

VQ Association News Letter

Winter/Spring 2005

From the president:

The Memphis reunion is in the archives and it was indeed a truly memorable event. I want to thank Charlie Wooddy and Bob and Ruth Edgerton for all their help in making it such a successful reunion. There are many others who deserve recognition, but lest I forget someone, I will simply thank all those who had a hand in making it all work.

The next event will be held in Charleston, South Carolina in October 2005. Thanks to the quick work of Dick and Sandy McClellan, we have the hotel, dinner and picnic all set up. Plus a fine golf course has been identified where we can hold our annual tournament.

There are lots of things to do in the Charleston area and we know you can look forward to a very enjoyable reunion. Mark your calendars for the Discoverers' Day Weekend 2005 and prepare for another fantastic time.

I'll keep this brief because we have a lot of inputs for the newsletter. The inputs are truly welcomed and we hope they continue. Keep those sea stories coming!

Clint



General Membership Meeting Memphis, October 10, 2004

The meeting was called to order by president Clint Epley at approximately 0830. There were 52 members in attendance.

The president advised members that the proposed by-laws for the VQ Association would be posted on the VQ website. One change is that spouses of members can be nominated for positions of director, secretary and treasurer. As there was no objection to this particular by-law, Sandy McClellan was nominated for treasurer, a vote was put to the membership and she was elected by acclamation. Her husband Richard gave an audible "sigh" of relief!

The president advised the members that assessment of the damage in Pensacola might make the 2005 reunion in Pensacola questionable, so a decision was made to go to Charleston, SC instead of Pensacola.

Bob Palmer provided about 18 hats with the association logo. The hats sold out in a very short time so it appears there is a demand for hats, shirts etc. The president committed to contacting a vendor to see about setting up an order type operation.

A member suggested that popular activities in the community at the reunion site be included with the information about the reunion. The secretary took this for action.

The president told of a need for staggering the terms of association officers to provide continuity. The position of vice-president was opened for nominations and David Thomas was nominated. His nomination was put to a vote and he was elected by acclamation. The association appreciates outgoing VP Ed Witt for his participation.

A member suggested that the trophy awarded in the annual golf tournament be limited to association members. Any action on this will be through the golf participants.

As there were no additional items, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 0925.



Dues and Membership

A new procedure has been implemented to let members know their dues status. A number appears following the member's name in the newsletter address label. A "5" indicates 2005, a "6" 2006 and so on. This number indicates the year (October) the dues expires. It should be pointed out that the absence of a number does not indicate you are paid up until 3000!

Dues are due in October and are 15.00 yearly or 25.00 for two years. Money taken in is used for the benefit of all. We depend on your personal honor in the matter of dues payment. Checks should be made out to VQ Association and sent to the secretary, Allan Prevette, at 3232 Village 3, Camarillo, CA 93012.

Please note also that the secretary/editor has a new email address. The correct address is: pierreputt@earthlink.net.



Share your experiences!

We are still seeking stories (sea stories are fine!) and tales about your VQ experiences. We need them

so we can document them for posterity and use them in future issues of the association news letter.

We also need photos of aircraft and people. Photos over the internet would be great. If you're not on the net, you can send in a photo and we will make a copy and return it you! Please send inputs to Allan "Putt" Prevette, 3232 Village 3, Camarillo, CA 93012 or email to pierreputt@earthlink.net.



A3 Whalers Reunion, Pensacola, Florida Spring 2005

check www.a3skywarrior.com for details

To Speak of Many Things (Part One)

by Bob Bublitz

In October of 1951, the Korean War was still on. Tens and tens of thousands of Americans, Koreans and Chinese were yet to die in the nearly two years before the fighting would stop while the talking, talking, talking continued even as it does today over 40 years later. The disintegration of the US 25th(?) Division, thrown piecemeal from its comfortable occupation billets in defeated Japan into the path of the tough, well-led, well-trained, Soviet-equipped North Korean Army was clearly remembered in the strains of the "Bugout Boogie" (When that old four deuce begins to chug, the Twenty-Fifth begins to bug, bug-out boogie...). The battle of the Pusan perimeter was a year earlier; the US Army's Tenth Corps remembered all too vividly the mauling it received from the Chinese People's Liberation Army as it neared the Manchurian border, and the First Marine Division, proud conqueror of Guadalcanal and innumerable Pacific Islands, was still adjusting to the lessons administered to it by the Chinese on its chilly "advance to the rear" from the deep freeze of the Chosin Reservoir to the icy beach at Wonsan.

