

VQ Association News Letter Winter/Spring 2006

From the President:

I hope I speak for Putt as well as myself in thanking you for your continued confidence in us as we both accepted the nomination and election to another term as Secretary and President of this August association. Dick McClellan was also elected to a position on the board of directors and we offer our congratulations to him.

We often hear after a reunion that this was the best ever. Well, thanks to Dick and Sandy McClellan, we seem to have a majority opinion that Charleston was truly the best ever and, I might add, a most memorable one. With a little help from our Chaplain, Dr. Jaye, speaking on our behalf for clear skies, the weather predicted to be bad on Saturday instead turned out to be beautiful. For those who missed it, it was a lost opportunity to mingle with friends and a fantastic night with even better food on a cruise of Charleston Harbor. Sunday's traditional Southern dinner at the beautiful Middleton Plantation left us all feeling we had enjoyed it too much and needed the walk around the plantation to work it off.

Believe it or not an EP-3 flight engineer won the well-received raffle for the numbered painting of PR-32, the EP3E aircraft knocked down by the Chinese. Thanks to Ed Witt for providing two of the paintings for the raffle.

I can't thank the members enough who organized the reunion and manned the ready room enough for all their efforts in making this one of the most successful events to date. Special thanks to "Putt," Frank, Tom and Dick for organizing the ready room and welcome packets, thanks to all those who brought memorabilia as well as those who helped man the ready room during the five days that the event encompassed. Putt's DVD of some 800 plus photos of people and airplanes from the four squadrons was a smashing success and I understand the collection continues to grow. Thanks to Don, our resident golf pro, and congratulations to Roger, Duel, Mike and James on winning the golf tournament.

Several new members attended this event with the same refrain: "I don't know anyone here." Later when I talked to them I was told they had already found new friends and were going to call others to attend in the future. With a VQ background it is not hard to get a conversation started and develop new friendships from common experiences.

This event drew about 200, even with the challenges of the two big hurricanes and high fuel prices. The next event will be in San Diego and has the potential to be one of the most highly attended events to date. We need to make sure everyone we know who was affiliated with the Q knows that the organization exists and that we are having a reunion. Spread the word and let's make San Diego the biggest event ever. Call friends and let's use this event to get together with long lost shipmates.

Clint

VQ Association General Membership Meeting Charleston, SC, October 9, 2005

President Clint Epley called the meeting to order at 0900. There were 40 plus members in attendance.

Clint brought up that the position of president and secretary were open for nomination, as the two incumbents have served three years. A motion was made and seconded that Clint Epley and Allan Prevette be elected for another tour. This passed by acclamation of those present.

Clint advised that there was one open position on the board of directors. A motion was made to draft Dick McClellan and this was quickly seconded. This passed by acclamation of those present.

President Epley read a message into the record from Mel

Davidow, one of the first 12 pilots selected for the Special Projects Division in 1951. Mel is facing some serious medical problems. The association appreciates his long time support of the association and his contribution to the VQ heritage.

The popular VQ Association golf trophy has run out of space to list winners. Member Bill Knable volunteered to get a new base made that will allow inclusion of future winners.

President Epley brought up the idea of permanent name tags for reunions, as making name tags was a continuing cost to the association. The assembled members agreed that a permanent name tag should be adopted. This will be an action for the secretary with monitoring from the board.

President Epley suggested that fixed dates in October for reunions essentially excluded many places in the US to be considered for reunions. Furthermore, by allowing some leeway in dates, better rates may be

available at reunion sites. The assembled members agreed so future reunion dates will be predicated on location and cost advantages.

Two spirited presentations were made on 2007 reunion location for Wichita, KS and Durango, CO. A voice vote of assembled members was taken and Durango was selected. Dick McClellan will be the coordinator. Our thanks to Jim Gresty for his Wichita presentation. He is a very animated advocate!

Clint brought up that the position of historian is still open. While some have volunteered, none were present at the reunion. As this is one of the most important tasks of an association, due consideration will be given to all who volunteer. There were some at the Charleston reunion who expressed interest and this is appreciated. Final selection will be subject to approval by the board at San Diego in 2006.

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A Day at the "O" Club

A Captain went to the "O" Club to eat lunch. Entering the dining room, he found the place was quite crowded. Three young Lieutenants were sitting at a table with one empty chair, so he asked them if he could sit down. They promptly invited him to join them.

