

Excerpts for VQ-1 history from:

ANCHORS AWEIGH—AND UP INTO THE AIR!

My Cold-War Time in the Navy

Donald L. Morgan

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Donald L. Morgan

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ANCHORS AWEIGH! – AND UP INTO THE AIR!

My Cold-War Time in the Navy

Foreword. This memoir focuses on my experience in the Navy. I decided to write it long after the events described, having concluded that I had witnessed some extraordinary events that might be of general interest. As I was writing I came to believe that the reader might also be interested in what my day-to-day life was like in the Navy. Chronologically, the memoir covers my student days at Harvard College and, after active duty, Harvard Law School and the beginning of my work as a lawyer with Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton. This account does not deal with them, other than in passing.

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5. How I Reach Japan.

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While still in Basic Flight Training in the Pensacola area, we flight students learn that the Navy offers a choice of fleets, Atlantic or Pacific, for post-training duty assignments. Within each fleet one can ask for a particular home base. I want Japan, but that is not listed as a choice, so I ask for Pearl Harbor. That is the listed base closest to Japan. I figure that at some point I will get to Japan with any squadron based in “Pearl”.

Fleet assignments, but not home-port ones, materialize promptly, and give a new meaning to “choice”, at least in the Navy. Many who ask for Pacific find themselves on the Atlantic fleet list, and vice versa. When pairs of mis-assigned trainees ask to be switched to the fleets of their expressed choice, the uniform response is that the lists are already typed up and thus are final! At the same time top Navy brass deplore the fact that something close to 95% of new aviators leave the Navy after the end of their obligatory first tour of duty.

I am encouraged to see my name on the Pacific Fleet list. I have to wait until almost the end of Advanced Training, at the Hutchinson, Kansas, Naval Air Station, to receive a home-port assignment. Somewhat cryptically my orders (of August 22, 1957) read that after some further training at the Naval Air Stations at North Island, San Diego, and Whidbey Island in Puget Sound, I am to report to the Chief of Naval Transportation in San Francisco for transport to “the port in which Electronic Counter Measures Squadron ONE (VQ-1) may be”. What is VQ-1, and where is it? What the squadron is or does remains to be defined. “Where” is rumored, accurately, to be Iwakuni, Japan!

Perhaps the generality of the orders reflects the fact that in its eight years of existence VQ-1 has been home-ported at U. S. Naval Air Stations in Guam, Sangley Point in Manila Bay, and Naha, Okinawa. It is to move again, to its fifth home in ten years, shortly after my tour of duty ends, to U.S. N.A.S. Atsugi in the Tokyo area

6. A 4.0 in 4Dog! Astounding, but Not So

My orders call for me to report to an electronics training school at N.A.S. North Island, California, to take course OE4D, an advanced electronic countermeasures course that is designated “Four Dog” in oral Navy terminology. Four Dog is a three-months long course that starts only twice a year. Some sort of guinea pig, I am oblivious to the fact that no aviator had ever taken that course. It is designed for and was run by specialized Electronics Officers who are not Naval Aviators. They are the “geeks” or “nerds” of their time, well versed in manipulating the “black boxes” that are found in the rear sections of the reconnaissance aircraft that engage in electronic-countermeasures flights. Perhaps as commentary on their pride in their ability to twirl the dials on the fronts of the black boxes, they are called “twidgets”. Some twidgets resent the glamor attendant, or widely thought to be attendant on being a Naval Aviator. They comfort themselves with the conviction that they are more intelligent than the aviators in command up front in the cockpit -- *much* more intelligent. Perhaps it is to test that hypothesis that some naval aviator in the order-writing section of Naval Air Training decides to send a Harvard-educated aviator to Four Dog.

In any event, on October 3, 1957, I walk into the room my orders call for, wearing my summer white uniform, short-sleeved white shirt adorned with Ensign’s shoulder boards (one gold stripe) and Navy Wings of Gold on the chest. Behind a counter are two twidgets, a Lieutenant (two stripes) and a Lieutenant Commander (two and a half stripes), obviously forewarned by their earlier receipt of a copy of my orders of the insult I am about to present, however inadvertently on my part.

“What are *you* doing here”, one of them snarls, eyeing my wings.

Taken aback by the hostility, I respond in a soft voice,

“ I have orders to take OE4D.”

“You can’t take that course, that’s for Electronics Officers”, one of them growls.

Four and a half stripes to one, in an organization so hierarchical that any officer seems entitled to abuse everyone of lesser rank, not just of lessee stripes, anyone one place in line behind. Not even all ensigns are equal. For example; we are all ranked within that category, and the relative ranking really matters. The senior within any group of Ensigns is the “Bull Ensign”. So four and a half stripes to one is an enormous gulf, twidgets or not.

“But I have orders to take the course”, orders by the Admiral who was Chief of Naval Air Training, whose headquarters happen to be just a few blocks down the street

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“We’ll get your orders changed! There’s a course for aviators starting next Monday, you’ll take that!”

I take that course, a very basic one on electronic aspects of airborne antisubmarine warfare. It lasts only two weeks. A few days into the course I ask the twidgets whether they have gotten my orders changed.

“Not yet.”

I doubt that they will get my orders changed. I plan to take Four Dog, for which the next class does not begin for almost another three months. Julie and I go house hunting.

We find an attractive small house. We ask the elderly landlady to lease it to us for six months. Nothing doing.

“I don’t deal with Navy people.”

“But we’re very reliable, I’m a Harvard graduate and my wife is a Radcliffe grad. You can trust us. We don’t throw wild parties.”

Reluctantly, she agrees. We sign a lease on Thursday October 17, expecting to leave the motel where we have been staying and move in within a few days.

The next day I take the final exam in the two-week course for aviators. The course is designed to teach 20 facts. They are summarized at the outset, explained in detail over the two weeks, and reviewed an hour before the examination. The Navy *wants* us to know those 20 facts. As do about 95% of the class, I score a perfect 4.0.

I visit the twidgets to see what happens next.

“Get out of here, you’re through.” They shove my orders across the counter at me. The orders now certify that I have completed “the course for ECM Officers”. My personnel file now contains a fancy certificate of having completed the ECM Officers Course– sans any grade, I am relieved to see..

“Did you get my orders changed?”

“No. We’re giving you the score from the exam you just took.” (*A Four Dog course has just finished. The two twidgets who took it end up second and third in a class of two! A 4.0 is unheard of; Four Dog is a really difficult course.*) “Move on!”

What to do? Make a huge fuss? Try to see the Chief of Naval Air Training down the street? Take on four and a half stripes? Accept a fraudulent grade? Stay silent? Who would know? *I* sure won’t tell anyone. What difference could it make? After all, I am trained to be an aviator, not a twidget. Not much time to decide. But what to tell the landlady?

“I *knew* it, I knew not to deal with Navy people!” This only about 24 hours after having allowed herself to be sweet-talked into a lease by two earnest Ivy Leaguers.

I check out of North Island on the 18th. We promptly head north. We drive first to Hollywood and spend a night at the home of one of Julie’s distant relatives. More driving including an agonizingly slow portion on the rugged and beautiful Humboldt Coast of Oregon that I want to see. By ferry from Seattle we reach Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island and drive to the Naval Air Station there.

I sign in at the base at 1700 (five in the evening) on Thursday, October 24. An Ensign who looks even younger than I sits behind a desk as “Officer of the Day”. Looking at the orders I hand him, he pauses and looks up at me as if something miraculous has happened, and says in a hushed, awestruck tone..

“You’re the man who got a Four Oh in Four Dog”.

“What’s going on? How does *he* know? That was only a few days ago, and seemed confidential”, I say to myself. I am in some distress respecting how to respond. I am reluctant to say either yes or no about getting the Four Oh.

“My name *is* Morgan”, I offer noncommittally. To my relief, that suffices.

What Heavy Attack Unit Pacific has to do with electronics countermeasures is not apparent when I show up there Friday morning. The administrative officers sign me in and suggest I check back in a few days!

HATUPAC flies A3D aircraft, the heaviest carrier-based planes the Navy has, but I never even see an A3D at Whidbey Island. Years later it dawns upon me that HATUPAC was for me just a front for a top-secret briefing that a twidget was supposed to give me privately about the history and mission of VQ-1. He knows that I have reported, and the hush-hush drill calls for him to find me and give me my briefing. He does not.

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I hang around HATUPAC for a few days after the weekend, not knowing what to expect. I have heard that VQ-1 will be transitioning to A3Ds, so I think that that's a possible reason why I am at there. The only exposure I have to A3Ds, however, is to observe a mock-up of its bomb bay doors, which open, eject a bomb, and close, all in a half second. I go back to the Administrative Department. The officers there seem puzzled to see me.

“Morgan, we just don't *have* a training program for you”, one of them says.

I hang around some more. Finally one of the HATUPAC officers asks where I am headed, no doubt already knowing that.

“To VQ-1.”

“Oh, you might want to talk to Commander Crandall”, he says, “He hangs out in the hangar.” He must have known that other aviators heading to VQ-1 get briefed by Crandall and move on.

It seems odd that there might be a Commander who just “hangs out” in a hangar, but sure enough I readily spot one.

“Commander Crandall?”

“Yes.”

“I am heading to VQ-1, sir, and someone suggested that I talk with you”.

Crandall has a defiant look in his eyes, and has his arms crossed over his chest.

“I have nothing to say to you.”

Wow, what a conversation stopper. I walk away, more than a little bewildered.

Not until a year and a half later do I learn from my fellow aviator in Iwakuni Lt. Commander Francis Brown (“Brownie” to his friends) that Crandall *is* why I was sent to Whidbey Island. Crandall served in VQ-1 years earlier. Brownie also was ordered to HATUPAC, where Crandall promptly looked him up and briefed him about electronic countermeasures and the early history of VQ-1. Brownie got his full of Crandall there, put off by excessive secrecy. Crandall would walk him to a corner of the hangar, and then *whisper* to him about his days in VQ-1, when P4M-1Qs painted all black and searching for radar and radio stations went all over China on night flights.

So why would Crandall refuse to talk to me? The only function he had to perform was to brief officers en route to VQ-1. Could it have been that he was jealous, angered and embarrassed about my Four Oh in Four Dog? He surely believed that the only aviator ever allowed to take the course had creamed it, far surpassing the best that anyone in the entire twidget community had every done! A lawless group at times, those twidgets!

I am in limbo. No one seems to know what to do with me.

To take Julie with me to Iwakuni, I wrote to VQ-1 on October 9 while still at North Island asking whether suitable housing is available. It is. That was not the only obstacle, however. As soon as she knew I had orders to Japan, while I was still at Hutchinson, she had applied for a passport. In these McCarthy-era days, it generally takes months to get a passport. Perhaps Ivy Leaguers are particularly suspect. The only reason we tarry at Whidbey Island is to wait for her passport. And wait. And wait. For weeks and weeks.

Whidbey Island is beautiful, life here is fun. Julie and I play some golf on the base's beautiful course on the western shore of the island. looking across Puget Sound to the

Whidbey Island is beautiful, life here is fun. Julie and I play some golf on the base's beautiful course on the western shore of the island, looking across Puget Sound to the snow-capped Olympic Mountain Range. We visit Seattle several times. To get the four hours per month flight time needed to qualify for flight pay, I hitch rides with an antisubmarine warfare squadron of P2Vs that is home-ported here and is training for a six months deployment to the Western Pacific.

7. Moving On: Westward Ho!

Each week Julie makes a collect call from a roadside phone booth to her home in Irvington, New York, asking whether her passport has arrived. I continue to wonder what I am doing at Whidbey Island. Nothing. When should I leave? Suppose the Navy ever asks why I did not report to VQ-1 earlier?

Worried about what VQ-1 would say about the delay in my arrival, on December 2 I take it upon myself to tell HATUPAC that I am leaving. Someone there duly endorses my orders. Julie and I drive down to San Francisco. When I check in on December 4 for transportation I mention that my wife does not have a passport.

"Oh, we have that right here," the Navy clerk says, reaching into a drawer of his desk. The passport apparently has just arrived there, as the clerk has prepared a December 2 offer of transportation for her to sign. She accepts.

On December 10, after a pleasant interlude in San Francisco, we leave on a military transport ship, the U.S.S. General Gaffey. We live quite comfortably in a large stateroom and enjoy fine dining as well as housekeeping by Filipino Stewards (the only job available in the Navy at the time to Filipinos). Five days later the ship stops at Honolulu to discharge five hundred Marines from steerage. It is early on a Sunday morning. We have two hours to go ashore. We share a taxi ride around town with Navy Dentist Lt. Cdr. Paul Beall and his wife Betsy. The place is virtually deserted. The taxi stops and we sample the sand at Waikiki, with Diamond Head in the distance. The skies are overcast, but the rain holds off.

Eight days later, on December 23, the Gaffey arrives at the U.S. Naval Station at Yokusuka. The few remaining passengers are bussed to overnight lodging. Transiting a fascinating open-air market as dusk is falling, we are appalled to hear a more traveled Navy wife loudly complain to her husband.

"This place is as dirty as Italy!"

No doubt, she is one of a number of wives who are to pride themselves on never going off a U.S. base in Japan, ones who on vacation or on "leave" fly to another base and stay there!

The next day a Marine C-119, a "Flying Boxcar", takes us to Iwakuni, about 450 miles west from Tokyo on the western shore of Hiroshima Bay, about 20 miles south of Hiroshima. Some kind soul escorts us to the authorized off-base housing in "Kurihara Heights", about a mile from the base. Built hurriedly by a local entrepreneur, the house is spacious, with four large rooms around an oil-burning furnace in the middle of the house.

With high ceilings! And with about a quarter inch gap around much of the windows, pretty much equalizing the indoor and outdoor temperatures! The Navy has furnished the abode, complete with three single beds, each with two blankets. It is still cold with all six blankets and both of us in the same single bed.

Feeling somewhat mutinous and alone, we welcome a squadron mate's invitation to Christmas dinner the next day -- in a warm dwelling on base. Life is good again.

8. On Duty in Electronics Counter Measures Squadron One (VQ-1)

I report for duty at VQ-1 the day after Christmas, 1957. While I am being processed in, the Captain of the squadron, Commander Newton Byrd, comes to say hello.

"I see you got a Four Oh in Four Dog", he begins, the first time I have heard that phrase since checking in at HATUPAC. I am shocked that he knows I received a Four Oh.

"Oh boy", I say to myself, "he probably thinks I am an electronics genius. He may assign me to some complicated electronics job. I fear the moment of truth is here."