The aircraft carrier Valley Forge, completing a peaceful six-month Far East tour in June of 1950, was held on station off Korea until late fall, her pilots and aircrews constituting a major portion of the scanty US airpower available to stem the rising North Korean tide. As other carriers arrived to take up the load, the "Happy Valley" finally made it back to Pearl Harbor en route to her home port, San Diego. Before she made it to the West Coast, the Chinese stormed across the Yalu and the Happy Valley and her weary warriors were again thrown back into their "tide-stemming" work. Late in the spring of '51, after nearly 18 months in the Far East and a year of continuous fighting, Valley Forge and her crew arrived back in San Diego(?). Some of the officers and crew found - to their surprise - that they were still married. Many, many more found that while they had been married, they weren't any more. Eighteen months is a long, long time.

On October 5 of that year, four Martin-built Mercator-type aircraft (Navy designation P4M-1Q), constituting the Special Projects Division of VC-11's Miramar Detachment, lifted off from NAS Miramar bound for NAS Whidbey Island. Airborne for six hours, they were on the first leg of a deployment that would take them nearly half way around the world and last for nearly a half a century.

The fact that until June of 1951, all officers were required to be (a) volunteers and (b) bachelors also added some glamour to the legend. You know, the old "eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow..." Initially, efforts had been made to recruit only unmarried aircrews, but it quickly became apparent that if the enlisted aircrews were to be all volunteers, it was going to be a very small unit. The unwed volunteer requirement was quickly dropped for enlisted personnel. The apparent reason behind the requirement was that ComAirPac, anticipating high attrition among our crews, reasoned that there would be less fuss if the casualties had no wives and children. Also, initially, we were told that the

tour of duty would be two years without dependents, not a cheerful prospect, but one which vanished when the decision was made to base us in the Philippines, outside of the Korean combat support area from which dependents were excluded.

ComAirPac's expectation of high attrition was not unreasonable, for at that time the Air Force's 91st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron was operating on similar missions in the Far East and encountering considerable testiness on the part of the Soviets, North Koreans and others, leading to the loss of several of their aircraft. Over the next few years, the 91st (whose members proudly boasted that their squadron had not gone one year without being under fire since their founding as an observation squadron in 1917) would lose some more. The Navy also had lost some non-specialized VP aircraft doing SigInt work. Indeed, we were told that at one point in time, 25% of the crews and 50% of the aircraft engaged in SigInt operations had been lost.

Be that as it may, in June of 1951 the bachelor/volunteer business was dropped and LTJG John "Red" Farrell and I were unceremoniously assigned to the Special Projects Division of VC-11's Miramar Detachment. Red and I were fresh out of flight training after several years of shipboard service. Our only special distinction, apparently, was that we had previously held security clearances.

Our grandparent, VC-11 (with which we had no contact whatsoever) flew "guppy" ADs out of NAS San Diego, deploying detachments of early warning and ECM aircraft with carrier air groups. The Miramar Detachment, our parent, flew Boeing B-17s, that were designated PB1Ws(?) which had been outfitted as airborne CICs, predecessors to the WV-1 Constellations.

A couple of months earlier, the Special Project Division's original 12 pilots had flown over to NAS Patuxent River on the Chesapeake Bay, to transition into the P4M-1Qs. Originally, we were to get BUNOs 121451-4, but BUNO 121452 apparently threw several turbine blades from one of its jet engines while on a high speed low altitude test flight and crashed in the Chesapeake killing its three man crew. BUNO 124369 was assigned to us in lieu of the crashed aircraft.

At Miramar, nobody bothered us; everybody ignored us and we went our merry way, making our own rules and figuring out what we were doing all by our selves. VC-11 Miramar was most generous with time and talent, but that was about all the support we got.

Life at Miramar was pleasant as we became acquainted with our new aircraft and fellow fliers. The two of us that were married found housing and enjoyed the little time we could spend with our families, while flying day and night radar and celestial navigation flights and gunnery hops. Maybe sometime I'll tell you about the time that two of us intrepid navigators managed to miss the West Coast of the US while flying eastbound. Or maybe that's a tale best left untold.

Then there was the time a middle-aged first class Aviation Radioman came to me and asked for permission to marry. I knew he was going with a woman with three children and as a 24 year old

fatherly type, I read him a little lecture about the responsibility of taking on a wife just prior to a deployment which we knew would be dangerous and last for two years without families (as we thought at that time). He said he had thought about that. I then asked him if he had considered what it meant to become responsible for three children, to which he replied, "I don't know why I shouldn't, Lieutenant, they're all my kids." Public mores were a little different then, and I hastily dropped the counseling session and granted the necessary permission.

