



# Atkron 12 Newsletter



Volume IV, Issue 1

March 2005

## Ubangi

### 2006 Reunion News

The votes have been tallied, and the site has been determined for our 2006 Reunion. Chicago and Galveston were not in the running, but Memphis was supported by a lot of voters. In the end Pensacola, FL gained the most first place votes. I will begin locating a hotel in the next few weeks. I am still hoping for April, but that will depend on availability. Thanks to all that sent in their ballot. I appreciate your input.

### That Winning Season

In the Sept. 04 issue, you featured some pictures of our 1956 "Cecil Field Intramural Champs" Upon seeing these I had to send a copy of our group pictures taken in Jan. 1957 of our Champs. If my memory serves me right, we won every game that year by at least 30 points. Nobody could touch us. If someone has a book of the 1958 Med Cruise on the Forrestal, they could probably look up the names of most of these players. I lost

## Ubetcha

my Cruise book somewhere in the shuffle. I know that on the far left is another Minnesota boy by the name of Larry Marose. (Hose nose Marose) Next to him is our quarterback and Coach from Pennsylvania. His name is Draudt, this guy could knock you off your feet with the football while he threaded the needle. The next player is Ludwig, then myself, Pat Hedican, the one with glasses, P.J, my clothes stencil read P.J. so I was called P.J. Next there is George Hines, we played opposite ends. I've never seen a guy jump so high in my life. We were about the same height and when he jumped up for a ball, his feet were about chest high on me. Next to George is Stankowich, I think he was from New York, then Cary the black guy. I think he was from Chicago. Nice guy and strong as a bull. He made a few of the opposition hurt. As for the rest of the guys I would have to guess their names skip my memory. It has only been about 56 year.

Pat (P.J.) Hedican 56-59



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*George Hines supplied a few more names for you Pat, You know us guys from the great white north loose our memories faster because our brains freeze in the winter. He didn't know the name of the guy next to Cary either. The Officers kneeling from left to right are; first unknown, then Ltjg. Scott, then the XO but he couldn't remember his name, then Lt. Hardisty, and lastly Lt. Howell (he thinks.) So not bad, between the two of you, you only missed two guys. Maybe someone else in our Association will think of their names.*

## Basketball Champs Also

*Football was not the only games that these 56/57 Ubangi's could play. This is a pic of our Basketball team that won the championship in 1957.*



Back row left with the glasses is Melvin McAllister, next Paul Preznhy, then Jim Williams, and Ronald Hampton. Front row left myself George Hines, next to me is Jerry Cassidy, then Lt.Cmdr. Sullivan XO and Denny Pumpus.

Note: Our XO Lt.Cmdr. Sullivan was lost one night during night operations. To my knowledge the only thing that was found was one drop tank and his helmet. He was a full Cmdr. at the time

George Hines 56-58

## A Forgotten Scooter Pilot

*A letter to the Webmaster at [A4Skyhawk.org](http://A4Skyhawk.org) Strange how we find things. Tonight on the Wings channel there was a piece on **VA-163 the Saints**. While watching it, and just*

out of curiosity, jumped on the website to track the details/dates. Well, while there, I bounced over to my old squadron (end of '68 – beginning of '71) – **VA-12 the Flying Ubangi's**. I've always remembered that the only pilot lost while I was in the squadron (on both a Med and a WestPac cruise) was a young Ltjg. On our '69 Med cruise (onboard the Shangri-la – CVA38 back then – what else during that period???) I checked out both of these areas and couldn't find him..... The Squadrons Unit Casualties and Casualties-POWs-Recoveries. His name was Ltjg. Frank Peter Neuman – Died on 12 Feb 69, during recovery of aircraft. If memory serves...( and being a Personnelman for the squadron, not an airdale...the details might not be 100%) we were attached to CVW-8, on the Shang while recovering inot a setting sun. From what I gathered, Ltje. Neuman was doing fine on his final, but as he dropped for the wire, he turned to the port side (thought someone said it was because he mistook the setting sun for the ball), catchin the #2 wire, but at such an angle his aircraft proceeded to go over the side...he ejected, but by the time the sequence completed, he was ejected almost on a parallel path to the water. Apparently when he hit the water at that much of an angle, he broke his neck. HC-2 could not cut him loose from his chute and the body was never recovered. Had he not ejected...the plane was held by the wire with its' nose just touching the water.....The memorial service was held onboard the Shang on 15 Feb 69. I just thought you might add his name to the list of those whome we remember the most. I know that at the VA-12 Squadron reunion last April, a lot of the guys had forgotten... but when they could see the *Memorial* that was handed out to us that day, with his picture, they remembered. Thanks and...May We Never Forget.