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“Oh boy”, I say to myself, “he probably thinks I am an electronics genius. He may assign me to some complicated electronics job. I fear the moment of truth is here.”

“Captain, there is something I have to explain about that.”

He listens, and to my great relief at the end of the confession, he laughs with a broad smile. He leans forward in a swivel chair and playfully points a finger at me.

“Don’t tell the twidgets!”

I never do. Neither does any twidget ever ask me about the Four Oh. In fact, they rarely talk to me. (At any one time, VQ-1 has a complement of about 20 aviators and 10 twidget officers.) To this day the twidget community may be depressed by the belief that the only aviator ever to take Four Dog scored Four Oh. They have only their willful compatriots at North Island and perhaps Walt Crandall to blame.

Life in VQ-1

Who runs this outfit and what does it do?

The senior officer on the base is a Marine Corps General. The senior Navy officer is Captain Gerald Staley. He is entitled to and does call himself Commodore since he has a number of Navy units under him. As a practical matter, he has scant control over VQ-1.

The Chief of Naval Operations in Washington, D.C., controls our operations. We receive logistical support from the Commander, Naval Forces Japan (ComNavForJapan), in the Tokyo area. VQ-1’s principal mission, at least in terms of time spent, is to fly offshore along the coast of Communist Asia to collect data about on-shore radio and radar capabilities using sophisticated electronic monitoring equipment that the twidgets operate. For this work we have five P4M-1Q and two A3D-1Q planes. The Air Force flies similar missions. It has ten times the planes and men we have, but we share the work evenly.

The Navy formally provides information only on a need-to-know basis, so we aviators officially learn only what courses and altitudes to fly and when to fly them. There is an intimation that the data the flights collect are analyzed by highly secret methods at Fort Meade, Maryland, to plot low-level attack routes for American warplanes to avoid electronic detection while penetrating the perimeter of Asia in the event of a “thermonuclear exchange”, WW III in plain language..

The Navy regards our mission as very important but is unable to equip or otherwise prepare us well. Unlike other Navy aircraft squadrons, which spend a year in the States training for a six-months deployment at sea or on a foreign base, the Navy permanently bases VQ-1 abroad, as it does VQ-2 in Rota, Spain, to collect data along the “Iron Curtain” that separates the free world from the western U.S.S.R. hegemony. Our training proceeds informally, on-the-job. Pilots new to the squadron go along for the ride for several flights and are expected to learn by watching others fly the planes. We do not even have “pilots’ handbooks” for our P4Ms.

The fact that our P4Ms are 10 to 13 years old and were manufactured in limited quantities aggravates our supply problems. The Supply Corps has few parts in inventory. It is not unusual for the Supply Corps to tell us that a part will have to be manufactured (if the original blueprints can be found) at Overhaul and Repair in Norfolk, Virginia. That takes a long, long time at best. When in early 1958 one of our pilots lets down the wheels of an A3D-1Q at too high a speed and several “fairing” parts blow away, the squadron has to contract with a local Japanese firm to repair the damage. Fortunately we have an intact A3D for the Japanese craftsmen to copy. That takes them nine months. The Navy does not devote special funds to ease our supply problems since it plans to replace our outdated planes with brand new A3D-2Qs as soon as it can obtain funding. Congress promises the funding but delays year after year.

VQ-1 is poorly equipped, poorly trained, and over-worked, Its mission is vitally important. Its flight crews are expendable

The Navy expects us to make do as best we can. We make do for equipment in part through some “Midnight Requisitioning” from the Marines. Their C-119 “Flying Boxcar” transports use the same reciprocating, internal-combustion engines that our P4Ms have, Pratt and Whitney built R-4360’s (four radial banks of seven cylinders each, with a total cylinder volume of 4,360 cubic inches). Regulations forbid taking a part from one plane to keep another flying, “cannibalizing”. That happens all the time, however, on an informal basis between maintenance personnel. We cannot justify failure to fly the Navy’s half of the ECM operational flights because of supply problems, at least not to CNO. We do not try. Our motivation is to fly the missions, every one of them

basis between maintenance personnel. We cannot justify failure to fly the Navy's half of the ECM operational flights because of supply problems, at least not to CNO. We do not try. Our motivation is to fly the missions, every one of them.

My collateral-duty assignments

My first collateral-duty assignment with the squadron is Parachute Officer, about as far as possible from Four Dog. There is absolutely nothing for me to do in this role. The parachute riggers have their own small building. They may occasionally unpack and then repack a parachute but I never see them do anything but hang out and talk. Within a month or so the Captain moves me to Assistant Material Officer, again as a collateral duty. My primary duty always is flying airplanes. I become Material Officer a few weeks later when my predecessor Lt. j.g. Emmet Hughes leaves the Navy. I continue as the Material Officer for the rest of my time with the squadron, serving as Assistant Material Officer when a newly arrived senior (Lt. and later Lt. Commander Nathaniel Land) is inserted above me.

Land never does anything, however, except shoot the bull and display his Academy ring – a real “ring knocker”. It is scarcely an exaggeration that when he approaches around a corner, his ring appears before he does!

To the very limited extent that the Material Officers do anything involving material or the enlisted men (“Storekeepers”), I do it. I have no training or experience in supply matters, other than a confusing explanation of double entry bookkeeping by my departing predecessor Hughes, but come to understand that they are all very detailed and technical. I never actually feel responsible for them. I see myself as an aviator.

Much of the reason that I get involved only rarely in the details is Storekeeper First Class Petty Officer John J. Fitzsimmons. He is the senior enlisted man in Material. The other Storekeepers are Second Class Petty Officer Wickwire and two juniors, Grimes, a farm boy from Iowa who is an excellent basketball player (I learn that from playing with him on the squadron's basketball team now and then), and Bellefore from Houston. Fitzsimmons seems to know everything about his job and trains and supervises the other men, who call him “Fitz”. They all work together very well. They simply don't need any supervision from me, even if I were knowledgeable about their work.

Our office quarters are a small room crowded with several desks and file cabinets, and a small metal closet in which I keep my flight clothing and, for T-Bird flights, my helmet. I spend a lot of time at my desk there when not off flying. The room is located just inside the middle one of the squadron's three adjoining hangars. The Maintenance Department for which we get parts is next door, in the hangar in which P4M maintenance is performed. Willie Wise is the enlisted man who serves as liaison from the Maintenance Department, letting us know what parts or other items are needed there. The middle hangar rarely has a plane in it and is available for delivery and temporary storage of incoming shipments from the Supply Corps. The third hangar takes care of our two A3D-1Qs.

Fitzsimmons is a colorful, profane, outspoken man, barrel-chested with a strong, gravelly, base-baritone voice—entertaining, I find him. In the past he has been too outspoken for his own good and that has made it into his personnel file. I write very favorable fitness reports on him every six months recommending promotion to Chief Petty Officer, but know that in the Navy a single bad report means no further promotion. I think he is aware of that. Fortunately he seems content.

I can see why he may have gotten a bad report. One of our twidgets is Owen Farley, a diminutive Alabaman who says he plans on being a U.S. Senator some day, and acts as if already entitled to the perquisites of that position. For example, he routinely phones his wife Moonean to tell her where and when he has landed on supposedly Top Secret operational flights. Moonean feels entitled too. At bridge her cute Southern drawl “One li'l club” means one no trump. She finds it harder to play a hand in no trump than in a suit and hopes that Owen will bid and play the hand in no trump. If she means to bid clubs, she will dispense with the “li'l” and say “One club”.

One day Fitzsimmons is telling me about something Lt.j.g. Farley has improperly asked for. Fitzsimmons either doesn't know or cannot recall Farley's name and with appropriate hand gestures to indicate his stature refers to him, in his customary loud voice, as “that iddy biddy officer”. I know whom he means. Fortunately no other officer appears to be within hearing range. On another occasion Fitzsimmons is relating difficulties on shore leave in India, being besieged by small children aggressively looking for handouts, and offers advice on what to do.

to be within hearing range. On another occasion Fitzsimmons is relating difficulties on shore leave in India, being besieged by small children aggressively looking for handouts, and offers advice on what to do.

“You just have to drop-kick the little bastards into the bay”.

I intervene in the Storekeepers’ work on only two occasions. On one, I notice all of them huddled together in a corner of the office for several days. My curiosity grows.

“Fitzsimmons, what are you all doing?”

“Oh, Mr. Morgan, at the end of each quarter we cross-check the chits for expenditures against our double-entry bookkeeping. They’re off by two cents. We’ve gone through them several times already, trying to get them to agree.”

I do not give much thought at the time to the cross checking. The men resume their scrutiny of three months worth of handwritten carbons copies of chits for consumables.

Our quarterly budget is \$90,000. The chits cover items costing as little as two dollars (summer flying gloves). Our big ticket items are jet fuel, nine cents a gallon, and aviation fuel, eleven cents.

The men keep at it for a few more days. I come to doubt that further checking is a good use of their time.

“Fitzsimmons, how’s it going?”

“We still are off by two cents, Mr. Morgan.”

“Can I see one of those chits?”

“Sure, here is one.”

“What do you think this last number is?”

“That’s a seven.”

“I think it’s a nine..”

“Oh no, Mr. Morgan, that’s not a nine, that’s a seven.”

“It looks like a nine to me.”

“Look, here’s a nine, over here. That’s a seven.”

“Fitzsimmons, I’ll take responsibility for that being a nine. Now the books agree with the chits. You men have a lot of other work to do, you know.”

Fitzsimmons is unhappy. He starts to say something but pauses. He is reluctant to give in. He comes to realize, however, that no one will ever know what I have done. No one else will compare the chits with our books. Normal work can resume. And it’s not as if two pennies have been misappropriated. We never see any currency or coinage, we are just allowed to use up material worth \$90,000 a quarter. He drops his shoulders and has a sad look on his face.

“O.K.”

My second intervention starts when I return from several days of operational missions. All the men seem depressed.

“Fitzsimmons, what’s the matter with everyone?”

“Mr. Morgan, we just had an Admin/Material inspection. We got a terrible report. There are takusan [very many] things for which we do not have a record, Electronics alone has hundreds of tubes. And we have records for lots of things we cannot find.”

It does not surprise me that our inventory control is in such bad shape. The squadron has moved around a lot. It is on the cutting edge of U.S. electronics technology, with a very high priority mission. It can get whatever it wants, whether through normal Material Department/Supply Corps channels or otherwise. It often receives shipments of electronics gear that it has not ordered.

On one occasion a large crate shows up in our hangar simply addressed to “VQ-1”. I go out to look at it. Someone opens the crate. We see a large piece of metal and some smaller items. We have no idea what we are looking at. Even men from Electronics are stumped. More twidgets come to look.

“I think I know what this is. I was back in the States last year at a contractor. They were developing a new system and said they would send us one when they got it ready,” one of the newcomers says.

Electronics takes the shipment to their area, presumably for its leader John Ballard to put to use. Material has no record of the new shipment.

I can’t think of any way to deal with the inventory control problems. Subsequent developments, however, will lead to a very effective solution. (See *We happen to establish inventory control*, below.)

Our Captain also assigns me a number of special projects. Early on an enlisted man

developments, however, will lead to a very effective solution. (See *We happen to establish inventory control*, below.)

Our Captain also assigns me a number of special projects. Early on an enlisted man dies in his sleep; I prepare a formal report on the cause of death. When one of our P4Ms is attacked by MIGs (see below) and the crew jettison everything they can, I supervise preparation for the State Department of formal claims by each crewman for the value of lost personal effects, for presentation to the U.S.S.R. for payment. For a few months I am squadron Paymaster, responsible for paying the enlisted men every two weeks in cash (military "Scrip" in U.S. Dollar denominations; "Greenbacks" are forbidden). I fly to various other bases to confer with authorities there. I ferry our former commanding officer Byrd from the Tokyo area to Seoul where he now works. I also serve as counsel in two Special Courts Martial.

The barefoot schoolboy

Not everything is work. I enjoy varied opportunities to experience Japanese culture and customs. As I ride my bike to the base one raw January 1958 morning I see how dirt poor post-war Japan still is. Ice covers the ditches alongside the road. Snow tops the cabbages in the fields. I pass a boy of about eight and do a double-take. Yes, he's wearing only a T-shirt and short pants as he runs to school, barefoot! I am ashamed that, wearing a uniform, a lined raincoat, hat and gloves, I feel cold.

Picking up the Mayers

Four weeks after arriving in Iwakuni I go to Tokyo to welcome an incoming family, Lt. Commander Donald Mayers and his wife and four children. I get this assignment as the newest arrival. I do not know Tokyo at all but manage to connect with the Mayers and help get them settled overnight in one of the military's many hotels there. Don is an Annapolis grad, an aviator in a "restricted" flight status that I do not understand, then or later. We all go to dinner that evening at a building in the Ginza area that features a different restaurant and cuisine on each floor. We dine on the seventh floor, on sukiyaki. I enjoy the company and the meal. (I find that I love Japanese food.) Don and his wife are very pleasant. The children behave well. We get along well. The next day we fly to Iwakuni, their new home.

Why We Move on Base So Soon

When I first arrive in Iwakuni there is generally a wait of about ten months before on-base housing will open up for us. Modern, warm housing! Conveniently located! The base is a Naval Air Station. On January 1, 1958, it becomes a Marine Corp Air Facility. We don't know why the change, but the base is the home of the First Marine Air Wing and about five thousand Marine ground troops. The Air Wing flies A4D fighter/attack aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons and C-119 "Flying Boxcar" and other transport planes. "Station Keeper" administrative personnel are Navy folk many of whom are married and occupy on-base housing. They leave early in January. Since Marines who replace them do not have spouses with them, much on-base housing opens up for married Navy officers. Julie and I are delighted to leave Kurihara Heights. Our hot-water heater here works only about a third of the time. January has been a very cold month. It is really disappointing to come home on a cold day looking forward to a refreshing hot bath and find the water ice cold. We gladly move into Quarters 609B early in February, for the remainder of our stay in Japan.

Commodore Staley's residence is across the street. Because we are neighbors and perhaps because Staley's son is in a class Julie teaches in the junior high school on base, the Commodore treats us to an occasional motorboat excursion onto the Inland Sea. It is still virtually pristine in this early stage of Japan's post-WW II industrialization. We can see sand dollars on the sea floor at depths of 30 feet and more. I swim down to collect them. We get a pretty good look at a cargo ship that is always anchored about three miles out into Hiroshima Bay. It is rumored to hold nuclear weapons for use in emergencies. Japanese law prohibits the presence of nuclear weapons on Japanese soil but not more than three miles offshore.