In the course of their conversation, the Captain mentioned that he could observe characteristics from which he could determine the source of officer's commissioning. The LTs were eager to hear about this and how it applied to them.

The Captain told the LT on his left, "You went through

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To Speak of Many Things. By Bob Bublitz

At Sangley Point, life loped along. We commenced operations in November, 1951 and gradually settled into a routine. Missions were launched at any minute of any hour of any day of the week in order to avoid establishing a predictable pattern. A typical mission would take off at 0242, heading for the coastal area to be patrolled. Using a call sign "Navy" and the last four digits of the false Bureau Number painted on the tail, 100 miles out of Sangley we would check out of the radio net with "Manila Control, this is Navy 1234 100 miles out."

At that time, all navigation lights were extinguished and radio silence set until, 100 miles out of our destination, we would check into the radio net again. About half an hour from the point where we would turn to patrol parallel to the coast all turrets were manned. Occasionally, test bursts were fired, but we later dispensed with that procedure as the test firing blew the plastic tampions from the gun barrels, leaving them vulnerable to ice accumulation. If then you needed to fire, the guns could burst from the accumulated ice in the barrels.

Then followed five, six or seven hours of quiet droning along on autopilot, holding altitude, making gentle turns to remain 20, 25 or 30 miles off shore and watching for aircraft which might resent the presence of our blue monster. No reports from the men in the after fuselage, just little flurries of activity as the gunners relieve each other in the turrets. Down in the navigation compartment, sometimes we could pick up commercial radio broadcasts, sometimes at remarkable distances. We learned to appreciate the symphonies of Shostakovich, Rimsky-Koraskov, Beethoven and the drill-sergeant sound of Radio Shanghai's "Ee, er, san, szu!" as the morning exercise program roused 12,000,000 Shanghaiese for the morning jerks. Interestingly enough, we could also pick up the Chinese Communist radio aids to navigation, which were still broadcasting on the same frequencies and with the same call signs as they had under the Nationalist regime. We never used them for navigation purposes, though, because of the possibility of deception and the danger of being led into forbidden areas by relying on them.

The radioman always had the current code groups for various contingencies: "Attacked by aircraft," "Tracked by aircraft," and "Fired on by surface craft" taped up over his transmitter key. If any of those events transpired, the navigator immediately handed the radioman the current position, which he then transmitted to the Navy shore stations on the radio net.

I remember one time when two MiG-15s made firing passes at us. The tail gunner, presiding over a "dumped" and useless tail turret, called out over the intercom, "I've got two MiGs back here at 5 o'clock and they're firing." I responded, "Roger, all turrets, fire back, Radio, send your message." With no break whatsoever, the radioman said, "I've got a 'Roger.'" Amazing, how fast you can send radiotelegraphy with a hand key when properly motivated.

On that particular occasion, the MiGs missed as we rolled into a 90 degree right bank and dove for the deck. Flipping the jet throttles to the air-start position, we hit 395 knots (a bit over the red line) before settling down about 350 feet above the water. The 3-400 foot zone was a good place to be. If we flew higher, the MiGs could make gunnery runs on us; lower and they could resort to strafing tactics.

Running under a thin cloud deck at about 1,000' a few minutes later, we were called by a Navy cruiser en route back to Korea from R&R. When we confirmed that we were a ferret aircraft, the cruiser asked us if we had brought any of our playmates with us.

"Not that we know of," we replied. "Well," said the cruiser, "I have three contacts on my scope, two of them a mile or so behind the first. If you like, make a low pass and we'll clean them off for you." "Roger and appreciate that," we responded, "give us a steer and we'll be right along. But please tell the gun-boss that we're the big blue one in front!" In any event, the MiGs broke off and returned to their base and we proceeded somewhat more sedately to ours.

On a number of occasions at night, we would see the exhaust from jets which were obviously out hunting us, but without A/I radar, they had little success in finding us. The patrol vessels did somewhat better at finding us, but were such poor marksmen that we never even bothered to report the occasions when they opened fire on us. Because we flew at relatively low altitudes and on a steady course, they frequently popped away at us with their 3" guns. We assumed they always hid in amongst a bunch of fishing vessels when they fired because they had respect for our 20mm and didn't want to make us really mad.