Late in August, I was summoned to an obscure corner of ComAirPac's offices at NAS San Diego. An emaciated Lieutenant who looked like he hadn't seen the sun for months was sitting in front of a massive vault. Upon establishing my identity, he handed me a sealed envelope containing our operations order. Back at Miramar, I read it several times, then took it to John Douglas, who also read it, while shaking his head. He asked me what I thought of the two-part operations and communications document. I said I thought it was pretty confusing and that the only explanation I could think of was that the operations part was written by the communicators and the communications part was written by the operators.

The bad news was that the so-called OpOrder didn't give us much guidance. The good news was that it only contained one clear prohibition: under no circumstances were we to come closer than 20 miles to communist-held territory, so we had lots of room to work out our own doctrines.

Since that October day, the unit has been called by many names: Special Projects Division, VC-11, Miramar; Special Projects Division, NavSta Sangley Point; VW-1 Detachment A; VW-3 Detachment A; and ECMRon One and finally, Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron One (VQ-1). Needless to say, the personnel of the unit have changed many times over.

As a LTJG and freshly designated Naval Aviator, I was one of the participants in that flight, serving as Navigator on BUNO 121453, one of 19 operational P4Ms procured by the Navy a few years earlier. It was also one of the last times she would fly under her true number. Once we arrived in the Philippines, she and her three companion aircraft got new - and false - tail numbers every month for the rest of their lives.

A few years ago, I searched the Naval Air Museum in Pensacola for the P4M, but it has almost disappeared from the history of Naval Aviation. Maybe, just maybe, that's appropriate, considering the fact that for the decade they were the Navy's front line SigInt aircraft, the last thing that the Navy wanted was for P4Ms to be ogled by the public. I finally found a black and white photo of a P4M - I think it was 121453 because '453 couldn't retract her tail skag and the P4M in the photo was dragging her skag - in the display of the Pratt and Whitney R4360 engine. It's a sad note that a plane that did so much for the Navy and in which so many

officers and bluejackets fought and died should end its days as a mere footnote to the biggest reciprocating aircraft engine ever built.

Where did this P4M come from? The stories vary. One has it that the plane was designed during World War II to serve as an aerial mine-layer, to bottle up the Japanese ports in preparation for the US invasion of Japan. There is some credibility to that, since the diagrams of the P4M offer six different bomb bay loadings, three of which are mine loads. Also, on its first and only overseas deployment with a patrol squadron (VP-21), the squadron's mission was minelaying. An element of doubt arises, however, since crewmen who served with VP-21 report that mines were rarely carried.

Another theory holds that the plane was designed by Martin to compete with Lockheed's P2V for the role of the Navy's post WW II patrol bomber, but lost the contest due to the P4M's greater cost. That theory stands up fairly well. The Navy was able to equip about 50% more VP squadrons with P2Vs than would have been the case with the P4M. Also lending credence to that theory is the fact that as the P2V went through a long series of modifications and upgrades, it ultimately acquired many of the characteristics of the P4M, jet engines, etc., etc. One thing the P2V could never replicate was the P4M's enormous internal space, room for the large amounts of electronic equipment P4M's carried when they were converted into the P4M-1Q reconnaissance version.

The P4M, a cantilever shoulder-winged monoplane boasted two Pratt & Whitney R4360 4-row/28 cylinder/56 spark plug engines generating some 3,250 BHP driving 4-bladed Hamilton Standard props. Aided and abetted by the two Allison J-33 3,800 pound thrust turbojets, one slung under each R4360, the old Mercator was an awesome package of power for its day. With two "churnin" and two "burnin," it was the biggest fuel hog flying as well as the nosiest blasted airplane in the Fleet as borne out by the following tale:

The P4M in its "Q" version lugged twin 20mm cannons in an Emerson bow turret and a Martin tail turret and a pair of .50 cal. machine guns in a dorsal turret aft of the wing. The tail turret had a disconcerting habit of "dumping," losing hydraulic power, and frustrating the gunner with two guns pointed permanently downward until repairs could be made on the ground. The bomb bay was home to four 400 gallon fuel tanks.

Sprightly on take-off, the Mercator could climb over 2,000' per minute with its inconspicuous - but noisy - jets on. In those days, 500' feet/minute was the standard rate of climb for multi-engine aircraft and only the hottest prop fighters boasted 1,000 fpm climb capability.