Bob Fossum 68-71

## Deployment correction

*Bill Doody noticed an error in the list of deployments that the squadron made from the September 04 Newsletter. My apologies for the omission.*

I suggest that the deployment aboard the USS Ranger to the Caribbean in October to December of 1957 be added to the list of VA-12 deployments.

It was important because:

1. It was the first carrier deployment for VA-12 for over two years, since the USS Midway World Cruise ended in July 1955 with the F2H-2 Banshee. As I review all the other carrier deployments, this is the longest period VA-12 had ever been ashore.
2. We were the first operational A4D Skyhawk squadron to land on the recently commissioned USS Ranger – the largest Carrier in the Fleet.
3. This was the first operational cruise for the USS Ranger.
4. The squadron also spent some time at Gitmo in Cuba just before Castro came to power, so there was some activity near the base.

We also made a State visit to the Dominican Republic.

We flew aboard the Ranger off Norfolk on October 28<sup>th</sup>. (I went to my log to get the date.), and had the last hop from the USS Ranger on 3 December. Our time aboard was a wonderful adventure as both our squadron and the ship's company were adjusting to that great ballet of carrier landings and take off's. As we all know carrier flying is also serious business. I Catapult waiting for the first launch of the morning. We were a flight of 2 A4D's and 2 aircraft from another squadron were on the forward cats, I was at full power, had saluted and was ready to go after they shot the plane on the forward cats; all of a sudden the ship turned sharply left and crewmen started running forward and I got the hold signal. The first plane did not get a good cat shot and hit the water and unfortunately the pilot did not survive. I still remember that evening memorial service. The mission on that last flight was to take the Atom Bomb Shape complete with instrumentation (at the time VA-12 was a low level atomic attack

squadron) and attack a selected US target. After hitting the target we were to fly to Norfolk, where a team evaluated the instrument switches to see if we had done things correctly. My target was a dam near Macon, Georgia and fortunately I had followed the correct switch procedure to simulate the arming of the nuclear device. This deployment was important to VA-12. We had been slated to deploy in August 1956 Med Cruise with the F7U-3 Cutlass. However because of the maintenance issues with the Cutlass our deployment got cancelled. So taking the A4D's aboard in 1957 was a highlight, certainly of my time in the squadron, and a great morale boost to the whole squadron.

The USS Ranger had just been commissioned, as I mentioned and we were the first A4D squadron to land on it. A special anecdote concerned our Skipper Cdr. Pete Deputy who had only recently assumed command. As the former carrier experience utilized flags to come aboard, he was having great difficulty transitioning to the Mirror approach during our field carrier approaches at Cecil Field. As we flew out to the Carrier in a flight of 4 – (Skipper, Ltjg. Fleming, Ltjg. Eskew and myself) the junior officers had agreed that Pete would be the first to land aboard. This was a big deal since Captain Booth the Ranger's Commanding Officer had informed us that the first pilot to land would have a celebratory cake to commemorate the first operational squadron A4D landing. We agreed that no matter how many wave off's the Skipper took, we would not land before him. Of course, the first guy to land on the first pass was the Skipper. In the ready room knowing what we had planned he said "Boys youth and speed does not always beat age and experience" I should also add that Pete Deputy was a holder of the NAVE CROSS awarded for his efforts at the Battle of the Coral Sea. I was honored to have served under him. Lt. William J. Doody 56-57