Although the SigInt guys were very security conscious, on one occasion I learned a little bit about what they did. One day, the skipper of the NavCommUnit detachment called me into their end of the quonset hut they shared with us and said they had a problem. They were picking up signals from a radar of US origin which appeared to be in downtown Shanghai - a strange place for a radar. He knew I had been in and out of Shanghai aboard ship a few years before the Communists took over and asked if I had any idea of what was going on. After WW II, I told him, the Air Force had taken over a hotel, the Broadway Mansions, right by the Garden Bridge over Soochow Creek in downtown Shanghai. Somewhere along the line, the USAF had installed an air traffic control center on the upper floor of the hotel and a surveillance radar on the roof. The ChiComs obviously had put it back in operation. Sighs of relief from the SigInt folks, at least they knew that their bearings were right

As far as I can recall, very few men ever flew with us who were not attached to the Special Projects division. I believe the Captain of the Station and the Air Operations Officer, both pilots, were each given a short orientation flight in a P4M, more for local political reasons than anything else. One of the Station medical officers, a Flight Surgeon, was invited along on local training flights a number of times to get his flight time in. And, of course, we had the occasional VIP from Pearl Harbor to contend with. One tale I still enjoy: We occasionally were visited by officers from CinCPacFleet staff who had the requisite security clearances to fly with us as observers. And, for their benefit, we created the "Instant Hero" patrol route. While I cannot offer the exact route, suffice it to say that it ran through the Formosa Straits and nicked the Korean Combat Zone before retiring to Okinawa. Thus, an intrepid observer (REMFs, they called them in Viet Nam) in one ten-hour flight could acquire a China Service Medal, a Korean Service Medal with a battle star, a United Nations Service Medal, a Korean Presidential Unit Citation (that's one medal every two hours and thirty minutes) and a \$200 deduction on their income tax. They also qualified for 1/10th or 1/20th of an Air Medal depending upon whether we encountered enemy fire or not. They loved us for our thoughtfulness.

We managed to scrape up a number of E&E and survival items from various sources. Scrounged is the operative word. Included were a small compass, the cloth maps, a spherical compass about the size of a small marble, meant to be swallowed just before capture and retrieved after a trip through the intestinal canal, a Japanese watch (derisively referred to as a 'one-time-wind' watch on the grounds that it would probably only work once - don't wind it up to

test it), a serialized gold bar - 1/2 ounce, as I recall, although it might have been an ounce but I don't think we were able to persuade Uncle Sam that we were worth an ounce apiece, a small plastic case for carrying the gold bar, which had two compartments but only one bar, and whatever else we thought would be useful. All crewmen carried some "green" US dollars, special permission for which we were able to obtain through the Paymaster. "Green" was illegal for US personnel to hold in the WestPac area at that time; only MPCs were legal. Most of us carried waterproofed matches and some silver coins as well. The logic for the silver coins was that you could carry a bunch and negotiate a price, whereas with only one gold bar, whatever you were negotiating for was going to cost one gold bar. If you needed two whatevers, you were in trouble. In that sense, the gold bar was also a one-time-use item.

We were issued the blood chits before each flight. Each chit bore a serial number, an American flag and a message in a number of Asian languages, "I am an American airman. Return me to my people and you will be rewarded." In order to avoid the time-consuming chore of checking out serialized chits, gold bars and .38s before each flight, each crewman was permanently issued a chit, gold bar, .38 and other survival and E&E gear. However, except when actually on a flight, each crewman's survival and E&E gear was kept in the custody of the Division Intelligence Officer.

Knowing the importance of opium in the peasant economy of the Far East, we asked if it could be provided as an E&E item. We had no great hope of an affirmative answer, and we didn't get one. Given the attitudes of those times, our request was neither stupid nor unrealistic, but I can appreciate the possible political blow-back had a crew been captured with opium in their pockets. Our concern, however, was not possible political storms; it was in acquiring anything that would enhance our chances of survival, which we had been told were not particularly good.

It is typical of the times that we had to scrounge for and compile our survival and E&E equipment. And, having done that, we found that we had no way to carry the stuff. We finally had our parachute rigger run up 75 light canvas bags about 8" X 8" equipped with a snap so that they could be hooked onto the parachute harness where the right leg strap snapped on. The bags solved the problem of keeping everything under custody - we just collected the bags after each flight and held them until the owner was briefed for another flight.