One night in the Kadena O Club, LT John Douglas, our skipper, ran into a newly arrived commander, CO of the first VP squadron to deploy to Okinawa with an early (no jets) version of the P2V. Pleased with his new toy, ignorant of the publicity-shy P4M, and inordinately proud of the rate of climb the R3350 compound engines could

deliver, the CO offered to bet John \$100 he could beat him to 1,000' from a standing start. John, a big, slow talking Oklahoma boy, looked at the CO for a bit, and then said, "Tell you what, Captain, for \$200, I'll feather one right after take-off and still beat you to 1,000'." Suspicious, the CO declined the wager and embarked on less confrontational aircraft characteristic research.

Range, according to the handbook, was 2,400 nautical miles with bomb bay tanks, which we never flew without. 2,400 miles though, was stretching things a bit. We regarded anything more than about 2,200 miles as "Get there and fall out of the sky with empty tanks" range. Endurance was rated at 14 hours at most economical cruise, around 170 knots. We normally flew at 180 knots indicated, which gave us a total endurance of about 13 hours to dry tanks. Our normal patrols were 9.5-10.5 hours, with an occasional stretch to nearly 12 hours.

When converted to the "Q" version, the Mercator carried a crew of 14-16 men, in what for those days was regarded as real comfort. We even had a galley, and I have fond memories of watching the sunrise over the East China Sea while eating freshly prepared bacon and eggs with toast.

The permanent flight crews were composed of three pilots, one of whom navigated, a pair of Aviation Radiomen, an Aviation Electronicsman (radar operator), two Aviation Machinists Mates and an Aviation Ordnanceman. Plus, an officer SigInt Evaluator and four enlisted SigInt operators were drawn from any of the electronics oriented ratings—mostly aviation—but including an occasional Communications Technician or Radioman. Each crew was assigned its own airplane, which it flew pretty much exclusively. When operating away from home base, the permanent crew was supplemented with an Aviation Electrician or Aviation Metalsmith or both, depending upon the ailments and peculiarities of the particular airplane deploying.

This concludes part one of Bob's recollections about the early day's of VQ. Part two will be in next newsletter. Editor

.....

The New Face of Airborne Reconnaissance?

Robert Hall/Washington

Lockheed Martin's winning of the U.S. Army's future signals intelligence aircraft gives a big boost to the contractor and its team member Embraer; however, program officials are worried that Northrop Grumman's losing team may protest the decision.

The Army awarded the Lockheed Martin-led team an \$879-million system design and development contract for the Aerial Common Sensor (ACS), which in-

cludes delivery of five aircraft. Production, which would commence in 2007 would be for 33 more Embraer EMB/ERJ-145s, and potentially almost 20 more if the U.S. Navy sticks with its commitment to join the project. The total program value could reach \$7 billion.

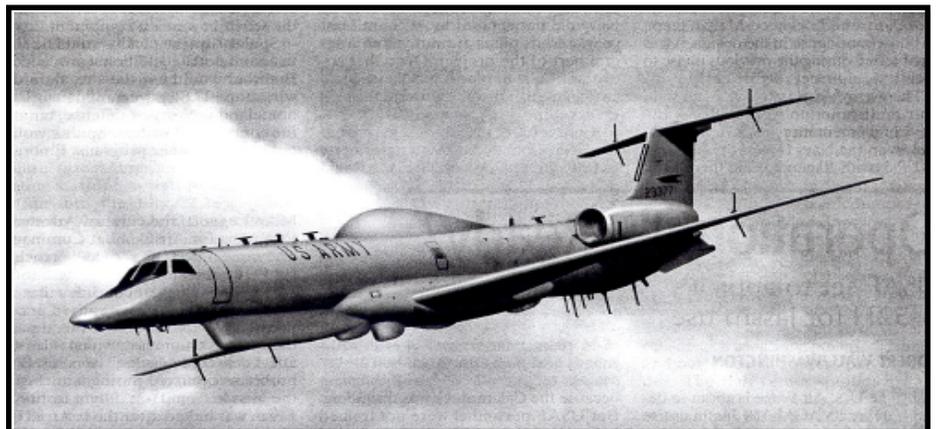
For Embraer, the award is of strategic importance because it's the first win of a U.S. national security program for the Brazilian company. It also cushions the blow to Lockheed Martin from the recent loss to Boeing on the Navy's Multimission Maritime Aircraft—although the latter is much larger with more than 100 aircraft.

Northrop Grumman officials were dismayed at the decision, particularly because they believe their Gulfstream 450 platform offering would have met all the Army's future performance requirements (especially for altitude), while the EMB/ERJ-145 would need upgrading.

