungi, bacteria and detritus, depending on their availability. A mixed diet of plant and animal matter appears to result in the fastest flight speeds and greatest levels of performance.

NEW LIFE FOR DISBANDED NAVAL AVIATION UNIT

The World Famous VA-12 Flying Ubangis were established in 1945, towards the end of the Second World War. Based at Naval Air Station Cecil Field, Florida, the unit served with great distinction until 1986, when they were summarily dis-established by an official Navy delegation of half-wits, dim-wits and nit-wit numb-nut clowns. Recent efforts conducted by the VA-12 Reunion Association to rectify and correct this grievous error were instrumental in bringing the sterling reputation of VA-12 once again to the attention of Naval Air Command authorities.

An initial allotment of four aircraft has been delivered to the newly resurrected squadron. Enlisted personnel within the newly reformed “Kiss of Death” unit are already using the informal moniker “Crate” to refer to their new CRA-8 aircraft.

The squadron is rapidly manning up to full strength, expecting a compliment of 25 officers/pilots and 225 enlisted personnel.

The unit’s new commanding officer, Cdr. Austin O’Brien anticipates receiving a final set of 8 aircraft, bringing the squadron compliment to 12. Speaking at a news conference at the new NAS Beenie and Cecil Field outside of Jacksonville Florida, CDR O’Brien noted that “We’re making great progress in getting checked out on our new hot rod. The Crabcat handles beautifully and we have had no unexpected flight events so far. I’d rate it a notch above our old A-4 Skyhawks in almost every flight regime. And we are all learning the tricks to flying sideways. We’re proceeding cautiously because while we only have 4 aircraft at this point, we are also not yet built up to our full compliment of personnel.”

But the wily and sagacious CO has a plan to fix that manpower shortage pretty quickly. Cdr. O’Brien notes that “Well of course many of our veteran VA-12 Ubangi personnel are reaching retirement age at their civilian occupations. We encourage them to go visit their local Navy Recruiter and inquire about the special assignments available to them. A pretty nice 4 year reenlistment package has been developed which includes tech school assignments followed by special duty assignment to VA-12. We think the families of these prior-service veterans – especially the wives - will be particularly flabbergasted by the offer.”

Maintenance Officer Cdr. J.J. McGroom reports that the Crabcat seems to get superior performance off of the mixed diet of fungi, algae, and morsels of shredded cod meat. But he already has a big job for the Airframes Shop. Aircraft 412 suffered some fuselage damage during an aircraft handling exercise aboard the USS Heywood U. Buzzoff (CV-79). “One of our newest plane captains thought he might be in hot water over the mishap, and to tell the truth the skipper and I were both steamed over the damage. But everyone calmed down over a few adult beverages with our crab leg dinner and we realized that at the same time the pilots are still learning how to fly in sideways mode, everyone is learning how to parallel park the Crabcat on the flight line. And the flight deck, where these jobs are doubly tough.”

Attached non-official US Navy photos were taken during a recent training cycle on-board the Navy’s newest carrier, CV-79 Heywood U. Buzzoff. The

Buzzoff was operating in the Mid-Atlantic training area east of Norfolk, Virginia.

Photos and Story by AQ2 JP Larch.



Editorial Comment

This is what you guys will have to look forward to, if you don't start submitting your own articles.

Ubangi Golf Balls

\$10.00 per sleeve, includes shipping, send me a check.



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