When loading out for a flight the officers wore khaki-colored cotton flight suits, sometimes over their uniforms, usually wash khakis, but in the winter, greens if heading for cold weather. The enlisted men wore dungarees. I don't remember if they wore flight suits or not, but I seem to remember that they didn't. In really cold weather, we all wore leather flight jackets. Regardless of the weather, we each donned a .38 revolver in a shoulder holster with six tracer rounds in the cylinder and 12 more rounds of ball and tracer on the strap, followed by a life jacket and a parachute harness but no chutes. The chutes were chest packs and kept stowed in the aircraft by the exits and work stations. The gunners had to shed much of their equipment in order to get into the turrets, but redressed when they got out. We were in the Philippines, you know, and during the hot and rainy seasons, we were pretty sweaty and soggy getting into the plane. Took a couple hours at altitude to dry out, and while we never smelled very good, at least we all smelled alike.

It is interesting to note that of 19 operational P4Ms, seven were lost in action or in operational accidents. VQ-1 had one shot down and another stricken because of damage received from hostile

aircraft. One crashed on a test flight and VQ-2 managed to crash four of them. VQ-2 also lost the PB4Y-2 to the Russians in 1950 and a WV-2 to weather in 1962.

A P2V from VP-22 was doing some passive ECM work off Swatow, and having intercepted signals from a radar station on Kinmen Island, moved in closer to try to obtain photography of the antenna. There was always some confusion in determining where those lines actually ran. AA guns on the island shot down the P2V. The Coast Guardsmen at Sangley Point, who had SAR responsibility for the area, launched a SAR PBM. The pilot, a mustang LCDR named Vukic, who had made beaucoup open sea landings, elected to land alongside the men in the water to pick them up. The landing was successful and I believe that 9 of the P2V crew of 10 were picked up, some injured. On takeoff, Vukic fired the JATO bottles (actually, small solid fuel rockets), which malfunctioned on one side, driving the aircraft into a pinwheel crash. About 10 men of the combined crews made it into the water, including Vukic, who was in a raft with two enlisted men. The tide and current were setting the raft toward the island, and when the men tried to paddle away, they drew small arms fire from the beach. The two enlisted men stopped paddling and drifted in to the beach where they were taken prisoner. Vukic left the raft and started swimming. As he later said, "My wife was due in to Sangley Point on the next dependent transport, and I was damned well going to be there to meet her." Vukic's determination is best appreciated when one notes that Kinmen is some 600 sea miles from Sangley Point!

In the meantime, a destroyer from the Formosa Straits patrol had been ordered to the scene and as it maneuvered to pick up survivors, began to take fire. The destroyer radioed (in plain language) Commander, Formosa Straits Patrol for permission to return fire, which was granted, also in plain language. Whereupon the Chinese ceased fire. Three men, including LCDR Vukic, were picked up from the sea. I seem to remember that Vukic received a DFC, and I know I read several low grade intelligence reports about US sailors being marched through the streets of Swatow. To the best of my knowledge, nothing has ever been heard of those men, nor has the US Government ever made any inquiries about them.

I believe the P2V was in violation of CinCPacFlt's standing orders to all patrol aircraft to remain 20 miles offshore. This incident would have been embarrassing to the United States because the P2V violated standing instructions about flights close to Chinese airspace, which may account for the fact that little or no effort has been made to ascertain what happened to the men who were taken prisoner by the Chinese. The legends surrounding the incident also record that the skipper of the VP squadron involved was looking for a way to distinguish himself and his squadron and decided that conducting passive ECM was the way to do it. Passive ECM (SigInt) at that time was not encouraged in the Fleet VP squadrons. While VP aircraft carried some intercept gear, little training was provided.

Bob Bublitz joined the Navy in 1944 at 16, was commissioned in 1946, served on amphib, then got his wings in 1951. After his Sangley tour, he taught primary flight and pre-flight, attended the Intelligence Post Graduate School, qualified as an interpreter/translator in Arabic, and later in German. He served in Baghdad, Washington and Munich as an Intelligence Specialist and retired in 1968. He has written articles starting back in the late '50s on naval matters, dog training and intelligence.

We really appreciate him sharing his recollections of the early days of Special Projects Division which have appeared in three newsletter installments. Editor

Mystery Aircraft Unmasked



Grumman F9F-8T flown by VQ-1 in the early 1960s. This aircraft now resides in a museum in Arizona.



"Tonnerville Trolley," a Lockheed P2V-3 flown by VQ-2 in the late 1950s.