# VA-12 History continued from Vol III Issue 4

## Air Wing Assignments

Air Wing	Tail	Assignment Date
CVG-/CAG/ CVG-1	Tt	12 May 1945
GVG-10	AK	20 Jan 1958
CVG-1/ CVW-1	AB	05 Dec 1960
CVW-8	AJ	25 Aug 1968
CVW-7	AG	1971

## Unit Awards Received

Unit Award	Inclusive Dates	Covering Award
NAVE	01 Jul 1965	30 Jun 1965
AFEM	06 Jun 1983	12 Jun 1983
	27 Jul 1983	30 Aug 1983
	01 Sep 1983	19 Oct 1983
	27 Oct 1983	20 Nov 1983
MUC	11 Apr 1970	06 Nov 1970
NEM	29 Apr 1980	16 Jul 1980
	22 Jul 1980	08 Dec 1980
	25 May 1983	27 May 1983
NUC	29 Apr 1980	10 Dec 1980
	21 Jul 1983	20 Nov 1983
VNSM	30 Jul 1966	
	09 Aug 1966	12 Sep 1966
	01 Oct 1966	03 Oct 1966
	19 Oct 1966	14 Nov 1966
	24 Nov 1966	28 Dec 1966
	20 Jan 1967	21 Jan 1967
	10 Apr 1970	02 May 1970
	12 May 1970	29 May 1970
	13 Jun 1970	04 Jul 1970
	28 Jul 1970	19 Aug 1970
30 Aug 1970	30 Sep 1970	
20 Oct 1970	07 Nov 1970	
RVNGC	21 Oct 1966	

NAVE Navy Excellence Award  
AFEM Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal  
MUC Meritorious Unit Commendation  
NEM Navy Expeditionary Medal  
NUC Navy Unit Commendation  
VNSM VietNam Service Medal  
RVNGC Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross

## Bio

I joined the squadron in Jan. 57 and left in Jun. 59 as an ADJ3, I was a plane captain for a year then moved to Logs & Pubs. A short time before Sept. 58 we deployed for a Med. Cruise. I was discharged in Jun. 59 and went to work in construction for 30 years, then took a job with a local gas company. Retired in 2000. Theron "Sonny" Hill 57-59

## Sea Stories

### Mystery Solved after 46½ Years

Probably late 1957, Gordon Solomon, I don't remember who else, and I were working night check. The SDO sent his messenger to the flight line to the A4D that we had a NC-5 power unit connected to and told us to report immediately to the duty office. We walked into the ready room and Ensign Wahl asked which one of us did it? I asked "Did what?" He would not say what he was accusing us of so we stood there until the radio on our squadron frequency blared "Mayday, Mayday, I'm in a SNJ at 40,000 feet. (SNJ was a WWII trainer, probably with a service ceiling of 18,000 feet or less.) We knew then what we were being accused of. Ensign Wahl then told us to get back to work without an apology or anything.

I never found out until our April 2004 reunion who was transmitting the Mayday. A retired ATCS admitted to me that he had conned ATAN Frank Loveless to transmit the Mayday while working on the A4D in the Hanger. I will not expose the ATCS but he lives on Tara Lane in Orange Park, FL at present.

Jim "Calhoun" Renfroe 57-58

### Man Overboard

This happened aboard the USS Eisenhower CV-69 somewhere in the Mediterranean in 1979. I was the Command Senior Chief During the cruise I would make my rounds everyday, through the berthing areas and shops just to let the guys know that we cared about their well being and to answer any questions they might have had.

One of the guys I remember particularly used to sit in the berthing area and play his guitar and sing. He was happy because he had a girlfriend who he heard from often. He told me that most of the songs he sang and played were about her.