The loss weighs heavy on Northrop Grumman. Through acquisitions, it became a major player on Army intelligence aircraft, both the RC-12 Guardrail Common Sensor and the RC-7 Airborne Reconnaissance Low that will be replaced by ACS. A company official said, "We eagerly await the Army's debriefing on their reasons for declining what we believe to be the best-value proposal for this critical program." Northrop Grumman hasn't indicated whether it will challenge the decision.

The fear of a protest has led the Army and the winning team to be circumspect regarding what's ahead. Nevertheless, Lockheed Martin has embarked on a 66-month development effort. Aircraft flight testing should commence not too far into the future, suggests Wes Coburn, deputy vice president for Lockheed Martin Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Systems. Development of the mission system and flight certification will be undertaken in parallel to save time.

ACS will fly at 37,000 ft.—which the Army eventually wants to boost to above 40,000 ft.—and carry a 13,000-lb. payload. Five aerial exploitation battalions will be set up, with seven aircraft each. An additional two aircraft will be used for training and continued development. The Pentagon already has approved the first lot of seven low-rate production aircraft, which would be on top of the five built in the development



Artist's rendition of Embraer EMB/ERA-145

phase. The first unit should be operational in 2007.

Coburn concedes ACS is being developed on an "aggressive schedule," but he notes that much of the hardware was demonstrated during prior risk-mitigation phases, so the main task will be integrating components. To minimize hurdles, Lockheed Martin has opted for a high degree of off-the-shelf technology with a high percentage of software reuse. In the areas where development work is needed, Coburn says the company has laid out primary and secondary paths to ensure there's a fallback if problems arise.

Developing a low-band (communications intercept) subsystem—a key feature of ACS—has posed problems for the Pentagon. Fairfax, Va.-based Argon Engineering has devised the low-band approach for the Lockheed Martin team. To boost confidence in the design, it was flight tested during the previous phase to show it would meet requirements.

The Army ACS is to be fitted with four multifunction workstations; the Navy implementation would feature six. However, the Navy is used to operating its EP-3s with 20 people, and there's still concern in the service over whether its needs can be satisfied with a smaller contingent. Boeing officials have suggested they might be able to accommodate the signals intelligence role and re-create with the Boeing 737 the existing arrangement in which maritime surveillance and sigint aircraft use the same platform. Acting Pentagon acquisition chief Michael Wynne has told the Army and Navy to fully integrate their efforts. The Navy did not commit to ACS until last year, and its plans are not yet an integral part of the project. Once that coordination is in place, the Pentagon's civilian overseers will scrutinize the program again. Embraer has already begun work at the Cecil Commerce Center (formerly Cecil Field) in Jacksonville, Fla., to build its production site. The company is constructing a 71,000-sq.-ft. hangar and office space on 10 acres with an option for 30 more acres. The facility should come on line in the second half of next year and have 150-200 employees, says Gary Spulak, president of Embraer Aircraft Holding. The facility eventually will become a classified site to accommodate the security requirements for ACS.

EMB/ERJ-145 production will begin in Brazil and likely cover the first three aircraft, with work shifting around the fourth aircraft. By the fifth, the team expects to have moved production to the U.S. Embraer will build the aircraft and provide space for the various sensors and antennas. However, the aircraft will be taken to L-3 Communications' Greenville, Tex., site for installation of the sensitive mission equipment. Spulak says the facility would be able to accommodate additional production. Embraer would use the site, should it win more U.S. government work in homeland security or defense, but not for commercial orders.

Spulak would not say what other programs Embraer is targeting.

*Aviation Week & Space Technology/August 9, 2004
Our thanks to Ron Paul, JD Miles and Dave Laney for their inputs. Editor*

.....

A Sad Day in the Cold War
By CDR Robert C. M. Ottensmeyer
U.S. Navy (Deceased)

Things went like clockwork—until we lost an engine. What began as part of the continuing cat-and-mouse intelligence game of the Cold War turned into a night when we ditched in the open ocean and a brave naval officer died. On 6 February 1952 at about 1600 local time, we launched in our P4M-1Q Martin Mercator from the Royal Air Force base at Nicosia, Cyprus. We were home-based at Naval Air Facility, Port Lyautey, French Morocco (now Kenitra), on a special electronics search project mission. There were 15 on board—airplane crew and intelligence specialists—from the Patrol Unit and Naval Communications Unit 32 George (32G), both based at Port Lyautey.