In a way, Marine wives are responsible for their banishment from foreign soil. A few years before we arrive in Iwakuni, a beautiful young Japanese woman shows up at a Marine Corp officers' party there on the arm of a handsome Second Lieutenant. At the next party a Captain escorts her. Soon thereafter a Major! Not long afterward she is the Commanding General's gal. He takes her to Hong Kong on a Marine Corp transport plane

Marine Corp officers party there on the arm of a handsome second lieutenant. At the next party a Captain escorts her. Soon thereafter a Major! Not long afterward she is the Commanding General's gal. He takes her to Hong Kong on a Marine Corp transport plane for a shopping spree. A Marine wife on the base complains to her Congressman about that. The General has friends at headquarters in Washington. The Corps announces that Marines are abroad to fight and is concerned that their families could stand in their way. The Corps calls all of the wives and children back to the States.

Bless that pretty gal! And the complaining departed wife! We get on base!

A pound of "Gohan"

Proud of her knowledge of the language that she picks up from dining in Japanese restaurants, Carolyn Lewis, the wife of one of our twidgets, goes to one of the small open-front grocery stores in town and orders, quote, "a pound of gohan". She thinks she is asking for a package of white rice. The shopkeeper seems to have trouble understanding the order, but Carolyn persists. The shopkeeper shrugs and disappears to the rear of the store. Carolyn waits. And waits.

"What could be taking her so long just to bring me a pound of white rice", she fumes.

A full half hour she waits. Finally the shopkeeper comes forward, bearing a huge plate of steaming hot rice. Carolyn then realizes that just as Eskimos use 26 different words to describe snow in various forms, the Japanese use different words for different conditions of rice. It is she who tells this story. She is self-confident and relaxed enough to be able to do so. In my view, bringing her to Iwakuni is the best thing the twidgets did for VQ-1.

"Are you hot, tried, and all ran down?" How about a steak dinner?

We live well on my Navy pay, which was about \$224 base pay and \$110 flight pay per month as an Ensign, now slightly more as a Lieutenant (junior grade). At the only stop light in town, just outside the front gate, is a restaurant with a painted sign bearing the words in quotation marks above. There is a better restaurant nearby, Kin-Nan's, where we get a good steak dinner, including a bottle of Japanese beer, for one dollar.

Cherry Blossoms at Kentai Bashi

The Japanese celebrate the blossoming of cherry trees. At Iwakuni whole families camp out and party for three days and nights on the banks of one of the rivers through town, just downstream from a famous centuries-old five-span wooden bridge, "Kentai Bashi", that provides access to an ancient feudal castle. At night colored lights in the trees illuminate the blossoms and help keep the sake flowing. As observers, we Westerners enjoy the scene.

Boys Day

On Boys Day, May the Fifth, poles in front of Japanese homes hold aloft large authentic looking paper fish, one for each boy in the family. The more fish, the prouder the household. Some have as many as five. Parades feature traditional Japanese attire including that of the Samurai.

Women endure more than the absence of a day celebrating girls (held on March 3 by the 1990s). Julie and I come to know a UCLA-educated Japanese who owns a sweater shop near the base's front gate. He invites us to visit his home. We look forward to meeting his wife. Her only appearance, however, is to serve us tea, moving in and out of the room on her knees. She says nothing. Her husband makes no effort to introduce her, or even to say who she is.

Change comes slowly in Japan. When working there as a lawyer in the 1990s, I will need an expert witness on the country's environmental law. I travel to Nagoya to interview at his home a Japanese law professor who has relevant experience. Again the wife silently serves tea, on her knees. She later serves us lunch in a dining area. I particularly wonder at her silence because she lived in the States while her husband taught at Harvard and Yale law schools for several years. Maybe she doesn't speak English, I think. When, however, the professor has trouble remembering their address in Cambridge he asks her.

"Three fourteen Sparks Street" she replies, completing the only spoken communication between them during my visit.

Mia Jima

One of the most famous and beautiful sights in Japan is the island of Mia Jima and its red wooden torii standing in the water just offshore from the island. The torii appears in innumerable wood block prints and other works of art. The island is about six miles north of our runway so we fly over it when taking off to the north. It is about a quarter mile offshore from the main island of Honshu. Ferries connect the two. The island is

innumerable wood block prints and other works of art. The island is about six miles north of our runway so we fly over it when taking off to the north. It is about a quarter mile offshore from the main island of Honshu. Ferries connect the two. The island is mountainous, about two thousand feet high and undeveloped, a nature reserve. It is enormously popular among the Japanese. We feel fortunate to have both it and Kentai Bashi close at hand.

Parties

The squadron frequently holds cocktail parties for its officers and wives at an adjunct of the Officers Club on a seawall that is the eastern boundary of the base, using as excuses the departure of officers leaving the squadron or celebrating promotions that other officers receive ("wetting down" parties). The parties are fun and relaxing. One of the other junior officers I know well, Hugh Sams, not fully sober, makes a point at one party of sipping champagne from a shoe he has borrowed from Julie. She enjoys the attention, and Hugh's wife Mary does not seem to mind. The parties are also educational for the aviators, who "talk shop" about their unusual experiences flying the squadron's planes. We have no formal training program and no written materials such as pilots manuals for our workhorse P4Ms, so we are eager to find out how other pilots handled difficult situations. Our lives can depend on that. Despite the liberal flow of alcoholic beverages, the aviators pay close attention to each others' stories.

Chaperoning skiing

Julie's junior high school students agitate to go skiing. We agree to chaperone a day trip by bus to a ski area that is believed to be nearby. The bus is cold, heated only by a few pieces of charcoal in a ceramic hibachi that rests on the floor in the aisle. The roads are almost impassable. Several times the Japanese men who come with the bus have to get out and shovel snow to clear a passage. It takes five hours to get there. The resort turns out to be a hill with a vertical drop of about 200 feet that is serviced by a rope tow. Why is no one skiing? Why is the rope tow not operating?

"We only operate it on weekends", says the only local we can find.

At first he declines to start the tow for us. We ask how many customers come on a weekend day. About a bus load! We have a busload! The tow starts about noon. Some Japanese skiers show up. Two of them help a third stand up on skis between them at the top of the hill. He needs the help. They shove him to give him a robust start down the hill. He turneth not. Somehow does not fall either. Starting with a schuss! Banzai! Fortuitously, he comes to a stop just short of a creek at the edge of a flat area at the base of the hill. (John Ballard, a hefty 200 pounds or so, tells us later that when he went skiing at a commercial ski area in the Japanese Alps and stopped in the middle of an open slope, a Japanese man skied into him so hard that he knocked John out of his skis.)

We ski for a few hours before darkness begins to fall. The bus ride home is long

and silent. What tired kids! Julie and I aren't feeling very chipper either, half frozen and exhausted. No one agitates for a repeat trip.

Brownie

Lt. Commander Francis X. Brown, U.S.N.R., joins VQ-1 some months after I do. I get acquainted with him at parties. He drinks a lot, and is generally delightfully disrespectful and funny. We suspect that he puts on a show of drinking so he can express his true feelings and get away with that. He is far from the only Navy aviator who relaxes with alcohol. In fact, we all do. Brownie is quite a character.

I get to know him much better after the squadron decides to establish crews that will generally fly together, at least on operational missions. He leads Crew Number 9, numbered after P4M Serial Number 122209, supposedly "our" plane. I am the co-pilot. Sid Druquer is our navigator/spare aviator.

Brownie loves to talk, and is an entertaining talker. He mainly fills up the long otherwise generally boring hours on our flights with descriptions of his sexual exploits, often with psychological insight into the motives of partners and sometimes their complaining husbands. I believe most of what he relates; I am a good listener. Some of what he says is pure amusement, however, or impure amusement if you will. For example he relates that one night he was so tired when entering a Mexican whorehouse that he placed the woman on top of a dresser, stood on the bottom drawer, and hired a boy to move the drawer in and out

he relates that one night he was so tired when entering a Mexican whorehouse that he placed the woman on top of a dresser, stood on the bottom drawer, and hired a boy to move the drawer in and out.

He served in World War II, after which he left the Navy to work as an accountant. He joined the Reserves and was called up for the Korean War. He flew numerous low-level missions in a prop plane from an aircraft carrier close offshore in support of ground troops.

On a typical flight, he would stay on station for hours, getting target information from a ground observer or from a slow- and low-flying spotter plane.

“See that rump on Hill 347, there’s a cave about 50 yards below just to the right of the grove of trees, hit there”, for example, followed by “That shot was a little low, about ten yards up the hill and a little to the left next time, I know the cave is hard to spot”, as Brownie circled for another run on target. This routine would be occasionally interrupted by a call to the spotter from an air force jet from Japan at 30,000 feet, with an heroic announcement.

“Army 2460, this is Air Force 7693, enough fuel for one run, where’s the target”. That is followed by a bomb drop from several thousand feet, lucky to hit even the right hill, and the plane’s return to Japan with credit for another close-ground-support sortie.

After the Korean War wound down, Brownie decided to try to make a career of the Navy. He is married to a very attractive woman named Laurie. They have three young children, oldest about four years of age. We are warned in Shemya (see below) not to get close to the DEW Line radar antennae there lest its radiation cause sterility.

“Let me at it”, Brownie exclaims as he leans backwards and spreads his legs and arms.

It is from Brownie that I learn that Commander Crandall at Whidbey Island, discussed above, was in fact a twidget, and what his function there was supposed to be.

Brownie is worried about getting promoted to Commander. He needs that to get in 20 years active duty to qualify for a pension. There are not many openings for reservist Commanders. He has to watch his behavior, but knows it’s safe to let loose at cocktail parties. His heavy drinking is not unusual among Naval Aviators, who spend a lot of time at the bar and who joke about needing flight pay to pay for the drinks that help them let off steam, socialize, and deal with the stresses of their occupation. I never see Brownie drunk, he can handle a lot of liquor.

During the time that we are regularly flying together as pilot and co-pilot, Brownie chairs the two Special Court Martial Tribunals, discussed below, before which I represent first the defense and then the prosecution. I and my co-counsel Brian Mims vigorously represent our blameworthy defendant client. Everyone knows that the Captain wants to get rid of the guy. One of the prosecutors angrily denounces me for trying to get the bastard off despite the Captain’s wishes. Concerned though he is about promotion prospects, Brownie never says a word to me suggesting that I pull my punches. In the second case, the accused is a good sailor who gets into fights at the Non-Commissioned Officers Club with Marines who are aware of his gorgeous wife’s rampant promiscuity, for example entertaining groups of Marines at home while he is at work. Our assigned Flight Surgeon Jim Connors testifies as an expert for the defense, reviewing the wife’s troubled sexual history starting with abuse as a young girl. We prosecutors ask him no questions. The case is sensibly resolved by arranging for the wife to be sent to the States where she can get the psychological help she needs. Brownie comments to me later about that trial, saying he was glad we had not asked Jim any questions.

“I didn’t want to hear any more”.

I enjoy flying with Brownie. I respect his flying experience and he respects my flying abilities and gives me plenty of opportunities to take the controls.

Yoshii

Yoshii is our Japanese maid. She works for a dollar a day, 360 yen. The local authorities urge the Americans not to pay their maids more, as 360 yen a day is already upsetting local wage rates. Skilled craftsmen get no more. Yoshii is devoted to her son who is in his twenties and is trying to get into medical school. The most demanding entrance examination is English. Our operational flights regularly take us to Formosa (Taiwan) where we can purchase bootleg versions of the latest large Webster’s International Dictionary, selling legitimately for \$36 in the U.S., for \$5, or \$7.50 for the thumb-index version. (Chiang’s Republic of China government orders blacking out all uses of the word

(Taiwan) where we can purchase bootleg versions of the latest large Webster's International Dictionary, selling legitimately for \$36 in the U.S., for \$5, or \$7.50 for the thumb-index version. (Chiang's Republic of China government orders blacking out all uses of the word "communist". Long live the Kuomintang!) Yoshii asks me to buy one for her son, to help him prepare for the English exam. With no hesitation whatever she opts for the thumb-index version – a week and a half's pay.

She has tried to arrange her son's marriage. He gets to meet a prospective bride once, with her parents present. He can say yes or no, but he doesn't get a second "date" unless he says yes. The girl too can say yes or no. So far he has turned down two fair ladies that Yoshii thought would make good wives. She worries about this.

She is an excellent housekeeper. Our quarters are spotless. If I change clothes at lunch she has the discarded clothes washed and ironed before she leaves that afternoon.

"Missus, today is the day the bomb went off", she says to Julie on August 6, 1958. We know she had been in a train station in Hiroshima then and has a scar on her left forearm from the radiation.

"My husband died there", she adds.

"Oh Yoshii, I am so sorry!"

"That's ok, missus. He was not a good man."

Betsy and Paul

Julie and I met the Bealls on the U.S.S. Gaffey en route to Japan from San Francisco. We all became close friends. Paul works at N.A.S. Atsugi in the western suburbs of Tokyo. Julie and I visit them several times and stay with them in their traditional Japanese-style house near the base. They show us around Tokyo and to outlying scenic attractions on day trips. It snows a few inches on Christmas 1958 during one of our visits.

The neighborhood is quiet and peaceful, looking very much like a classic wood-block print.

On another day I mention to Paul that I had seen what turned out to be a U-2 land while Hugh Sams and I were playing golf on the base.

"Oh yes, 'they' stay on the other side of the field, something very hush-hush, we take care of their teeth", Paul explains.

I will keep in touch with Betsy and Paul. Twenty years later, to their great surprise and pleasure, they will have their first and only child, their "miracle".

Golf

Virtually every Naval Air Station I have ever seen has a golf course. Hutchinson, Kansas, was an exception. Iwakuni barely qualifies. The whole base is in a very flat and sandy delta of two rivers that enter Hiroshima Bay, part of the Inland Sea. The golf course, only nine holes, is located among taxiways and nearby airplane parking areas. The whole course is one long sand trap. If however, a shot goes off to one side or another, it will bounce on a concrete surface, and bounce, and go on almost forever. More than once my ball hits a parked airplane. If I am very lucky, a stray shot will bounce back onto the fairway, an enormous distance from where I swung at the ball. The base course gets very little use.

In contrast N.A.S. Atsugi has a beautiful 18-hole golf course. Rolling hills, green grass, soft greens! I never pass up an opportunity to play there. It's a shame that the squadron does not move to Atsugi until several months after I leave it for law school!