As the cruise progressed he finally got a "Dear John" from his girlfriend and he was devastated. I came into the berthing area and he told me "Senior Chief, I got a Dear John from my girlfriend and the guys in the

berthing area and the shop won't let me keep my guitar anywhere". I told him we surely could work something out so he could store it. He said no, I don't want to keep it anymore, it is causing too many problems and I am going to throw it over the side. I tried reasoning with him but he was determined to get rid of it. I followed him until he got to the catwalk and he flung it over the side. I tried to reason with him to no avail. He then proceeded to put his leg on the rail so I grabbed his shirt and said "oh no you don't" and pulled him away from the railing.

I took him to the Ready Room and told the Skipper what had happened. He spoke to this individual and after some counseling turned him loose. That afternoon I got a call from the OD asking me to meet with the Skipper in the Ready Room. When I entered the room I saw that his guy had shaved his head and eyebrows. He turned in his ID card too and told the Skipper, "I Quit". He was turned over to the Brig for safe keeping. The next morning about 5 a.m. I heard "Man Overboard" on the speakers. At 6 a.m. while in the CPO mess I heard a conversation between a Marine Sgt. And a CPO about the man overboard. Thinking that this was the same guy from the squadron, I asked the Marine Sgt. If he knew who it was and he verified that it was in fact our guy. I was told that he jumped off the elevator during morning exercise. He was fished out right away and put back into custody.

All of the paperwork was taken care of between ships medical, legal and the squadron to turn this guy over to the hospital in Naples when the ship pulled in. When the day came I rode the launch over with him and escorted him to the Naval Hospital in Naples. He was very quiet and apologized for all the problems he had caused everyone. He told me he couldn't take it anymore once he got the letter from his girlfriend.

I turned him over to the people at the hospital, and I wished him the best of luck and left. It was really sad for me because I had gotten to know him fairly well.

When we got back to the states, I never did find out what had happened to him. Soon after we arrived at Cecil Field I retired.

AMCS Thomas Micheli 78-79

## F-14 Commentary

Below is an article written by Rick Reilly of Sports Illustrated. He details his experiences when given the opportunity to fly in a F-14 Tomcat. If you aren't laughing out loud by the time you get to "Milk Duds," your sense of humor is broken.

"Now this message is for America's most famous athletes:

Someday you may be invited to fly in the back-seat of one of your country's most powerful fighter jets. Many of you already have ... John Elway, John Stockton, Tiger Woods to name a few. If you get this opportunity, let me urge you, with the greatest sincerity...

Move to Guam.

Change your name.

Fake your own death!

Whatever you do.

Do Not Go!

I know. The U.S. Navy invited me to try it. I was thrilled. I was pumped. I was toast!

I should've known when they told me my pilot would be Chip (Biff) King of Fighter Squadron 213 at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia Beach.

Whatever you're thinking a Top Gun named Chip (Biff) King looks like, triple it. He's about six-feet, tan, ice-blue eyes, wavy surfer hair, finger-crippling handshake -- the kind of man who wrestles dyspeptic alligators in his leisure time. If you see this man, run the other way. Fast.

Biff King was born to fly. His father, Jack King, was for years the voice of NASA missions. ("T-minus 15 seconds and counting ..." Remember?) Chip would charge neighborhood kids a quarter each to hear his dad. Jack would wake up from naps surrounded

by nine-year-olds waiting for him to say, "We have a liftoff."

Biff was to fly me in an F-14D Tomcat, a ridiculously powerful \$60 million weapon with nearly as much thrust as weight, not unlike Colin Montgomerie. I was worried about getting airsick, so the night before the flight I asked Biff if there was something I should eat the next morning.

"Bananas," he said.

"For the potassium?" I asked.

"No," Biff said, "because they taste about the same coming up as they do going down."