The take-off and climb were uneventful. After crossing the southern coast of Turkey near Adana at our planned altitude and on course, Lieutenant Bob Hager, the plane commander, secured the two J-33 jet engines, and the back-end (Mickey) crew proceeded to check out their equipment. I briefed the operators on the overall mission objective, the expected environment at various positions on track, and information of significant interest to satisfy requirements. We planned to use some signals to double-check our track as an assist to the navigator. The plane crew checked out its inter communications (intercom) system to ensure it was working properly between front-end and back-end crews—and we in the back verified that our own private system was up. The plane crew could talk without bothering us, and we could discuss classified information without bothering them. Lieutenant Hager and I could talk to each other as required for coordination.

The aircraft and crew then settled down.



HMS Chevron, a British destroyer out of Malta that picked up the crew of the ditched PRM on February 7, 1952

Normal operations meant radio and radar silence; the radar, if used at all, it was operated discretely in short sweeps in specific directions and specific angles and directions of antenna radiation for flight safety and navigation, only. We continued on track and crossed the north coast of Turkey between Trabzon and Batumi a few miles from the border between Turkey and the Soviet Union. All hands were alert for any unfriendly reactions to our presence over the Black Sea.

We climbed and signal activity increased; Hager adjusted our altitude, course, and speed to gain maximum access to the information we wanted. Our track was approximately 20 to 30 nautical miles south of a line joining Suchumi and Simelz. Southeast of Sevastopol, we set up a racetrack pattern between 15 and 40 nautical miles from the city to stimulate signal activity--which we certainly did! I could see the lighted sky over Sevastopol and Yalta, where Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Josef Stalin met during World War II. Shortly after the last out-bound leg, approximately 50 nautical miles southeast of the city, the starboard R-4360 engine blew an oil line; the crew feathered the propeller, secured the engine, and our routine flight got more interesting.

Hager and I evaluated our situation and decided to abort the mission, light off the J-33s, and head for home. We descended to get below the Soviet radar horizon and picked up 150 knots to conserve fuel, crossing back into Turkey northwest of Samsun in the vicinity of Sinop. At 10,000 feet, we cleared the Kuzey Anadolu range. But we were consuming too much fuel using both jet engines, so Hager secured the port J-33 and ordered the crew to lighten ship to maintain altitude.

We still had some mountains ahead of us. The nature of the mission precluded a landing in Turkey; Nicosia was the only option--and we could not use the radio transmitter unless we were going to bail out. I opened the after belly hatch and we prepared to jettison everything possible, using fire axes and hammers to destroy the classified equipment before pushing it out. I straddled the open hatch and pushed the equipment out--giving each a strong shove to keep it away from the aircraft. The whole process took about 30 minutes, and included all of our personal baggage. We then went to bailout stations. None of us relished the thought of bailing out over the rugged, snowy mountains. We flew by Mount Hasan Dagi, and its peak--10,672 feet--was higher than we were. We cleared other ranges and the Taurus Mountains and breathed a little easier, especially when we looked back and saw that we had flown through a saddleback that did not leave much room on either side. Everyone was praying that we would make it to the Mediterranean as we thought we were almost out of gas and flying on fumes.

At approximately 0045 on 7 February, we crossed the Turkish coast outbound at Tasuco and went immediately to our ditching stations, discarding our parachute harnesses as we went. Ear-

lier, I had gathered all of the classified material pertaining to the mission and placed it in a weighted jettison bag with multiple holes, along with my 38-caliber revolver. Approximately two minutes after crossing the coastline, all engines stopped and it got very quiet. We were at 7,500 feet. The only lights in sight were in the glow over a city in the distance. Hager executed an open-ocean dead stick ditching at approximately 0100. There were large swells, but it was done very professionally and smoothly, all things considered. It appeared that we had landed in a sea state 4 to 5. Moments later, all hands began getting out. All of us in back, plus the tail gunner and the assistant plane captain, exited over the main wing spar emergency exit on the starboard side. The rest of the aircraft crew exited through forward escape hatches. We deployed the life rafts and clambered in. Immediately, I called the names of all crewmembers who were not in my raft to ascertain if anyone was missing. Everyone answered except Hager. Ensign John Wojnar and I jumped in the water, inflating our Mae Wests, and searched around the aircraft for about 30-45 seconds, then it began to slide beneath the surface. Not wanting to get sucked under, we paddled away.

After the aircraft disappeared from sight, we swam around the area calling out Bob Hager's name and blowing our whistles. This elicited a shout from Lieutenant (junior grade) Ralph Parsons that Bob had helped him out of the plane because he had injured his back on impact with the water. Bob had escaped from the plane, but he apparently reentered the aircraft to ensure all were out and was trapped when it sank. He was that kind of a naval officer. We tied our two life rafts together and took stock. Parsons appeared to have a broken back, Wojnar had a nasty cut on his head, and Lieutenant Don Huddleston had some bruises and contusions.