Pete Dunbar writes in an email:

Our original one (F9F-8T) was 147389. I flew it first on 11 Dec 1960. I flew it a number of times until it went to Itami for "Paint & Return" in May 1961. NAS Atsugi signed 147397 over to us while it was gone. That is the one we kept after 389 came back. As I recall they were designated PR-1 and PR-2 respectively. PR-3 was the lowest numbered A3D. Turns out that I did fly some "Station" F9's, (147395 & 147410). My last flight was in PR-1 on 11 Jan 1962. As a result of the fatal crash of an A3D at Atsugi on a Plane Commander checkout in Jan 1961, all of the junior A3D pilots were given split-tours out and were replaced in the right seat by NFO's. Then the Training Command started losing F9's and with production at Grumman shut down, ours were "fair game". They were on a ship headed for Texas in early 1962. The Navy was pulling old TV's out of the desert and running them through Overhaul and Repair to replace F9's that had been "confiscated". We even got the manuals. But wiser heads prevailed. By now, the ones flying them would have been junior WV pilots, doing it just for fun. Old airplanes, many pilots with no single-engine jet experience, another airframe and engine type for maintenance, etc., etc. all added up that someone may have gotten themselves killed.

Our tanks to Pete for sharing this information on a little known era in the VQ squadrons. If anyone recalls any similar experiences at VQ-2, we would like to hear about it. Editor



John J. McIntyre writes in an email:

This is in response to your message earlier about different types in VQ-2. This JQ-7 bird, a P2V-5F (SP-2E) was a late addition to the flock, arriving as I recall after the move to Rota. I am also sending you a shot of the original Toonerville Trolley marked JQ-4 which was a P2V-3 stripped down inside and great for carrying beer kegs, Turkish rugs and, oh yeah, an occasional fuel pump or quill shaft. Al Stetz and John Shattuck flew it, and the Plane Captain was Chief George Swem.

Our thanks to John for sharing pictures and remembrances about the "P2" era in VQ-2. Editor



Willard "Bill" Johnston writes in an email:

Allan, I can't say for sure, but VQ-2 had a P2V-3 in 1957 that resembles the one in the picture. I believe we received it in Feb. '57 or thereabouts. We picked it up somewhere in Florida, and it was used for "fam" flights, liberty hops to places like Gibraltar, night flights over the fishing boats off the coast of Port Lyautey, etc. I do remember that



VQ-2 P2V-5F somewhere in England circa 1959.

it had guns in the tail, nose and a deck turret when we received it. The deck turret was removed and the hole covered over with sheet metal, and the six 20's were removed from the nose. When it was ready for a check flight, the chocks were pulled, and as they started the first turn, the brakes were applied, the nose dipped, and as it came back up, she kept rising till the tail skag hit the ground, then the nose slowly settled back to the ground. Needless to say, the hop was immediately scrubbed until a proper weight and balance could be achieved. As I recall, all it took was putting the nose guns back in to restore the balance.

Our admin officer, a LCDR whose name I don't recall (it has been a long time), used to get his time in at night in the P2. We would take off and head out to sea. He would pick out a light on one of the fishing boats in the distance, and start descending to make what was basically a strafing run on the boat. As he would get close, he would flip on the landing lights for a greater effect. I'm sure there are some Moroccan fishermen who probably remember those nights!!!

Our thanks to Bill for his input clarifying the "Mystery P-2 Aircraft." Editor



San Diego site of 2006 Reunion

Now is the time for starting your plans to attend the VQ Association reunion to be held in San Diego, CA, September 21-24, 2006.

There are a multitude of interesting things to see and do in this sparkling city with a proud Navy heritage. The U. S. S. Midway, Seaworld, San Diego Zoo, Wild Animal Park are all internationally acclaimed. Old Town San Diego features fine dining and night life. If you're so inclined, Mexico is just a short trolley ride away.

Board member Frank Warren is working hard to set up the reunion. Details will be posted on the website when they are finalized. We hope to see you there! PS No hurricanes!

**Bill Weigand writes in an email:
The Storm**

The storm caught most every one by surprise. I think the aircraft (two P2Vs) were scheduled to fly. In about a half hour it was decided the wind was getting bad and it was time to put them back in the hangar. The first plane was tucked in the far end of the hangar and the tug went out to get the second aircraft.

The wind was now so strong that taxiing was not possible. In fact it was so windy that the aircraft could not be towed into the hangar. It was always cocking into the wind. So it was hooked to tractors just to keep it from blowing off the taxiway. The wind was getting pretty strong so to keep the engines from rotating they were



This is a photo of P2V-5F, PR-7, which was brought into the hangar to weather a storm. Unfortunately, the hangar blew away and the aircraft was damaged. Shemya, AK, December 1959.