The next morning, out on the tarmac, I had on my flight suit with my name sewn over the left breast. (No call sign - like Crash or Sticky or Leadfoot ... but, still, very cool.) I carried my helmet in the crook of my arm, as Biff had instructed. If ever in my life I had a chance to nail Nicole Kidman, this was it.

A fighter pilot named Psycho gave me a safety briefing and then fastened me into my ejection seat, which, when employed, would "egress" me out of the plane at such a velocity that I would be immediately knocked unconscious.

Just as I was thinking about aborting the flight, the canopy closed over me, and Biff gave the ground crew a thumbs-up. In minutes we were firing nose up at 600 mph. We leveled out and then canopy-rolled over another F-14.

Those 20 minutes were the rush of my life. Unfortunately, the ride lasted 80. It was like being on the roller coaster at Six Flags Over Hell. Only without rails. We did barrel rolls, sap rolls, loops, yanks and banks. We dived, rose and dived again, sometimes with a vertical velocity of 10,000 feet per minute. We chased another F-14, and it chased us.

We broke the speed of sound. Sea was sky and sky was sea. Flying at 200 feet we did 90-degree turns at 550 mph, creating a G force of 6.5,

which is to say I felt as if 6.5 times my body weight was smashing against me, thereby approximating life as Mrs. Colin Montgomerie.

And I egressed the bananas. I egressed the pizza from the night before.

And the lunch before that. I egressed a box of Milk Duds from the sixth grade. I made Linda Blair look polite. Because of the G's, I was egressing stuff that did not even want to be egressed. I went through not one airsick bag, but two.

Biff said I passed out, Twice. I was coated in sweat. At one point, as we were coming in upside down in a banked curve on a mock bombing target and the G's were flattening me like a tortilla and I was in and out of consciousness, I realized I was the first person in history to throw down.

I used to know cool. Cool was Elway throwing a touchdown pass, or Norman making a five-iron bite. But now I really know cool. Cool is guys like Biff, men with cast-iron stomachs and freon nerves. I wouldn't go up there again for Derek Jeter's black book, but I'm glad Biff does every day, and for less a year than a rookie reliever makes in a home stand.

A week later, when the spins finally stopped, Biff called. He said he and the fighters had the perfect call sign for me. Said he'd send it on a patch for my flight suit.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Two Bags."

Jon Sutherland 66-68

## **The Word From The West**

### **Puerto Rican Spanish Memory**

I had a lot of leave saved up towards the end of my 4 years. One day I calculated that by the time April 3 rolled around, I would have 43 days of leave saved. In fact, I might not even have to attend their little yacht party in the Med. But they made me go anyway. Eventually, though, my departure date in early February came around, and from port-

call at Naples I spent a couple days getting from NSA Naples, to NAS Naples, to Sigonella, to Rota. We all got off of the transport and schlepped with the seabag over to Transit Personnel. I had been there once before, the first time overseas, and this time figured that it would be a repeat of the last time; get a rack in the Transit Barracks and wait for an overseas MAC flight one day soon. In the meantime, go on working parties until that departure. But I wasn't all alone, one of my squadron buddies was there with me most of the time, Ron C. Ron was a Puerto Rican from New York, with transfer orders and 10 days of leave. We got ourselves squared away, found that the next flight was 3 days out. We got our working party the next day in a warehouse, stowing gear coming out of containers. The Navy hired a lot of Spanish civilians to work on the base in those days (I imagine that they still do, even now). So we all went to work and during the first break, Ron thought that he would strike up a conversation with the Spanish gents on our team. So he started off talking in Spanish. They chatted back. He talked, they talked. They talked, he replied. Fine by me, whatever! Talk Talk Talk, Yakkedy Yak. After quite a while, even after the break and we were back playing with the boxes of stuff, I asked Ron, "So, OK, what's the news with our pals here?" And Ron said, "Hell if I know." I said, "Well, wait a minute, whada you mean 'Hell if I know?' You've been yakkin' away with these guys like a bunch of teenage girls!" And Ron replied, Every so often I understand a word here or there, maybe one outta four? And they are so happy to talk to a Puerto Rican, they are going so fast so every once in a while I say 'I don't believe it', just to have something to say. This is what I am saying in Puerto Rican, but what do they hear? I don't know what the f%\$& they are talking about." This was just absolutely whack-o to me. I thought Spanish was Spanish, and Ron said "I just know my home town, you see, but I guess there's Spain Spanish, and Mexico Spanish, and