Tennis and squash

In a welcome change from the quality of the base golf course, the base has several excellent gray-gravel clay tennis courts. Julie and I play there all day sometimes. Some of our mixed doubles players are an earnest American missionary couple. We are somewhat amused to hear their perplexing story of happiness with initial ready and frequent converts to Christianity, to be dispelled when they see a converted couple they have just married at a Shinto marriage ceremony at a local shrine. The Japanese have a broad pantheistic streak, it seems. No wonder conversions come easily.

The base also has a squash court. We play there a few times when it's too cold or rainy to play tennis.

Touring Japan

Train service is very reliable but slow. It takes seven hours to get to Kyoto and 13 to get to Tokyo. We travel overnight on a 3rd class sleeper to get to Tokyo. That works quite well. For daytime rides to Kyoto we ride in coaches. We always get a seat. The Japanese

train service is very reliable but slow. It takes seven hours to get to Kyoto and 15 to get to Tokyo. We travel overnight on a 3rd class sleeper to get to Tokyo. That works quite well. For daytime rides to Kyoto we ride in coaches. We always get a seat. The Japanese will make room for us so they can practice their English. For the same reason we collect crowds of uniformed school children wherever we go in Kyoto and Nara.

We are dismayed to see Japanese train passengers discard garbage and trash in the aisles as they finish their box lunches, oranges and bananas. We understand that context is everything. The Japanese keep their homes immaculate. But among strangers the rules are different; you owe nothing to strangers. (If however you befriend a stranger, as in a car accident, you become responsible for good care of the former stranger.) For the same reason the Japanese push and shove strangers trying to get into Tokyo subway cars.

In the 1990s Japanese trains will be immaculate. Doubting my memory, I will ask a Japanese client about the messes I remembered.

“Yes, you are correct”, he explains, embarrassed. “The government told us we were making a bad impression on Westerners”, he says to explain the change.

On Washington’s Birthday weekend in 1959 Julie and I venture to Matsuyama, across the Inland Sea on Shikoku, the smallest of the four main islands. To get there we take a ferry from Hiroshima. The three-hour voyage features live chickens and goats, and a large circle of pretty lively men seated in a circle on a tatami-matting floor consuming enormous quantities of sake from a huge jug in the middle of the circle. No one seems to speak English. The men are not as lively at the end of the voyage, but peaceful.

As we disembark two teenagers come onboard and try to steal our suitcases from me. I resist. They persist. It dawns on me that they may have come from the inn where we will stay. That is in fact what is going on. I relent.

We enjoy a visit to a centuries-old castle atop a high hill (or small mountain, “yama” means mountain) in the center of Matsuyama. As we try to find the base of the cable car that goes up to the castle, two school girls in uniforms silently take us by the hand and lead us across a large playing field and into a western style house. There we meet the aged American headmaster of the school and his American wife. They are delighted to see some fellow Americans. They have headed a girls school, quite unusual in Japan, since shortly after he graduated from Harvard Law School in 1906. They stayed at their posts throughout World War II, although they were not free to travel around Japan.

Later we get to the cable car and then to the castle. It appears not to have suffered damage during the war. Century-old paintings on the wood ceilings of its long passageways opening onto the inside courtyard are colorful and fascinating.

General Curt Lemay’s air force fire-bombed Matsuyama in the spring of 1945, incinerating much of the town and its inhabitants. None of the Japanese seem friendly to us here, and some seem hostile, in contrast to those in Hiroshima. None of the inhabitants outside the inn speak any English to us. Matsuyama is off the beaten path. We see no other Westerners during the few days we are here.

Our inn is traditional Japanese. To warm up in the morning, we go down the hall to a hot bath. When we return to our room it is snowing inside! The maids have opened up the walls, perhaps to let in some fresh, invigorating air. We shiver, and endure.

Another weekend we take a bus from Iwakuni across Honshu to the village of Hagi, 90 miles away on the Sea of Japan and famous for its pottery. The roads are terrible. The bus takes several hours to cross the island, almost all of which is mountainous. We buy some pottery and stay overnight. Alas, we need to take the bus back!

BANZAI! Self Defense Force take-offs

Some of the VQ-1 enlisted men like to take target practice with rifles. They need an officer to supervise a visit to the base’s firing range, a low-lying space between a taxiway and the south end of the runway. I agree to accommodate them. While we are there, six Japanese Self Defense Force twin engine, tail-wheel Beechcraft taxi out to the end of the taxiway.

They add power to run magneto checks to see whether sparks are effectively getting to all of the cylinders from each magneto. The left engine of the lead plane performs so poorly that I can hear it misfiring, despite the shooting and the noise from the other five planes. I am amazed to see the six planes taxi together onto the runway and the lead plane accelerate down the runway, coughing as it goes. Shortly after it gets up enough speed to lift its tail off the ground, smoke billows out from the left engine, the plane makes a sharp 90 degree turn to the left, and abruptly stops as its nose and propellers hit the ground. Ablaze, the plane is still on the runway. As fire trucks speed down the runway from the other end, the

off the ground, smoke billows out from the left engine, the plane makes a sharp 90 degree turn to the left, and abruptly stops as its nose and propellers hit the ground. Ablaze, the plane is still on the runway. As fire trucks speed down the runway from the other end, the second Beechcraft starts its take-off roll! It takes off, just missing the oncoming fire trucks. The other four Beechcraft also promptly follow suit, roaring by the fire trucks that are fighting the fire at the edge of the runway.

The incident does not seem all that unusual. The Self Defense Force pilots also fly into and out of clouds near the airfield without being on an instrument flight plan that should enable them to avoid collisions with other aircraft. We keep a sharp lookout for Beechcraft darting out of clouds near the field.

“Spend all of the money!”

VQ-1 has an allocation or budget of \$90,000 per calendar quarter for consumables such as leather summer flying gloves (\$2 per pair), jet fuel for the TV-2 and A3Ds (nine cents per gallon), and aviation gasoline (eleven cents per gallon) for the P4Ms. Big ticket durable items such as engines, propellers and electronics systems and equipment come free. Near the end of one quarter we are way under budget; many of our planes have been laid up. The squadron sends out several flights of P4Ms to fly around low and slow, landing gear and flaps down, with the jets on, to burn as much fuel as possible, to use up the 90 grand. I go on such a flight. (Really boring flying!) I argue with higher-ups against the waste.

“We work for CNO, on very high-priority missions. We won’t have any trouble getting ninety thousand next quarter, no matter how little we spend this one.”

“Morgan, you just don’t understand the Navy.”

They are right. We spend all the money.

Courts Martial

The Captain convenes two Special Courts Martial during my time with the squadron. In the first, he appoints Brian Mims, a twidget, and me as defense counsel. Neither of us is a lawyer, but neither of the prosecution officers is a lawyer either. That’s fair, the Navy thinks. In a General Court Martial the defense counsel must be lawyers since very severe penalties may result from conviction, whereas a Special can at most put a man in the brig for six months and order a Bad Conduct Discharge. Our thoroughly disreputable client is a teenaged enlisted man. He faces two charges, violating an order, “To wit, do not enter off-limits restaurants or other facilities”, and assault and battery on his Japanese girl friend. The undisputed facts are that the girl friend emerges from her room above a restaurant bleeding from her head; the Japanese police apprehend our client in front of the restaurant, an off-limits one, and take him into it to await the arrival of the Shore Patrol, who take him into U.S. custody.

As noted above in “Brownie”, my piloting partner Lt. Commander Brown heads the three-officer court. None of them is a lawyer. The trial commences in a large room in the building that houses base administration personnel including the Marine Corps Commanding General. Wooden chairs with small arm-desks accommodate members of the public. Willy Wise, at 6’4”, the tallest enlisted man in the squadron, is the bailiff. Everyone knows you are not supposed to go into off-limits places, but I have never seen a written order saying so or listing the off-limits places. I took a Navy correspondence course on Military Justice when in basic flight training and thus know something about due process and the rules of evidence. At the outset of the trial I demand to see the order that the charges quote saying don’t go into off-limits places. I spend a few minutes arguing why we are entitled to see the order. Willy has been standing rigidly at attention and passes out as I near the end of my oration. He strikes an empty wooden chair on his way to the deck. The chair slides across the room and bangs into the wall, loudly. Time out!

The tribunal asks the prosecutors for the order. They do not have it. They ask for a recess so they can get it from the Marine Corps folks who administer the base. They report a half-hour later that no one can find the order. They are sure it exists, however. I protest, but the trial continues.

After establishing that the accused was in the off-limits restaurant when the Japanese police turned him over to the Shore Patrol, the prosecutors call the girl friend to testify. They use an interpreter to put her story into English. To everyone’s surprise, she testifies that she thinks she slipped and fell onto a ceramic hibachi in her room, not that our client hit or shoved her, as we had suspected. Brian and I do not cross-examine her.

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At the lunchtime recess I am walking through a parking lot. One of the prosecutors, twidget Simeon Fields, yells at me from his car as he prepares to drive home.

"Morgan, what the hell are you doing? You know that the Captain wants to get rid of that bastard!"

"I know that. But the Captain appointed me to defend him, and that's what I'm doing."

Fields is irate and speechless. He drives off.

I argue to the court in the afternoon about the absence of the order and the fact that the accused did not voluntarily enter the off-limits restaurant, and that there is no evidence to support the assault-and-battery charge. The tribunal members are on the spot. Fields is right, we all know the Captain wants to get rid of our man. The tribunal finds him not guilty of assault and battery, but guilty of the off-limits charge!

The squadron has a Legal Officer, John Kernell, a non-lawyer aviator who has taken a six-weeks course in Naval Justice at Newport, Rhode Island. He advises the Captain that the mandatory higher-authority review would surely reverse the off-limits conviction. The Captain reverses the conviction. He also orders prosecution and defense counsel to take the correspondence course in Military Justice. He administratively transfers the accused to California where he should get an Administrative Discharge. We hear later that soft-headed authorities there take pity on him because of his youth and allow him to complete his "Kiddie Tour" of duty, which obligates teenagers who enlist to serve only until they are 21. So he ends up with an Honorable Discharge! At least he is no longer with VQ-1!

It turns out that I am the only counsel who has already taken the correspondence course. The Captain does not make me take it again. He does, however appoint Brian Mims and me as prosecutors for the future. We handle the second court martial, discussed above under "Brownie".

"Get a little drunk and you lands in jail"

Joe Bellefore, my mild mannered 17 year-old Storekeeper, returns to the front gate of the base one night rather inebriated. The Marine guards put him into a small booth where they stand during inclement weather. The booth displays one of numerous large photographs around the base of the Commanding Marine Corps General. Joe pulls the photo down and tears it up. The guards are not amused. Joe spends the night in the brig and faces a charge of destroying government property. That brings Joe and me, as his supervising officer, to a "Captain's Mast", a forum to deal with minor infraction. The mast is, however, quite formal. I speak up for Joe as a good sailor. The Captain sternly sentences him to restriction to base for 15 days. Joe is contrite, and relieved. He does not get into any other trouble.

"Never Surrender" but "Ask for the Swiss"

Each P4M carries a carbine, and the pilots can carry 38 caliber pistols, supposedly so that if the plane goes down in Communist territory, the crew could fight off any would-be captors. Unreal, yes, but true. Every six months, every U.S. serviceman receives formal instruction on the Code of Conduct. Commanding officers require each man to sign a certificate (for use against him in a court martial) that he has received and understands the instructions. The military developed the Code in response to "collaboration with the enemy" on the part of some soldiers who were captured by the Communists during the Korean War. The Code forbids such collaboration, and also requires that no one surrender so long as there is any means available to resist. The carbines and pistols are means to resist!

Higher authorities also provide a different set of instructions for what to do if a VQ-1 plane goes down in Communist territory: Do not resist capture, lest that create a diplomatic incident. Instead, ask for representation by the Swiss government. When I and others comment that such a course of action would seem to violate the Code, the squadron writes to CNO for clarification. CNO does not respond or even acknowledge receipt of our inquiry. The brass like the contradiction the way it is. If a plane goes down and there is a hullabaloo about the crew putting up a fight, the brass can denounce the crew for not asking for the Swiss. If the crew fail to put up a fight and ask for the Swiss and there is a public outcry about lack of resistance, the brass can cite violations of the Code. Either way, the brass can blame the crew. What more could Admirals want?

In any event the conflict in instructions does not matter. No U.S. airman in our line of

outcry about lack of resistance, the brass can cite violations of the Code. Either way, the brass can blame the crew. What more could Admirals want?

In any event the conflict in instructions does not matter. No U.S. airman in our line of work ever lives to tell about going down in or near Communist territory, with the notable exception of Gary Powers, a U-2 pilot the Russians prosecute in a show trial. We are expendable, although we do not realize it until decades later when we read about the fate of numerous crews that went down as the result of hostile fire, one a VQ-1 P4M crew shot down off the coast of Shanghai in 1956.

The certainty of being blamed if things go wrong is just another risk that we take in service of our country. Our flying service happens to be completely voluntary; any member of a flight crew can at any time refuse to fly. One newly arrived VQ-1 twidget makes such a request, not professing any concern other than unhappiness with the cramped working spaces in the rear of the P4Ms. Within an hour, the Captain transfers him to another Navy unit at Iwakuni, a Fleet Air Support Squadron. The FASRON soon sends him elsewhere.

Would you believe a U-2?

Hugh Sams and I are playing golf at Atsugi late one afternoon, standing on a green and concentrating on putts. A shadow passes the green silently. We look up and see about 50 feet overhead what looks like a large black glider coasting in for a landing. I have never heard of the super secret U-2s, very high-flying planes photographing the entire U.S.S.R. Their flights continue until 1960 when one piloted by Gary Powers suffers damage from a near-miss from a Russian rocket. He fails to commit suicide as he had agreed to do. Both the U-2 and Powers end up in Russian hands. Nikita Khrushchev makes a huge public issue of the spying. President Eisenhower says all nations engage in spying; the U.S. has recently convicted a soviet spy named Abel. Khrushchev cancels a planned Summit. A few years later the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. exchange Powers for Abel.

I never see anything in the news or in histories about U-2s operating out of N.A.S. Atsugi.

Seaplane rocketry

I receive an assignment to monitor a March 10, 1958, check-flight by a P5M in an antisubmarine-warfare seaplane squadron temporarily based in Iwakuni for the usual six-months deployment from the States. That is my only flight in a seaplane. Among other things I check is the accuracy of rocket attacks on simulated surfaced submarines. A small rocky island in the Inland Sea serves as the target. In an effort to ensure that I give the flight a 4.0, the pilots entreat me to take the copilot's seat and make a rocket attack of my own. I duly place the P5M into a steep dive from 3,000 feet. The plane picks up speed and really shakes and shudders. At about 750 feet I press the button on the yoke that should fire the rocket. No rocket fires! I press the button again. Still no rocket launches! I pull up a few hundred feet above the target. As the plane passes through level flight and heads up, the rocket fires! It disappears into the blue. Where it lands no one knows. We hope it land harmlessly in the sea. I hear nothing further about it.