This is a photo of a VQ-1 P2V-5F that weathered a 100 M.P.H. plus storm at Shemya, AK, December 1959

feathered. A second, lighter duty tractor was secured to the other main landing gear as additional ballast. Everyone then took cover! As a side note, the anemometer (wind speed) gauge at the weather station only went to 100 M.P.H. and was firmly pegged for over 15 minutes.

I was in the hangar in the offices on the upper deck and I noticed there was a lot of creaking up around the roof line. Nothing special, just the whole building was creaking and the hangar doors were banging around in their tracks. So far so good, I thought. (I later decided that the creaking were rusty nails pulling out.)

Eventually one of the upwind doors broke. That was the beginning of the end. This allowed the air pressure in the hangar to rise and the roof began to lift up and then peel away. As more of the roof lifted off, more of the up wind doors broke. Pretty soon most of the upwind doors were gone and scattered all over the hangar deck. I think one of the door parts landed on PR- 7 in the hangar. Surpris-

ingly, only one of the downwind doors broke. As the roof vanished, there was less stress on those doors.

I don't know what happened to #7 as it was not considered flyable and was left behind. I left with the crew of BuNo 128400 as it was in perfect condition and came through with out any problems.

Our thanks to Bill for his recollections of the Shemya storm of 1959 and the pictures he provided. Editor



VQ Hats with Aircraft

The VQ Association is pleased to announce that we now have a limited supply of hats. Pictured is one featuring the EC-121M "Willy Victor." While this is obviously the "Top of the Line" hat, there are others that show the EA3B Skywarrior, a EP-3 Orion or a P4M-1Q Mercator. There are even a few with scrambled eggs on the bill. The color is black with gold lettering.

To order your hat send a check or money order for \$18.85 (\$15 for the hat and \$3.85 for shipping) to Dick McClellan at: 773 Woodcock Road, Henrico, NC 27842. If you want scrambled eggs on the bill, add one dollar (\$16). Please, no emails or phone calls. Specify aircraft type desired and include a legible return address. You had better act quickly as they're going like hotcakes!



"O" Club

(Continued from page 1)

ROTC." The LT confirmed this and asked how he had noted this. He replied , "Through our conversation, you seem to have a strong academic background and limited military experience."

He then told the LT on his right that he had gone through OCS with previous enlisted service. The LT confirmed that this was correct and also asked how the Captain had determined this. The Captain said, "You seem to have a firm military background and a lot of common sense.

The last LT then asked about his source of commission. The Captain replied, "You graduated from the Naval Academy. The LT stated that was correct and asked, "Was it the high level of intelligence, precise military bearing, or other superior qualities I acquired at the Academy?" The Captain replied, "It was none of those things. I simply noted your class ring while you were picking your nose."

VQ-2's Homeport Change

From Commander, Naval Forces Europe/Commander, U.S. 6th Fleet Public Affairs ITALY (NNS) — Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron (VQ) 2 will relocate from Rota, Spain, to Whidbey Island, Wash., effective Sept. 1.

The relocation of VQ-2's six aircraft and 450 Sailors to the United States is in keeping with the Navy's ongoing transformation of forces in Europe and will help reduce costs and eliminate redundancies throughout its force structure worldwide.

The move will co-locate the squadron with VQ-1, already based at Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, and will realize efficiencies through the consolidation of personnel deployment practices, aircraft maintenance practices and air crew training for these unique Navy squadrons.

This move is an essential element of our transformation in Europe, greatly enhancing our overall efficiency and, in the process, improving the operational capabilities of both VQ-1 and VQ-2," said ADM. Harry Ulrich, commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe.

"Both squadrons will now be strategically located together, maximizing their training and readiness posture and their ability to surge worldwide as required," said Ulrich. "The officers and Sailors of VQ-2 are true professionals and have carried on a proud legacy here in Europe. Theirs is a tremendous record of success and excellence. I have no doubt they will continue that record in the future."

VQ-2, established in 1955, has been operating out of Rota since 1960, and was at the forefront of the Navy's reconnaissance operations for the majority of the Cold War. The squadron was instrumental in providing reconnaissance collection for NATO operations in the Balkans in the 1990s and operated alongside VQ-1 to enforce no-fly zones with operations Northern Watch and Southern Watch during the same period. More recently, VQ-2 deployed to support both operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom in the Middle East.