On the island of Malta, Group Captain, Jimmy Morgan, Royal Air Force, our British liaison officer, was beginning to worry because he had not received word that we had returned, mission completed. Morgan coordinated all of the search requirements that needed British assistance, whether it was on Malta or in England. His instructions were to open the classified mission envelope two-and-a-half hours after the aircraft was overdue from any mission. His only knowledge of our mission was our takeoff and landing locations. If we filed an international flight plan, it was bogus. Most of the time, no flight plans were filed. Our radioman had sent a Mayday as we were making our no-power descent to the ocean but had been unable to get a confirmation that anyone had it before we hit the water. As the rafts rose to the top of a swell, we could see the lighted sky over Nicosia on the horizon. We readied our flares, positioned the radar reflector, broke out the emergency radio, and conserved our flashlight batteries. All that remained was to transmit a signal, stay together, and wait.



A copy of a P4M photograph that was signed by the rescued sailors and presented to many of the crew in the HMS Chevron.

Within 30 minutes after getting in the rafts, we could hear at least two aircraft that appeared to be searching in a box pattern. We used flares and flashlights, but the swells hid us for all but a few seconds of our bobbing up and down. We learned later that the aviators flying these aircraft had been alerted in a local nightclub and had taken off in all of ten minutes after being alerted. Real gung-ho chaps, the British said.

At about 0400, a ship came into view every so often over the horizon. We continued to activate the emergency radio and the radar reflector, hoping that this would indicate our location to the searchers. Something worked, because the ship finally headed our way. At sunrise, we used smoke and dye markers, and the ship sighted us about an hour-and-a-half after daybreak. By 0820, HMS Chevron came alongside, hoisted us aboard, and we were whisked away to the wardroom for drinks on the Queen. The ship headed for Famagusta.

At Port Lyautey, Lieutenant Dominic Deremegio, assistant officer-in-charge of 32G, called on my wife; he delivered a package from Sears mail order, told her of the ditching, and that one person had been lost. He tried to allay her fears and returned to the base.

After all of the crew members were examined at the RAF hospital and cleared for duty by the doctors, we loaded into a VR-21 aircraft that had been sent to ferry us back home and took off for Port Lyautey. When we got there, every one was on hand to welcome us; it was a bittersweet homecoming without our pilot. The mission was classified and publicity was kept to a minimum. The crew later got a Bravo Zulu from the Chief of Naval Operations and others in the chain of command, but, to this day, the heroic actions of all--and Bob Hager, who did so much for all of us--have never been recognized.

The editor has been in contact with Bob's widow, Gladys, and she is very pleased that her late husband's story is appearing in this newsletter. She resides in Santa Rosa, California. The late Bob Harrelson provided this input which appeared in "Naval Institute Proceedings."

On My Honor, A Navy Wife's Vietnam War
By Karen Waggoner

"I won't tell you when I'm leaving or where I'm going. I won't tell you when I will return. When I do return, I won't tell you where I've been or what I've done. So don't ask."

It is the real conversation I had with my husband in November of 1968 when we were newly arrived at NAS Atsugi, Japan, and new to VQ-1. For me, it was the beginning of an adventure filled with fear, frustration, and great pride in my new role as a VQ-1 wife.

Our years in VQ-1 were a life-altering experience that I would love to share with you in my book, On My Honor, A Navy Wife's Vietnam War (ISBN 1-59286-804-5). This candid look at an ordinary life in extraordinary circumstances is available at my website, www.karenwaggoner.com, as well as www.Amazon.com and in your favorite bookstore. When you have read it, please share your comments with me on my website.



Man on the Moon

On July 21, 1969, as commander of the Apollo 11 Lunar Module, Neil Armstrong was the first person to set foot on the moon. His first words after stepping on the moon, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind" were televised to earth and heard by millions, but just before he re-entered the lander he made the enigmatic remark, "Good Luck, Mr. Gorsky." Many people at NASA thought it was a casual remark concerning some rival Soviet cosmonaut. However, upon checking there was no Gorsky in either the Russian or American space programs. Over the years many people questioned Armstrong as to what the "Good luck, Mr. Gorsky" statement meant, but Armstrong always just smiled. On July 5, 1995, in Tampa Bay, Florida while answering questions following a speech, a reporter brought up the 26 year-old question to Armstrong. This time he finally responded. Mr. Gorsky had died, so Neil Armstrong felt he could answer the question. In 1938 when he was a kid in a small Midwest town he was playing baseball with a friend in the backyard. His friend hit the ball, which landed in his neighbor's yard by the bedroom windows. His neighbors were Mr. and Mrs. Gorsky. As he leaned down to pick up the ball, young Armstrong heard Mrs. Gorsky shout at Mr. Gorsky "Sex! You want Sex!? You'll get sex when the kid next door walks on the moon."