"The wheels, not the flaps, stupid."

I am practicing touch-and-go landings in a P4M at Iwakuni one afternoon. Lt. j.g. Sid Drucquer is my co-pilot. As we take off, the one thing that he is supposed to do is raise the wheels, to streamline the plane and help it increase airspeed. On one take-off the plane climbs to about ten feet and hangs in the air. It is not maneuverable! The ailerons do not seem to work. The wings are level. We can't turn. I wonder what is going on. And worry. The wind blows us slowly off the runway to the right. There are structures nearby on that side, but we pass them by without colliding. Slowly, very slowly it seems, we gain airspeed. The flight controls begin to respond. As I start to raise the flaps I notice that they are already up. *All the way up!* The wheels are still down! Drucquer pulled up the wrong lever, critically reducing the ability of the plane to maintain flight. We almost stalled and crashed.

"Sorry", he says, realizing his mistake, as I pick up the wheels.

A tragically bad run of luck

From spring 1959 to spring 1960 VQ-1 loses a third of its aviators. One loss involves two crewmen and the pilots, Commander Francis "Frenchy" J. Suhare and Lt. j.g. Don Schillinger. They have seven and three children respectively. They go to the States to pick up a brand new A3D-2Q. They fly it as far as Wake Island in mid-Pacific. They take off from there and disappear en route to Japan. They send out no distress message that anyone

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The second loss involves Lt. j.g. Allan DeWitt and Commander Burton "Ben" C. Decker, the latter newly come to the squadron. Julie and I get to know Ben and his wife Sally pretty well. We play bridge at each others' homes. They have a Siamese cat that uses the toilet; no litter box needed! We actually see the cat use the toilet, sitting carefully on the seat. We learn that Sally's first husband was a Naval Aviator who died in an aircraft accident. On a May 28, 1959, night flight on which Al is checking Ben out in an A3D-1Q, the plane crashes into the Inland Sea a few miles offshore from the base. Again, two pilots and two crewmen die.

The third tragedy takes the life of my good friend Lt. j.g. Neville Fowler. Nev leaves the squadron in the summer of 1959 en route to Morocco on an assignment as Naval Attache in our Embassy there. The commercial "Caravelle" plane on which he is a passenger crashes in North Africa, killing everyone on board.

The fourth occurs shortly after VQ-1 moves to Atsugi early in 1960. Another good friend, Hugh Sams, is practicing touch-and-go landings there in an A3D. Climbing out after a take-off, his plane suddenly dives to the ground. He leaves Mary with young children as she carries another.

Whenever deaths occur the Navy sends any spouse and children back to the States immediately. I believe that practice is designed to help the remainder of the squadron forget about the tragedies and go on with their work. There is little if any time even to say goodbye. By the time we learn of some accidents the spouses and children have already left.

Toying with the T-Bird

The squadron has a TV-2, a small Lockheed-built single engine jet fighter trainer to facilitate our promised transition to all new A3D-2Qs. The Air Force has the same trainer and calls it the T-33, giving rise to the generic designation of "T Birds". Flying the TV-2 is entirely voluntary. Almost no one wants to try that when I arrive at Iwakuni. Some of our aviators have gone into multi-engine in order to avoid jets, which they and their wives generally regard as unduly dangerous. I am not among them. Eager to resume flying after a lay-off of four months, I find out that Lt. Commander Hal Stewart is checked out in the TV-2, the *only* guy who is checked out. I ask him to take me for a few flights so I can get checked out.

Low and slow in the slipstream of some huge propellers

Stewart obliges, starting on December 31, 1957. We fly again on January 3, but not after that until March 5. The fourth flight, on March 20, is supposed to be my check flight. All goes well until we are on final approach for a landing to the south, about to pass over a tall brick smokestack that is part of an industrial plant at water's edge. Suddenly, some invisible force rotates the wings sharply counterclockwise. I react almost at once, stopping the rotation at about 90 degrees (the left wing now points straight down). I quickly return the wings to level, move the throttle full forward to increase power, and push the stick forward to nose the plane down and gain air speed, all as instructed in flight training to avoid a stall. We barely miss the smokestack. Landing now just won't work. Also as instructed in flight training, I retract the landing gear as we are "going around" in preparation for another approach.

Sitting in tandem behind me, Stewart curses to himself, "What the ++++ is going on?" His panic is understandable.

"I got it", he tells me and takes the controls. Shaken, I welcome the shift, and hunker down so Stewart will have a better view on the next approach, thinking, if you could call it that, that all was now safe and secure. (I never again think that way and will always want to be at the controls.)

Stewart's approach goes very smoothly. Slightly above landing speed and about five feet above the runway, he cuts the throttle all the way back, just as a frantic call comes in from the control tower.

"Navy 7961, go around, wheels up! Go around, go around!"

That's us. Stewart moves the throttle full forward. We wait anxiously for several seconds as the plane hangs in the air and the engine slowly winds up to full power. How

“Navy /961, go around, wheels up! Go around, go around!”

That’s us. Stewart moves the throttle full forward. We wait anxiously for several seconds as the plane hangs in the air and the engine slowly winds up to full power. How close we come to stalling and crashing, we do not know. The plane very slowly resumes a comfortable flying speed, still only a few feet above the runway. We go around for a third approach. By this time a red light is on to warn that our fuel supply is critically low. I explain to Stewart that in flight training we always retract the landing gear when going around, and do not lower them until the start of the 180-degree descending left turn approach to landing.

“We don’t do it that way in the fleet,” Stewart replies.

The fuel holds out. Stewart lands the plane (with the wheels down this time).

“We’ll have to call this an ‘incomplete’,” he says, taxiing in.

We soon learn that a P4M landed about a minute or two before our first approach. The air was unusually calm. It must have been the “prop wash” from the P4M’s huge four bladed propellers that caused the much smaller TV-2 to rotate so violently. Whew! A really close call! In several installments!

The next day we fly again, up to N.A.S. Atsugi in the Tokyo area and back. I’m checked out! I solo on March 24. Stewart leaves the squadron a few weeks later. The T-Bird is mine! All mine! No one else is checked out in it.

Almost asleep for lack of oxygen

On an early afternoon solo flight heading east toward Tokyo, I begin to feel sleepy as I fly over where Mount Fuji must be. Distinctive as Fuji’s profile is from the surface, from 30,000 feet above it is indistinguishable from the surrounding countryside. I fight off the urge to sleep as I try to locate Fuji. I wonder why I should feel sleepy at all. Regardless of the time of day or length of a flight, I have never before felt sleepy in flight. The urge to sleep grows dramatically. I have trouble keeping my eyes open. Just as I am about to give in, I remember some instruction in Pre-flight Training, that a deficiency in oxygen would turn your fingernails blue and make you feel sleepy. My fingernails are covered by my leather summer flying gloves and I do not have the energy to try to pull them off. Then it occurs to me to reach down to the oxygen mixture switch and move it from “Mixture” to “100%”. My brain immediately clears. I am wide awake. Very wide awake!

Standard Operating Procedures call for 100% oxygen at take-off but then a shift to “Mixture” to conserve the plane’s oxygen supply. The oxygen system should adjust the mixture of oxygen and ambient air, supplying almost entirely ambient air at sea level and increasingly oxygen as altitude increases and the amount of oxygen in the ambient air decreases. I now know that the system does not always function as designed. I worry a bit and wonder what would have become of me if I had not switched to 100%.

Sightseeing, doing favors, running errands

VQ-1 welcomes my flying the T-Bird whenever and wherever I want. The squadron has severe problems keeping its P4Ms and A3Ds flyable, due largely to delays in getting replacement parts. An hour flown in the T-Bird counts as much towards the squadron’s flying quota as does an hour in any of the larger aircraft. So I do a lot of sightseeing, cruising the Inland Sea and occasionally venturing out into the Sea of Japan towards South Korea.

I also run errands. I fly to a distant air base to get a bottle of ketchup to use at home, as the Commissary at Iwakuni (unenthusiastically run by the Marine Corps) was out. Another time I fly Hugh Sams 800 miles to the Misawa U. S. Air Force Base so he can buy a piece of hi-fi equipment. Alas, we learn there that the base’s hi-fi shop is closed on Mondays! On the return flight we have engine trouble, with vibrations at normal cruising altitudes around 30,000 feet. We come home more smoothly at 20,000 feet, but almost run out of fuel at the lower, less fuel-efficient altitude. The low-fuel red light comes on about 80 miles from Iwakuni as darkness falls. Fortunately, our first landing approach goes well.

At other times the squadron sends me to bases in the Tokyo area to confer with various officers there. At times all I know is that some higher-up wants someone to show up. That is so for a visit to COMNAVFORJAPAN’s staff at Atsugi. Fitzsimmons learns of my trip and says:

“Mr. Morgan, please ask them if we need to keep sending daily reports of aircraft flying status.”

I have not heard of such reports, and do not see one before heading east. I meet in a small room with three officers and two enlisted men. No one has an agenda, so we chat for

flying status.”

I have not heard of such reports, and do not see one before heading east. I meet in a small room with three officers and two enlisted men. No one has an agenda, so we chat for a while. Then I remember Fitz’s request.

“Say, I wonder whether you folks still need the status reports we send you every day?”

“What status reports?” one of the officers asks.. “We don’t get any reports from VQ-!”

“Oh yes we do, sir”, interjects one of the enlisted men. “I put them right here in this file cabinet,” opening a file drawer.

A pause ensues.

“Well, since we don’t even look at them, I guess you can discontinue sending them.”

A bit of good news for Fitzsimmons.

Test piloting (Is this airplane put together right?)

I also become a test pilot. The T-Bird undergoes a major periodic inspection and maintenance overhaul. That includes detaching the tail section from the fuselage to facilitate inspection of the engine. Only a test pilot can by regulations take the plane on its next flight. So the Operations Department types up and the Captain signs a document dated 20 November 1958 designating me as a test pilot. So far, so good! I encounter a major problem, however, during the standard pre-flight inspection of the plane. The Pilots’ Handbook (we have some for the T-Bird) says to shake the tail pipe (with a glove on). The pipe should move sideways and back a quarter of an inch. On all prior inspections that I made, it moved a quarter of an inch. This time, no movement whatsoever!

“No deal”, I tell the attending mechanic, worried that the tail section including the tail pipe has not been properly re-attached.

Out to the flight line comes my friend Lt. Commander Don Mayer, the Assistant Maintenance Officer.

“Don, I know the Pilot’s Handbook says the tail pipe should move, but we did everything right. The Erection and Maintenance Manual says nothing about needing play in the tail pipe. The plane’s o.k. to fly”.

I hesitate, but eventually respond.

“O.k. But if the fire warning light comes on, I’m bailing out right away. I’m not going to hang around and try to figure out what’s wrong.”

“Fair enough.”

And that’s that. The test flight goes smoothly. For subsequent flights the play returns to the tail pipe.

Another near mid-air collision

The TV-2 is not highly powered, and takes almost 30 minutes to get up to its top altitude, about 31,000 feet. During a climb I should do a series of “S Turns”, left and then right, so as to see what if anything is in the air ahead. As the plane nears maximum altitude its rate of climb is very small, and could be offset by the S Turning. Thus I am tempted to minimize the turning in order to get as high as possible (don’t ask me why). That changes for me one day, however, when I have almost reached 31,000 feet. An Iwakuni-based Marine Corps A4D, also climbing but at a much greater rate of climb, zooms by in the opposite direction, less than 100 feet away, possibly as the result of evasive action by the A4D. As we say, a mid-air collision can ruin your whole day.

Looped!

In the summer of 1958 I decide to take a night flight and have some fun doing aerobatics over the Inland Sea. The skies are distinctly un-crowded so there is ample room to maneuver. Aileron rolls and chandelles are easy, as expected. Then I try a loop, for the first time in a T-Bird. The procedure I had read seems simple: put the plane into a 30 degree dive at full power, increase airspeed to 360 knots, pull back on the stick until reaching four Gs (a G being the force of gravity), and hold 4 Gs until completion of a vertical 360 degree circle.

My G-suit helps, pressing against my legs and abdomen to keep blood flowing to my brain. I struggle nonetheless to hold 4 Gs, as the loop seems to be taking forever. The strain on my body becomes too much even though the plane is still moving upward, less than half way through the loop. I give up, roll the plane 180 degrees and level off. What a relief! I

brain. I struggle nonetheless to hold 4 Gs, as the loop seems to be taking forever. The strain on my body becomes too much even though the plane is still moving upward, less than half way through the loop. I give up, roll the plane 180 degrees and level off. What a relief! I realize that I am not as young or in as good shape as I was in basic flight training, just two years before. Of course, loops were much easier in the slower moving prop planes there. Nonetheless, I never again attempt a loop, night or day.

The loop attempt is not my first experience with the G-suit. That I wear on every T-Bird flight, over cotton underwear to protect me from melting plastic if fire breaks out in the cockpit, and under a standard summer flying suit. The G-suit has a hose attachment that fits into a high-pressure air system. The system supplies pressure only at and above 2 Gs, which are rarely reached in normal flight. With many T-Bird flights under my belt, I exceed 2 Gs for the first time, not realizing that the system would soon apply air pressure, or how it would supply pressure. I am startled by what feels like snakes wrapping themselves quickly and very tightly around my lower legs, then my upper legs, and soon thereafter my abdomen, all in just a second or so. I am greatly relieved when I realize the pressure is not coming from snakes and the G-suit has operated to keep some blood in my head.

Flight instructing

As the composition of the squadron's aviator contingent changes, some newcomers express interest in flying the T-Bird. I serve as their instructor, being officially designated as an Instructor Pilot on 1 August 1958. A memorable incident occurs on one of John Ballard's initial flights. Shortly after takeoff he is supposed to retract the landing gear. The gear handle is difficult to locate. Ballard, overworked by his duties as the squadron's Electronics Officer, has not had time to memorize the location of the cockpit controls. As he looks down to find the handle, which is small and hard to locate, he relaxes his grip on the stick. As that is spring-loaded forward, perhaps as a precaution against stalling, the T-Bird noses down toward the runway about 50 feet below. I pull back on my stick (which also pulls back Ballard's stick), without saying anything to him. Don't have to. Ballard is very sharp. He realizes what's happening and simply mutters "a huh" as he resumes the climb out.