The closure of VQ-2 facilities in Rota is being done in phases, with most of the sailors and their family members being permitted to complete their tours in Spain, while new personnel report to facilities in Whidbey Island. Additionally, two smaller associated units, Naval

Security Group Activity Rota and Aviation Intermediate Maintenance Unit Rota, will be disestablished through the ongoing transformation efforts.



An email posting by John Herndon

An update on Rota for you guys. The old hospital/PSD is gone, torn down. There are round-a-bouts all over the base now instead of stop lights and it's the same in town. I guess they like those things now!

The Rota gate was rebuilt (again) with four car lanes and pop up barricades to stop cars. The Air Force is building a new, giant ramp with deck fuel pits. The ramp is almost done and runs from the old cargo building to the Spanish hangar and touches width wise from the taxi way to the four seasons. They are also building a big cargo facility that will probably be bigger than Dover when completed.

VQ2 planes are stuck back on the Spot 5 that we never used and back by where the nose docks use to be (they are gone, too). The whole AirOps and VQ2 line and VP line were solid C5s and KC10's (PURE AIRFORCE RAMP). Com Station is gone and they planted Spanish pine trees in the park where VQ2 had its picnics. Security is building a new, giant building where PWD storage was on that corner. PSD is in the dry cleaning building. DGF is huge now, they added new wings (FOR WHAT? Everyone is leaving)

Housing was basically empty, plenty of houses with no commands. VQ2 is packing up, they are using a supply ship to take their stuff to Everett WA. Personnel are rotating out via CAT B, and a lot of them don't want to go! The VQ2 sign atop the hangar is gone, but the giant SANDEMAN that we painted on the doors is still on there, (Which can be seen from SPACE it's so big!) Thanks Captain Scorby for not getting mad when we did it!! Besides that everything else on the base looked dead and the same. Herndon out!



The Mystery of the "Patch," "Aircraft" and "Dog."



Once again we invite you to look back at those days of yore and send us any information you may have which would cast light on the photographs above. This is not a test but we sure appreciate your feedback!



As we have said in previous newsletters, at reunions, or, wherever else we can find an attentive audience, we are always seeking stories (sea types 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 are great. If you're not on the net, you can send in a photo and we will make a copy and return it you! We now have about 1000 photos of the VQ experience. Please send inputs to Allan "Putt" Prevette, 3232 Village 3, Camarillo, CA 93012 or email to pierreputt@earthlink.net.

The following is a true and factual story as it occurred in the western Pacific region several decades ago. In the repeated telling of this “sea story,” it has never been elaborated or embellished...hardly at all! — Any resemblance to persons living or dead in this article is probably true. *Chuck Landers*

The Hub Cap

In the fall of 1969 I reported for duty with VQ-1, home based at NAS Atsugi. At that time, I was an ADR2 and I considered myself a bright, young plane captain on C-121 type aircraft, a title I earned in previous commands. Shortly after check in I was assigned as plane captain on PR-27, BUNO, 143186, under tutelage of other senior plane captains and flight engineers.

I believe I once read in an English Naval officer’s manual a statement, “Beware of enlisted men as they are sly, cunning and bear watching at all times!” This certainly describes many of the sailors and most C-121 flight engineers I’ve known. VQ-1 flight engineers were, for the most part, very qualified senior enlisted men who were innovative, experienced, and knowledgeable. There were, of course, exceptions. Some were quite surly and others were prima donnas but those types were few and far between. I should point out however, shrewd, sly and cunning was an apt description for most!.

It wasn’t long before I encountered something called the “Roulette Wheel”. Even though I’d been around Super Connies a number of years on the east coast, this was the first time I had encountered the “Wheel!” In its most basic form, the roulette wheel consisted of a flight engineer crudely drawing on one nose wheel tire (with chalk) a bunch of numbers and lines resembling a clock face. After takeoff a hat was passed with numbers in it. Those wanting to participate would throw in a dollar and take a number. After the flight, on engine shutdown, whatever number on the tire that pointed straight down (six-o-clock) would win the pot! Often (usually according to the size of the pot), great debates would ensue...even to the point of breaking out a plumb bob or ruler to confirm a winning number! “Some” engineers (remember the sly and cunning?) would even release the parking brake, which would allow the aircraft to roll back very slightly, thus ensuring a win. I should point out; the Navy did not condone gambling. Therefore, winnings from this “innocent” game would go to the “Crew Morale Fund,” or some other charitable fund.