Our thanks to Dick McClellan for this input (I think). Editor



VQ Association Reunion 2005, Charleston, SC

Now is the time to start making plans for Charleston, October 6-9, 2005. Fine accommodations, a delightful harbor dinner cruise, a fabulous Sunday lunch at one of the oldest southern plantations in America and golf at a championship course are all planned for your enjoyment.

Information is now posted on our website (kleinandstump.com/VQ) under 2005 Charleston Reunion. The Summer/Fall 2005 Newsletter will have more details and sign up information.

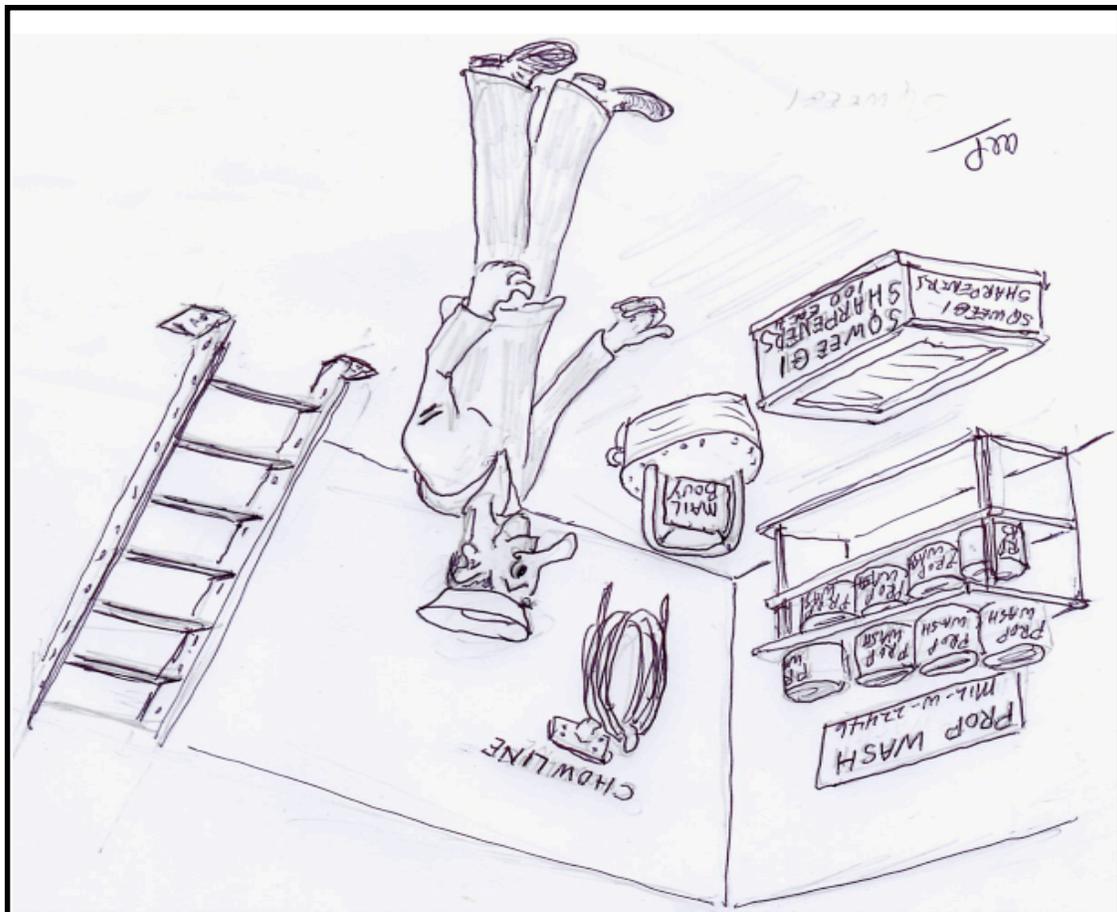


Winter/Spring 2005 Issue

VQ Association

Allan Prevette, Secretary
3232 Village 3
Camarillo, CA 93012

Visit the VQ Association website at kleinandstump.com/VQ



Y
V
A
N

Y
L
E