John Ballard wrote the following after reading the first version of this memoir.

In the Attention-Getting Flights Department, I remember a night TV-2 flight with you in front. You were making the approach and landing. At about 300 feet, the ACU failed, completely blocking your view with instant canopy fog. Your expression of concern was eloquent, indeed. Fortunately there was a small unfogged patch of cockpit just in front of my left shoulder. I took the aircraft and made an uneventful landing looking out the side of the canopy. A messy problem if one of us had been solo. Probably would have had to blow the canopy.

The young Flight Surgeon who consults with the squadron, Jim Connors, also wants to fly the T-Bird. He is not an aviator and it may well be improper for him to fly any Navy aircraft. I don't know and am not a stickler for regulations in any event. No one else in the squadron says anything about whether Connors can fly, and I do not consult anyone. After his first flight, in which I do the takeoff and landing, Connors asks to do the takeoffs. I agree. Connors is very pleased with himself after each subsequent take-off. I continue to do the landings. I think it's good for a flight surgeon to get some real flying experience. So does Connors.

Operational Flights: Cruising the Coast of Communist Asia

First operational mission: How far into China were we?

After several P4M familiarization flights in January 1958, my first operational mission takes off from Iwakuni on the evening of February 4. It is a rookie flight for each of the four pilots – Lt. Jack Taylor's first as an Electronic Counter Measure Aircraft Commander ("ECAC"), co-pilot John Conroy's first operational flight as co-pilot, and Lt. j.g Ty Lockett's first as lead navigator. My role is to learn the navigation ropes from Lockett. Neither one of us gets any pilot time in the cockpit during the 8.4 hour flight.

Our intended course is north to the east coast of the Korean Peninsula just south of the Demilitarized Zone ("DMZ") astride the 38th Parallel. thence west across South Korea

Lockett. Neither one of us gets any pilot time in the cockpit during the 8.4 hour flight.

Our intended course is north to the east coast of the Korean Peninsula just south of the Demilitarized Zone (“DMZ”) astride the 38th Parallel, thence west across South Korea and over the Yellow Sea to 20 miles offshore mainland China, thence southerly staying 20 miles offshore until the Shanghai area, thence east to U.S. Naval Air Station Naha in Okinawa.

The only advance information we have about winds off the China coast that night is a report from the U. S. Embassy in Moscow, thousands of miles to the west, of what the surface winds were there a week earlier. Hardly a sound basis for extrapolation, but Lockett is unconcerned, as the operational flights generally use radar every 20 minutes or so to determine the plane’s position. There seems to be no need to calculate the wind from one position to the next in order to project where our P4M will be 20 minutes later and what course Taylor and Conroy should steer to stay 20 miles offshore. Frequent and accurate radar positions will indicate well enough the necessary course adjustments. Usually!

The flight goes smoothly until we head south along the China coast. We encounter one violent rain-storm cell after another, for hours. Because the coast is low lying and level, our radar screen cannot differentiate it from the storm cells. Lockett thus resorts to “dead reckoning”, using the Moscow surface winds as the best guess respecting our actual winds. We all know that Moscow a week ago is an unreliable guide, but Taylor is not about to abort his first ECAC flight just because our position is somewhat uncertain.

“There’re the Barin Islands”, Lockett exclaims from time to time as he peers at the radar screen. I can see only dozens of small bright circles of the sort that both storm cells and small islands can produce, but Lockett confidently pronounces two of them the Barin Islands. They are so small that they do not appear on our navigational charts, but Lockett has seen them on an earlier mission as second navigator. To my growing unease, Lockett keeps picking out different bright spots as the Barin Islands, for the next two hours! No one can be sure which if any of the bright spots really are the Barin Islands, but there is no way that more than two of the scores of spots Lockett claims to be the islands could be them.

On and on our dead reckoning goes. (“Dead” seems pretty apt.) When a needle on the Automatic Direction Finder instrument display indicates that we are abeam of Naha, we tell Taylor and Conroy to turn 90 degrees to the left and follow the needle. It should take about an hour and a half to reach Naha from 20 miles offshore from the Shanghai coast. An hour and 40 minutes go by. The ADF needle still points due east. So we’re a little late.

Another half hour goes by, and still the needle points east. What’s going on? Where are we? Is the needle working? Where have we been if Naha is still ahead? On and on we fly eastward. What choice do we have but to continue to pursue the needle? At least we have by now left China far behind. That depends of course on where we were when we turned for Naha.

In fact it takes an hour and a half longer than we expect to get to Naha. Extrapolation back suggests that when we turned for Naha, we were 300 to 400 miles inland! Barin Islands indeed! Fortunately the weather is so bad that the “Chi-coms” cannot detect and find us. They shot down one of our P4Ms in August 1956 just off the coast from Shanghai, claiming that it had strayed inward of the 12 mile offshore limit then recognized internationally as defining Chinese airspace. I learn decades later that a top secret Navy inquiry also concluded that that plane had strayed inside the 12 mile limit due to unexpected winds and a resulting navigational error.

P4Ms are neither heated nor pressurized. The ambient conditions we encounter are very humid and somewhat chilly. I develop enough of a cold and ear-passage obstruction that the air pressure increase as Taylor brings the plane down to land harms my right ear, causing some bleeding. I see a flight surgeon in the morning. He offers to ground me until I recover. I am not about to miss our next operational flight the following day. I do not seem to suffer any lasting adverse effect. Neither do I ever see any sign of the Barin Islands, despite many subsequent flights offshore from the China coast.

The value of the twidgets’ monitoring of hostile radio and radar transmissions depends on the accuracy of the navigation of the monitoring aircraft. Everything is relative from wherever the plane is. My first operational flight thus is completely worthless. At least we did not get shot down over central China or collide with a mountain there.

The Vladivostok caper: Cold War hi-jinks

from wherever the plane is. My first operational flight was is completely worthless. At least we did not get shot down over central China or collide with a mountain there.

The Vladivostok caper: Cold War hi-jinks

The U.S.S.R's only warm water Pacific Ocean port, Vladivostok is a heavily guarded offensive arsenal. We VQ-1 pilots give it a wide berth, 50 miles rather than 20. Yes it has a lot of radio and radar capabilities. The U.S. needs no further information to know not to plan any attacking flights over Vlad, as the area was known.

In preparation for an operational mission, my P4M lands one afternoon at the U.S. Air Force Base at Misawa, Japan, on the Sea of Japan coast of northernmost Honshu - the closest U.S. airfield to or from Vlad, some hundreds of miles north. Sitting on the right hand seat in the cockpit, as co-pilot, I notice two of the Air Force's newest supersonic jet fighters, F-100s, sitting side by side just off the end of the runway. The planes are hooked up to a mobile power unit that would supply electrical power to start rotation of the plane's turbines before jet fuel would be injected and ignited as the engines started. Ready to fly on short notice!

My fellow officers and I have several hours to wait before take-off and spend the evening at a lounge in the Officers Club, playing bridge. A college acquaintance I know from running freshman cross-country and have hardly seen since, Don French, now an Air Force pilot, happens by. He says hello and we exchange some pleasantries.

"What are you doing here", he then asks.

All of our operational flights are top secret and the crew are forbidden to say anything to anyone, spouses included, about where they are going. (One's spouse is not forbidden from watching the husband pack. A swimsuit or summer civilian garb is a sure sign of heading south, for example. The number of sets of underwear and socks are also clues as to expected duration of a mission. When and where and for how long, the crew cannot say. Just as well, as occasionally the missions encounter delays and the husbands would not return until well after expected from the laundry counting. I am nonplussed by French's eminently reasonable inquiry.

"Playing bridge", I say after a long pause.

Nervous laughter all around. By now French knows that I am in electronics countermeasures and does not press the question. The conversation resumes.

"By the way", I ask, "Do you know what those F-100s are doing just off the runway?"

"Oh yes! That's a sore point. Three weeks ago two of our guys fly over to Vlad and make a touch-and-go landing there. We all have lot of fun about that. Then, about a week later two MIGs do a touch-and-go landing *here!* The Commanding General is really upset. He orders my squadron to keep two planes 'at the ready' at the end of the runway at all times. 'The next time MIGs do a touch-and-go landing here, you take off and shoot them down', he orders. That's a real pain. We only have about sixteen pilots and its really boring sitting out there around the clock."

No doubt the General does not expect any more MIGs. Rather, he comes up with a way of punishing every pilot in the squadron, thereby creating peer pressure to discourage future stupid hi-jinks that risk major international incidents that could heat up the Cold War. How long the runway patrol is maintained I do not know. I feel a little jeopardized; our P4Ms are easy targets along the coast of Asia.

So far as I am aware at this writing there has never been any publicity about the exchange of touch-and-go landings. Quite possibly both sides were embarrassed that enemy planes could do what they did, demonstrating weakness in the other side's supposedly formidable air defenses.

Surface and air battles over Quemoy and Matsu

Ever since Mao's communists took control of all of mainland China and Chiang Kai Chek's Nationalists fled to Formosa (Taiwan) in 1949, the U.S. Seventh Fleet protects Formosa from invasion from the mainland. The Chi-Nats take advantage of the protection to attack the mainland with impunity. When at the American Compound at the military airbase several miles south of Tainan, on the western coast of Formosa, I frequently see Chi-Nats taxiing out in American made F-86 fighter-bombers fully loaded with bombs and rockets under their wings, and taxiing back in within the hour empty, obviously having crossed the Straights of Formosa, hit one or more targets on the mainland, and flown home. Over time the Chi-Coms build up a MIGs air force and start to do battle with the Chi-Nats.

The Chi-Nats routinely fly B-17s, the Flying Fortresses of WW II fame, to drop

Straights of Formosa, hit one or more targets on the mainland, and flown home. Over time the Chi-Coms build up a MIGs air force and start to do battle with the Chi-Nats.

The Chi-Nats routinely fly B-17s, the Flying Fortresses of WW II fame, to drop propaganda leaflets over the mainland. The planes are defended by the darkness of night and electronic equipment to jam Chi-Com radars used to attack them. The Chi-Nats begin to lose every plane. CIA technicians cannot figure out what is wrong. They call for help. On a super secret mission my squadron-mate John Ballard is flown to Tainan during the middle of the night in one of our A3Ds. John finds a disconnect in the electronics of the jamming equipment. That solves the problem.

At about the same time, in August 1958, the Chi-Coms decide they can take control of Quemoy and Matsu, two small islands near the mainland that the Chi-Nats are holding. The Chi-Coms think the Seventh Fleet will not intervene just for the islands. They start bombarding Quemoy and Matsu with artillery from the mainland. The Chi-Nats do not surrender the islands. The bombardment continues. Working closely with the Chi-Nats, the U.S. calls on VQ-1 to find out whether the guns bombarding the islands have the benefit of radar guidance.

Hugh Sams and I serve as navigators on a P4M that that leaves Iwakuni late on September 7, 1958, on two hours notice. The plane uses its jets and prop engines all the way, in a hurry to get to Tainan, a flight of 4.7 hours. When we arrive in the middle of the night there are so many American planes there that there is no room in the American Compound for us to sleep. We sleep instead on the concrete parking area, in the shade of the wings of our plane. It is hot and humid, but I sleep for a few hours. About mid-morning some beds in the compound open up and we get some better sleep.

Early afternoon our pilots receive a briefing at a picnic table outside on the barracks where we have slept. Quite senior Navy officers, resplendent in dress white uniforms, tell the pilots where they are to fly (and they in turn tell us navigators). While the briefing is going on and the officers are huddled over charts of the Formosa Straights on the table, an aged Chinese shows up to empty the nearby holding tank for the wastes from the barracks' toilets. He sets down two wooden "Honey Pots" that he carries on the ends of a long pole and proceeds to open a cover on the ground and fill the pots with a long dipper. Some of the brownish liquid splashes on the backs of some white uniforms, undetected by those engaged in the briefing. Hugh and I watch from a distance as a worried look appears on the man's face followed quickly by a relieved grin when he realizes that no one at the table has noticed the splashes. He makes brief eye contact with us, as if to implore us not to say anything. We don't.

We fly for hours that afternoon up and down a specified course parallel to the coast of the mainland. Hugh and I use a drift meter all the time. By constantly viewing whitecaps through the drift meter we keep track of our course and immediately spot changes in the wind. When the wind changes we tell the pilots to turn 60 degrees one way for a minute and 120 degrees back for a minute and then fly a new course we have computed. We have measured drift in three different directions and use the measurements to compute the new wind. A week later at a briefing for all of the squadron's officers we hear praise from the squadron's senior twidget, Lt. Commander Kirkpatrick, for five hours of "perfect navigation".

We fly at 500 feet. It is hot and humid. High overhead, we see contrails from warring jets all afternoon, and an occasional smoking plane falling into the sea. We are glad none of the jets otherwise comes down where we are. The Chi-Coms lose 29 MIGs and another eight "probables" in a month of dogfights over Quemoy and Matsu with F-84s and F-86s armed with our brand new air-to-air heat-seeking missiles. The Chi-Nats have acquired those planes from the U.S. The Chi-Nats have excellent, experienced pilots, but it is rumored that U.S. Navy aviators fly some of the planes. Only two F-84s are lost, no F-86s.

Ground-to-air missiles from the Peoples Republic of China

"Are they still shooting ground-to-air missiles at you", an aviator who had served in VQ-1 several years before asks me at a bar in an officers club at one of the American bases in the Tokyo area. Yes. Fortunately the missiles' radar guidance systems can be confused by electronic jammers, and before they came into use by the release into the air of chaff, metallic needle-like strips about a foot long that show up in fire-control radar systems as alternate targets. (Chaff also serves as decorations on Christmas trees at Iwakuni, where tinsel is not available).

The electronic surveillance black boxes, programmed into our planes, enable our

alternate targets. (Chaff also serves as decorations on Christmas trees at Iwakuni, where tinsel is not available).

The electronic surveillance black boxes crammed into our planes enable our Electronics Officers to detect the approach of ground-to-air missiles, virtually all launched from mainland China. The officers can tell when a missile's radar "locks on" to our plane – anxious moments. They can also tell from a Doppler effect when the missile has flown by.

"Cockpit, do you see anything", we pilots hear them frantically ask on the intercom, followed soon by utter relief.

"Never mind, it's gone by".

This is routine life for us, on the hot fringes of the Cold War. With one exception, I never see anything. Many of our flights are at night or in bad weather with very low visibility. Even in good weather there generally is so much moisture in the air that one could not see even a large aircraft, let alone a missile, more than three miles away. And of course, the missiles move very fast.