My first observation was that even though this was a great game, it didn’t take long for the crude, chalk-drawn roulette wheel to fade out. So, on my first deployment to DaNang, in the beautiful Republic of Viet Nam, I took it upon myself to fashion a more permanent roulette wheel, a.k.a. the hub cap. I was an engine mechanic, limited in metal-smithing skills, so I enlisted the aid of our ground pounder metal smiths. Using the delicate art of “Cum Shaw” (an Asian word relating to barter/theft and what Navy supply types call misappropriation) I scrounged up some sheet metal, masking tape, and several cans of paint.

It was a trying job for me! I’m sure the average E-4 metal smith could have whacked out one of these things in an hour or two

but it took me quite awhile. At last I was ready for the grand unveiling! I presented my work of art to the flight engineer who seemed dutifully impressed, and he referred me to the plane commander. He liked it, but our copilot was somewhat dubious, thinking it might affect nose wheel balance. My God! I hadn’t even thought of that!! So our steely-eyed, vastly experienced aircraft commander allowed me to put it on the right-hand nose wheel and after a brief taxi test he concluded it was OK!!

TA-DAAA!!! I was in my utopia! Other crewmen would drop by our revetment to take pictures and admire my work of art. It was great fun! When we’d make an R and R (rest and recreation) run away from DaNang, the dollars would fly into the hat. Even some of our officers would proffer a dollar or two...knowing, of course, this was not gambling, but rather for the “Crew Morale Fund.” There may be some who recall the pay scale for sailors in the world’s Second Largest Nuclear Navy in the early ‘70s! Believe me, twelve or fifteen dollars would buy a lot of crew morale especially if one was buying San Miguel beer in the Philippines!

This went on for several detachments to sunny DaNang, RVN. On one particular detachment we decided to let the pot ride, keeping our original number and throwing in a dollar at every stop. After many missions from DaNang we were scheduled for an R and R run to Bangkok, Thailand. There must have been close to a hundred bucks in the pot! We did our preflight checks and taxied out. After engine run up we were

cleared for takeoff. We lined up, the power came up, the brakes were released and we were booking down the runway! Slightly before rotation, I think it may have been sensed, feared, or felt – certainly not heard (what with 14,000+ horsepower coursing through the plane and 400 airlock fasteners rattling away, precariously tacking on our vibrating cowlings), my “infamous” hubcap departed the nose wheel after shearing all the screws.

That night we held a helluva Hubcap Farewell/Crew Morale party in Bangkok. As I recall they even served adult beverages and offered adult entertainment as well – all for “charitable purposes” of course!! And I never made another hubcap!!

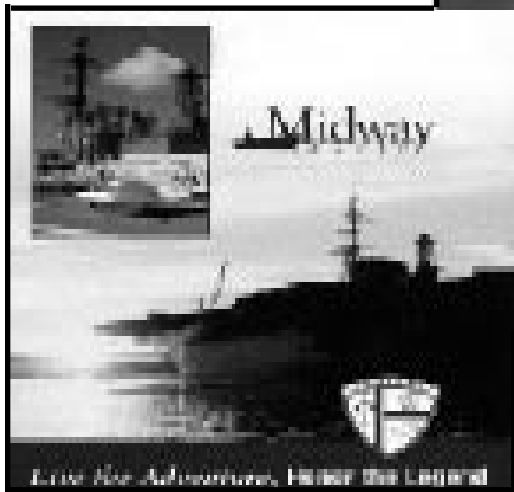
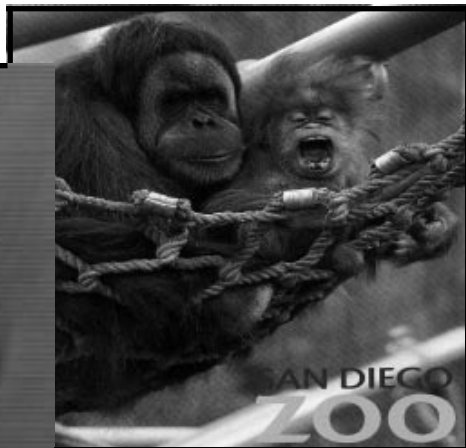
Our thanks to Chuck for his story that illustrates, “Life in the “Q” in a long ago tiime. Editor



Association Dues

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 Prevet, at 3232 Village 3, Camarillo, CA 93012. If you don’t know your dues status, please check the number following your name on the address label on your newsletter. The number indicate the year your dues expire. If in doubt, please contact secretary/editor.

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