South American Spanish, and Panama Spanish, and I just talk Puerto Rico Spanish **and these guys are from some g@?-d&\*n foreign county**, man!

We thought about that for a minute, and then *laughed*.... John Larch 76-79

## VA12 Association Members

Here are names of those that have joined our ranks since the last newsletter.

<b>Ron Witt</b>	<b>65-68</b>
<b>Theron Hill</b>	<b>57-59</b>
<b>Carl Stoffer</b>	<b>70-74</b>
<b>Robert Ziobron</b>	<b>71-75</b>

## Treasury Report

Carry over from 2004	\$325.61
2005 Dues collected	\$734.38
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1059.99</b>
Printing (*estimated)	184.05
Postage	48.00
Envelopes	4.87
<b>Current expenses</b>	<b>- 236.92</b>
<b>New Balance</b>	<b>823.07</b>

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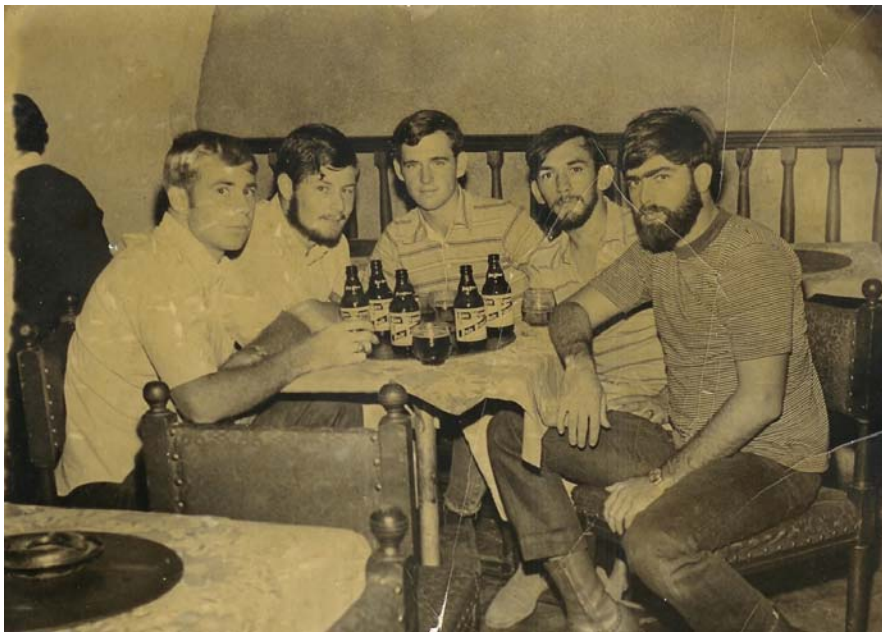
## Photos

These old photos on the back page were submitted by  
 John O'connell 68-70

The first one is from the 1970 WesPac Cruise, Subic Bay.

He could remember the guys name on the far left, but next to him is Gary Venama, John himself, Doug Popoloski, and Steve Carroll.





**This is Paul Kennedy and Rich Kichline  
69 Med. Cruise**

**Here we have Ted Carpenter, Eric Harvie, Steve Owings  
Keven Dean, Phil Erff, and Morgan**



**68 Gitmo detachment, Dashneau, Bunky, TC, Okie, Ed, Eric  
Unknown, Chief Hart, BJ, and another Unknown**



**This is John O'Connell himself.**