In the middle of the night of August 12-13, 1958, Lt. Patrick Kewley is our Electronic Countermeasures Aircraft Commander first pilot and I the co-pilot on a flight that starts at Sangley Point near Manila, proceeds westward over Corregidor all the way to 20 miles from the coast of what I know as French Indo-China (actually, but unknown to me, Vietnam since the defeat of the French at Dien Ben Phu in 1954), thence north, east and north around the large Chi-Com island of Hainan, thence eastward toward Formosa. Having just left Hainan behind, we are more than usual off shore, about 50 miles from the mainland, south of Hong Kong. The visibility is exceptional. We can "see" Formosa from 120 miles, as a black area in an otherwise star-lit sea. Pat and I see a white streak coming toward us from well inside the mainland, to the west of Hong Kong. In just a few seconds it passes by, at our altitude but about five miles ahead of us. We are comforted that the missile missed by so much. Our radioman reports the attack to Iwakuni. Several minutes later we worry as a second blazing white streak comes from the same location and passes about a mile ahead of us, again on our altitude.

"Wow, they seem to be getting the range".

Seeing is believing, much more worrisome to me that merely hearing about a missile from a troubled twidget. We have seen enough. We descend rapidly to a few hundred feet above the water to get out of "sight" of any land-based Chi-Com radar, we hope. We continue uneventfully to a night landing in Tainan.

We become Crew Number 9

For my first several months with the squadron I fly with a variety of aviators, as do the other aviators. Someone then decides to form the flight personnel into crews that will ordinarily fly together on operational missions and to assign each crew to a particular P4M. Brownie heads our crew. I am the co-pilot. Sid Drucquer is the navigator. We sometimes carry a fourth aviator, someone junior who is new to the squadron. The enlisted crew includes a mechanic whose specialty is the engines (Robert Ivey), a radar specialist, a hydraulics system specialist, a radioman, two ordnance men, and about five twidgets whom an Electronics Officer supervises. Our assigned plane is "Number 9". The numbers come from the last numeral in the planes' serial numbers. Ours is 122209, perhaps the first P4-M ever built.

We need the specialists. Malfunctions in flight are common. The specialists can often fix a problem. They also perform maintenance when the plane is on the ground, particularly when we land away from home base. The official role of the ordnance men is to operate the machine guns in the bow and stern turrets. We could care less about the guns. If an ordnance man wants to be assigned to a flight crew, he has to know how to cook. On our longer flights we generally get a steak dinner – on a paper plate. The ordnance men cook the steaks one at a time. It takes hours to feed everyone.

Ivey kneels between the pilot and co-pilot for take-offs and landings, monitoring the engine instruments. He also is responsible for brewing coffee. Promptly after takeoff he turns on an electric percolator. Within a few minutes he offers us small paper cups of fresh coffee. Here and elsewhere, the Navy runs on coffee.

"What do you think about making Ivey our Plane Captain", Brownie says to me one day. Ivey is a Petty Officer Third Class, a junior within the crew, and one of the very few blacks in the squadron. The Plane Captain serves as the communications link between the

“What do you think about making Ivey our Plane Captain”, Brownie says to me one day. Ivey is a Petty Officer Third Class, a junior within the crew, and one of the very few blacks in the squadron. The Plane Captain serves as the communications link between the pilots and the enlisted crew on such matters as when we plan to take off next. Thus he needs to keep track of the crew.

Ivey is under consideration because he works closely with the pilots. There are three potential problems. Ivey’s behavior has been less than ideal. He is junior to other crewmen who are Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers First and Second Class, some of whom are Southerners. He is black. Brownie and I are concerned about how the rest of the crew would feel about having Ivey as Plane Captain. We do not want to create dissension within the crew, but Ivey is convenient from our standpoint. On a personal basis, we would like to give him an opportunity to perform a more responsible role. We have no Plane Captain at present, so no one would be displaced, and a Plane Captain should help the entire crew function better together. We decide to make him Plane Captain and see what happens. We observe no resistance or complaint.

Emergency night landing among Korean hills

On an operational mission the night of February 17-18, 1959, Brownie and I fly north from Iwakuni to just south of the De-Militarized Zone that separates North and South Korean armed forces at the 38th Parallel. We turn west heading across the Korean Peninsula toward the coast of China. Our hydraulics crewman tells us that the hydraulic system has failed. That means among other things that we cannot lower the flaps, which we normally do to change the shape of the wings and enable the plane to maintain flight at lower speeds than it could with the flaps up (retracted into the fixed structure of the wings).

So we realize that we will be making a high speed landing someplace and will not be able to make a steep descent to a runway as the plane would gain too much airspeed. We worry about what has gone wrong and what else might go wrong. We decide to land as soon as possible.

We contact U.S. flight control operations on the ground in Korea. They clear us to land at the Kimpo U. S. Air Force Base north and west from Seoul. Brownie has the controls. He tries to land several times but avoiding high hills around the base means that he cannot get the plane down to the runway going slow enough to land and come to a stop before running off the end of the runway. In the darkness the hills look as if they might be low clouds. I am uncertain whether they are clouds or hills. I hope Brownie knows. Brownie avoids them in any event. At one point as we are circling for another attempt, ground control warns us that we are close to the forbidden DMZ. We make tighter turns from then on.

On our successful attempt Brownie gets much lower than in his previous ones and we fly between dark shapes that may be hills or clouds as we turn into the final leg of an approach to the runway. I look up at the shapes on both sides. The runway lights disappear from view for several seconds behind one of the dark shapes. Brownie keeps turning and a clear path to the runway reappears. He reduces power, the plane slows, and the landing goes well.

Some Air Force officers meet us as we leave the plane around 2:00am.

“We were worried when you disappeared behind the hills. We’ve kept the bar open for you.”

Those gray shapes were hills, not low clouds! We repair to the Officers Club for a drink. Or two.

We stay at Kimpo for three days, trying to get parts to fix the hydraulics. Kimpo is in shabby shape. The control tower took a lot of gunfire during the Korean War and the holes are still quite visible. The civilian employees cannot be trusted and are said to steal anything that is not nailed down. We hear that the runways will be closed at the end of the third day for six months, for resurfacing. We dread the prospect of being marooned at Kimpo. We decide to fly to Iwakuni “as is”, with the landing gear locked down using the metal pins that are inserted when the plane is parked. (We need hydraulics to raise the landing gear in flight and to lower them for landing.) We still cannot lower the flaps, so take-off requires more runway than usual. Fortunately Kimpo is an Air Force base and the Air Force has long runways. Landing to the north at Iwakuni is easy, as we have a long distance over water in which to get the plane down at a moderate speed.

War games

In early June 1958 the squadron sends some P4Ms to Atsugi for off-shore war games

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War games

In early June 1958 the squadron sends some P4Ms to Atsugi for off-shore war games. I am Brownie's co-pilot. Hugh Sams is the third pilot/navigator. We receive a mid-morning briefing in a hangar. Our "enemy" is some U.S. aircraft carriers somewhere in the North Pacific. Our job is to fly around at a low altitude so that the carriers' radar cannot detect us, while we should be able to detect their radar or radio transmissions and zero in for a surprise low-level attack. That tactic has succeeded in previous war games. Just as the briefing officer looks at his watch and announces at 11:00 on June 11 that the war has begun, a thunderous explosion goes off nearby and rattles the windows. A 500-pound bomb buried since WW II has just detonated!

We take off a short while later and head out to sea. There we fly at 50 feet, under low overcast skies. The sea is flat. The light is poor. I constantly monitor our radio altimeter to be sure we don't fly into the water. Brownie and I also try to keep a steady lookout straight ahead. Carriers are much higher than 50 feet and we don't want to make a Kamikaze run at one. We fly in these conditions for 10 hours. The experience is quite stressful. We detect no signals. The carriers have apparently learned not to make any radio or radar transmissions. It is completely dark by the time we arrive back at Atsugi, mentally and physically exhausted.

The next day we fly a similar mission, in the same weather. Still we detect no transmissions from the carriers, and the 10 hour flight exhausts us. We are happy to hear, however, that we will not be asked to fly again in the war games, although they will continue without us.

I get a good night's sleep. The next morning Hugh Sams and I head for the golf course. Playing there is a real treat. We play two full rounds, 36 holes in total, carrying our golf clubs. That takes all day, and we are pretty tired. We celebrate and relax with a leisurely good dinner and a few drinks at the Officers Club. I get to my room at the Bachelor Officers Quarters around 22:00 and go to bed.

At 22:30 a knock at the door brings word of a phone call for me. The message is come to the hangar right away, you have another war games flight! We take off after midnight and fly 9.9 more hours at 50 feet in the darkness and then in poor daylight visibility as the night ends. It is broad daylight at Atsugi by the time we get there, dead tired. We poll the crew whether to stay in Atsugi and rest or fly back home to Iwakuni right away. They are unanimous. Our flight takes a mere 3.3 hours. We survive the war!

IITYWYBMAD

One evening I and some fellow VQ-1 fliers walk into a small Officers Club bar at N.A.S. Sangley Point, between operational missions. There, sitting alone at the bar is Scotty Munro, one of my Class of 1956 colleagues from Harvard's NROTC unit. We join him at the bar and have some drinks. We learn he is flying with a seaplane Anti-Submarine Warfare squadron. We cannot fail to notice a long banner over the bar with large letters:

I I T Y W Y B M A D

"Scotty, what do those letters stand for," I ask after trying to decipher them.

"If I tell you, will you buy me a drink", he responds unhelpfully in a low calm voice.

"Come on Scotty, why should we buy you a drink? What do they stand for?"

"If I tell you, will you buy me a drink?" is all he says, deadpan.

My VQ-1 colleagues join in, imploring Scotty to decipher the sign. He simply repeats his request for a free drink. Eventually we give in and order a drink for him.

"OK, what do they stand for?"

"If I tell you will you buy me a drink."

Detachment Alpha: space-age surveillance

A near fatal flight to Shemya in the Aleutian Islands

The moral: When you stare Death in the face for hours and Death blinks, move to safety right away and be thankful, very thankful.

For more than a year we hear that our squadron will be sending some of its resources on a super secret mission somewhere near the Arctic Circle. Around the end of March 1959 one P4M and one A3D leave Iwakuni for wherever "Detachment Alpha" is. A lot of equipment and supplies including a jeep for the officers, a bus for the crew, and a large

on a super secret mission somewhere near the Arctic Circle. Around the end of March 1959 one P4M and one A3D leave Iwakuni for wherever "Detachment Alpha" is. A lot of equipment and supplies including a jeep for the officers, a bus for the crew, and a large supply of beer the crew have purchased go by ship in advance. Officers can take their own beverages on their planes.

Six weeks later it is time for Crew Number 9 to relieve the first P4M crew. I pack a foot-locker with enough civilian clothes to cushion a six weeks supply of Wild Turkey and Bacardi Rum. On May 10 we fly to Misawa, a flight lasting 3.9 hours. We refuel there, and leave on a night flight to our destination, which we now know to be Shemya Island near the western end of the Aleutian Islands.

I have been to Shemya before on regular operational flights that trace the coast of Siberia. I know that the island has really terrible flying weather, *very* foggy most of the time. That knowledge almost certainly saves our lives at the end of this flight.

Since this is not an operational flight we decide not to wear our protective one-piece rubber suits, "Mark IV Survival Suits" in official parlance, "Poopy Suits" unofficially. They are bulky and uncomfortable. They provide water-proofing, and insulation from cold ocean waters if that is where we end up, and from very low air temperatures on high altitude flights, some close to minus 60 degrees Fahrenheit. We rationalize that if anything goes wrong during our flight we should have time to suit up.

An hour after take-off the electrician in the crew reports a minor problem with the electrical system. Another hour goes by and Drucquer and the electrician report that the LORAN ("Long Range Radio Navigation") equipment is not working, probably due to malfunction of the electrical system. In the third hour the radioman is unable to get out a position report; his radio is not working. The electrician advises that the electrical system is seriously malfunctioning.

We wonder whether we are on course. I call down to Drucquer at the Navigation Station and suggest that he get a "fix" of our position by celestial navigation.

"I don't know how", he replies.

He probably learned how in flight training but we don't ordinarily use celestial on our flights. We are supposed to get a celestial fix once a month back at the base just to stay in practice, but no one bothers with that. I think I have a very good theoretical grasp of celestial, and I tell Drucquer I'll switch with him until I get a fix.

I am a little rusty. It takes me half an hour to figure out what I think I should do. I "shoot" three stars with a bubble sextant and plot the results on the navigational chart for the area of our flight. Such a plot produces a triangle; the most likely position of the airplane is the middle of the triangle. The triangles generally range in size from a mile (excellent!) to ten miles (quite adequate). My triangle is over 50 miles!

I ponder whether I have followed the correct procedures. I cannot think of how else to get a fix, so I repeat the effort a half hour later. Another very oversize triangle! My third effort takes another half hour. This triangle is about the same size as the first two! I am really stumped.

I remember something from navigation training in Pensacola about the assumption of a "constant error" in shooting stars. Error arises from the difficulty of deciding where the middle of the bubble is. The bubble takes up almost the entire field of view in the periscope-like sextant. If the bubble does not touch the sides of the field of view, it provides an artificial horizon to measure the altitude of the star. You try to place and keep the star in the middle of the bubble for two minutes, moving it constantly to account for the rotation of the earth. There is, however no cross-hair or other guide as to where the middle of the bubble is. If there were no error, the three plotted lines would meet at a point. No triangle!

Have I made large but constant errors, I ask myself. The triangles are about the same size. Then I take a glance at the whole chart. The centers of the three triangles are about a half-hour apart. And they are in a straight line! A line that runs from Misawa to Shemya! The fixes must be accurate! We are on course to our destination. Whew! About half-way there.

I go back to the co-pilot's seat. Following standard operating procedure, I check all of the flight and engine instruments. I see that the oil supply for the starboard reciprocating engine is down 20%. We have a serious leak. Brownie decides to shut down that engine. First we start the starboard jet engine. We don't ordinarily use the jets at normal cruising altitudes because they burn gas much faster than the reciprocating engines. The two reciprocating (propeller) engines are adequate for normal flying conditions. I estimate that

First we start the starboard jet engine. We don't ordinarily use the jets at normal cruising altitudes because they burn gas much faster than the reciprocating engines. The two reciprocating (propeller) engines are adequate for normal flying conditions. I estimate that we have enough fuel to get to Shemya with one of the jets going (but not 500 miles beyond to Adak, the next field down the Aleutian chain.). Brownie pushes a button that feathers the propeller for the starboard engine. It stops immediately. Suddenly I can see it, motionless just a few feet to my right. I have an uneasy feeling.

We fly at an altitude of about 8,000 feet. We are slightly above a cloud layer. The skies over head are bright. We have a beautiful view as we lumber towards Shemya, wondering whether we will live to fly again. I think to myself, at least we can enjoy the scenic beauty.

We try to make radio contact with a ground station. Any station. No luck. We turn on the "Identification Friend or Foe" gear, hoping than someone will realize that we are in distress. No response. We are a thousand miles from Shemya, farther from Misawa. I worry about the weather at Shemya. Clear? Foggy? How foggy? Both Brownie and I worry about whether we will make contact with Shemya personnel when we get within range of our line-of-sight radios. Shemya is basically flat, unlike the mountainous islands down the chain to the east, and has a superb Ground Control Approach ("GCA") operator who can talk us down in almost any weather -- provided that at least one of our radios works.

One piece of navigational equipment seems to work, the Automatic Direction Finding system. The ADF needle points straight ahead. When we pass over the ADF transmitter on Shemya the needle will swing to our rear. Brownie and I agree that at that time we will start a descent for landing, hoping that the cloud layer does not extend all the way down to the surface.

Hours of nervousness go by. I repeatedly try to establish radio contact, but to no avail. What will we do, I think to myself, if no radio works and fog precludes our landing without GCA help? Bail out? Shemya is a small island, about two miles by four miles. It's a very small target for anyone bailing out even in daylight. Oh yes, our radar doesn't work either. The swing of the ADF needle will be our only clue as to our position. But where on Shemya is the ADF transmitter? On the eastern shore of the island? If so, and if I fly westward at about 500 feet above sea level, 300 feet above the higher portions of the island, and crewmen bail out as soon as the ADF needle swings and immediately open their parachutes, they may be fortunate enough to land on the island. If they miss they will be in frigid waters and would not survive there, even wearing their Poopy Suits, for more that 45 minutes. Once the crew and other officers have bailed out, I could place the plane on autopilot for another run over the ADF transmitter and try my luck at bailing out. I can think of no other possible salvation. Landing on Shemya by parachute would be a stroke of extraordinary good luck. The wind force and direction are unknown (hence the low-altitude bail-out, to minimize drifting away from the island in the wind).

But what if the ADF transmitter is not on the eastern shore of the island? If I guess its location wrong, no one will land on the island. I assume it is on the eastern shore, since that is where our standard instrument approach would bring us as we near the runway, heading into the usually prevailing westerly wind. I say nothing about this to Brownie. I silently pray for clear weather at the runway. Brownie has been almost completely silent for hours. The tension builds. For hour after hour.

At last, the needle starts to waver, and then turns! Brownie turns the plane northeast as we start down into the clouds. Halfway down he makes a 180-degree turn to the right and continues down, now heading southwest. When he reaches the line of the runway he will turn right about 45 degrees and come in for the landing. *If* he can see the runway!

Down more we go in the darkness. At 1,500 feet I see ahead and off to my right the most beautiful two lines of yellow runway lights imaginable!

"There it is", I shout the great good news.

"Where", mutters Brownie, peering intently ahead.

"Right there!"

Brownie still sees nothing. We realize that the front of the windshield has iced over during our passage down through the clouds. We turn on the windshield de-icer. That will take time to clear the front.

"Lets go around", says Brownie tentatively.

"That's the idea", I say.

during our passage down through the clouds. We turn on the windshield wiper. That will take time to clear the front.

"Lets go around", says Brownie tentatively.

"To hell with that. I got it".

Brownie says nothing as I take the controls. We have flown together many times and he trusts me. I can see out the side, who needs to see straight ahead? I know where the runway is. Going around for another approach would take five minutes or more. Who knows what the weather will be then? I know from experience that it can change rapidly.

It takes a minute or two to reach the runway. By then the ice has melted and I can see straight down the runway, beautiful bright yellow lights on both sides. As I land I have a little trouble seeing the most distant yellow lights. They continue to disappear, but we are on terra firma. We re-enter almost complete blackness well before I bring the plane to a stop. The fog has rolled in. It does not lift for more than 24 hours.

In silence, Brownie and I shut down the engines turn off all of the switches in the cockpit. We stay put, each deep in his own thoughts and emotionally drained. Suppose we had gone around? We completed a flight of 9.9 hours with about ten seconds to spare. I am enormously grateful that we did not go around, that I had been to Shemya before and feared the weather, and that Brownie had accepted my taking the controls. I will sleep in a warm, dry bed soon, and live to fly another day!

We can hear the crew talking out near the starboard engine. In ten minutes or so a jeep comes up with some ground crew.

"Get a ladder", one of the men says. Someone does, enabling an inspection of the starboard engine.

"There's been a fire here", we hear as the result of the inspection.

The leaking oil had been burning. Who knows what would have happened if the leak had gone undetected longer or if Brownie had not shut down the engine?

Brownie and I remain silent. In another few minutes someone (probably Jack Taylor, the A3D pilot for the Detachment) passes up a square bottle to us, without a word. We soon realize it must be Jack Daniel whiskey. A standard Naval Aviator cure! We take turns taking swigs from the bottle, with barely enough light to be able to tell when it is being passed back and forth. After an hour or so I break our silence.

"Shall we go?"

We climb down. The bottle is still over half full. We take it with us. A jeep slowly drives us through the fog to the hangar.

It is far past midnight in Shemya but we have crossed the international dateline so it is May 10th again. On the 11th and with the addition of John Ballard as our fourth aviator we go on our first operational flight, on a P4M that John Ballard has specially equipped to carry out our mission. The crew we relieve flies back to Japan in the plane we had flown in on, after quick repairs and after an effort to delay its departure. Here is the story of that effort, almost comic relief after the pressures of last night's flight.

Stop that plane!

I am alone in our "BOQ", a small wooden building where all of the Detachment Alfa officers reside, when an Army Second Lieutenant strides in.

"You have to stop them leaving", he implores me.

He explains that a small rug, about two feet by three feet, is missing.

"One of the crew must have taken it! Don't let them leave until I get it back."

He is frantic, but I am not about to try to stop the departing flight. Indeed, I would not have known how to do that. I am stranded, and have no idea how I might get in touch with the crew. Based on my experience as the Material Officer, I surmise that the Second Lieutenant is responsible for custody of the rug, probably having issued it and other furnishings to the crew members who have been on Shemya the past six weeks and are about to fly home. He continues to insist that I must do something to stop the departure, which I have no authority to do. I also do not feel outraged by the thought that some sailor is making off with a small souvenir of six miserable weeks on Shemya. Yet a way to help the Second Lieutenant occurs to me.

"I'll sign for it."

"You *will*?"

"Yes".

He hurriedly writes something on a small piece of paper and I sign my name. Greatly relieved, he leaves. I see him no more, and hear no more about the rug.

“Yes”.

He hurriedly writes something on a small piece of paper and I sign my name. Greatly relieved, he leaves. I see him no more, and hear no more about the rug.

The mission

Because of my Material Department functions I learn of logistics preparations for the squadron's part in an Operation so significant that even its name is classified. Only those with a “need to know” receive official classified information in this man's Navy. All that we aviators officially learn is where and when to fly. The twidgets in the rear of our plane presumably know something more, but keep that to themselves. Unofficially we pilots gradually learn a lot more, and come to regard our missions as extremely important.

It is of course public knowledge that the U.S.S.R. is not far away. Its current leader Nikita Krushchev has publicly threatened that the U.S.S.R. will “bury” the U.S. Presumably President Eisenhower wants urgently to know whether they can do that. Some people on our side of the Iron Curtain are fearful of a surprise nuclear missile attack by the U.S.S.R. and push for a preemptive attack by the U.S. There is much talk but little if any hard data concerning a “missile gap” that favors the Russians. Is there such a gap? If U.S. Leaders know that the Russians cannot yet launch a first strike of missiles, they should not yield to pleas to start a holocaust, hoping to upgrade our own missile capability by the time the Russians could actually bury us. Whether the Operation includes plans or preparations for a first strike is something that we on Shemya do not need to know, and do not..

Our planes carry no external identification. The Russians, however, almost certainly suspect what we are doing. Out alone for a walk one grayish day, I see a Russian “Bear” bomber swoop down from the clouds about 500 feet overhead, and fly all the way down the runway from west to east (no one else ever flies that direction), and then disappear back up into the clouds. Our planes are generally parked outside of our hangar and could easily be photographed or just observed visually. I do not bother to mention the Bear to anyone as I did not have a camera with me, and our intelligence community has earlier given me the impression that they pay no attention to aviators' reports unless accompanied by a photograph. Years later John Ballard tells me he too had seen a Bear and had not reported its sighting, for the same reasons I had not.

Life on Shemya

The flying is easy, apart from the weather. Most of the time we endure fog, from the surface up to about 8,000 feet, so it is often quite dark at mid-day. Even in high winds the fog persists. I believe that the fog is due to the fact that the Japan Current rubs shoulders with the Bering Sea in our area. The air temperature hovers around 34 degrees Fahrenheit. The ground is frozen a few inches below the surface. For some reason, mistaken no doubt, our WWII Army placed a lot of metallic Quonset huts in excavations a few feet deep, all now filled with water in permanently frozen subsoil. All of the buildings usable today are wooden, built above ground. There is no vegetation anywhere.

The fog is so thick that when driving through it, like going to the hangar or the cafeteria, all that the driver can see straight ahead is blinding reflections from the headlights. By looking straight down from the side window, however, the driver can see the ground. So, the driver holds open and leans out his door of the jeep and steers it over to the left hand side of the road, where there is a drainage ditch. The driver leans out to look down and follow the ditch, careful not to drive into it. The driver has to memorize the routes so he knows where and when to turn onto a different road. There are said to be 250 miles of dirt roads on this small island.

Our BOQ is a mile or more from our hangar. We also drive to a large cafeteria that Northwest Airlines maintains just to the north of the main runway, to service trans-Pacific flights that need to refuel at Shemya. We see no such flights. The food is excellent. The cafeteria is open 24 hours a day. The Navy pays Northwest \$10.00 per day for each of us.

The Army Air Force used Shemya at the end of WW II to bomb northern parts of Japan. Parts of B-17s and B-29s that evidently crashed on landings litter the island. The Army had 35,000 men on Shemya by the end of the war. In 1959 Shemya is home to the Army Security Agency with about 2,000 men, a huge Distant Early Warning radar facility with a curved antenna about the size of a football field pointed towards Russia, a small Coast Guard contingent manning a weather station, and the Northwest Airlines folks. Nary a woman among them!

Very few planes set down in Shemya. A small commuter airline plane shows up every two weeks with two stewardesses. They stay overnight, partying and liking the

a woman among them!

Very few planes set down in Shemya. A small commuter airline plane shows up every two weeks – with two stewardesses. They stay overnight, partying, and liking the ratio. Occasionally an Air Force plane sets down here, probably bringing in supplies. Shemya can receive supplies by ship or barge only during the spring, because of weather conditions and the lack of any sheltered harbor. One day I notice an Air Force C-124, a huge cargo plane, parked near the Northwest Airlines cafeteria. Its large rear door is open, with a ramp to the ground. The plane is empty of cargo. Curious, I climb in the back, walk forward through the large cargo area (big enough for a basketball game), and climb a vertical set of metal rungs to peer into the cockpit, about 40 feet above the ground. There, pasted across the left windshield right in front of where the pilot sits, is a blue and gold bumper sticker, “FLY NAVY”. I scramble down at once, glad that no one notices me.

One night the DEW radar picks up what may be an airborne attack from the U.S.S.R. The operators alert top brass in the lower 48. Fortunately the detected objects turn out to be a flock of large birds.

Even when surface visibility is good, we see no movie theater, no library, no post office, no officers club, no store of any kind. For recreation we take walks when we can see ahead, and on one occasion we take target practice with small arms on a rocky beach on the north shore of the island. I do find a bridge game, discussed below.

After we have been here for a few weeks, Brownie mentions in passing that he has assigned some roadwork to Ivey. I gather that that is a disciplinary measure. I do not ask and Brownie does not volunteer what the misconduct was.

Flying with John Ballard

After a few operational flights with all four aviators on board, Brownie suggests that two will do and he and I can take alternate operational flights.

I do not know why Brownie would divide the flying. He may worry about survival. He and I have had some close calls in recent months.

“Another successful ascension”, he had murmured after one of our early joint flights.

In any event, we don’t need a third aviator to navigate, let alone a fourth. The radar crewman can do that; a five-thousand-foot-high mountain on Adak Island, 30 miles west from Shemya, provides an excellent radar target that is more than adequate for the route we fly. So John Ballard and I form one piloting crew, Brownie and Drucquer the other. We alternate operational flights. I am delighted with the additional responsibility.

John completed a five-year course at Dartmouth College leading to an M. A. in electrical engineering and received orders to be the squadron’s Electronics Officer while still in flight training – another blow to the twidgets’ egos no doubt. He is a genius, and leads the way on reconfiguring our planes to utilize new electronics systems as they show up in our middle hangar at Iwakuni and makes sure they work properly. That takes a lot of his time and he does not get in much flight time. In Shemya, however, we both have a lot of spare time so I take him out on training flights whenever we have a steady ceiling of 500 feet or more. (We never see the sun from ground level during our six weeks stay.)

At the end of one local flight John is practicing touch-and-go landings. One of his landings is really smooth. As he adds power for take-off Ivey, kneeling between John and me, reveals his surprise.

“Mr. Ballard, I bet you can’t do that again.”

“How much you wanna bet?”

“A case of beer.”

“It’s a deal,” says John, shaking Ivey’s hand and controlling the plane with his other hand as the plane lifts off.

We go around. This time John makes an even smoother landing, much to Ivey’s dismay. I doubt that John receives his case of beer. (He does not, and never expects to.) There is no place to buy a case, and the crew are not about to let Ivey make off with a case of their dwindling supply.

We also do some sightseeing on the few days when weather permits. About 30 miles southwest from Shemya, Aggatu Island’s rocky southern shore is a “sunbathing” haven under relatively thin cloud layers for thousands of sea lions and seals. There is no sign of human habitation; the sea mammals have Aggatu all to themselves. Attu Island to the north and west marks the end of the Aleutian chain and is of interest because of its WW II history, seized by the Japanese early and retaken by the U.S. in bloody fighting in 1944. It

human habitation; the sea mammals have Aggatu all to themselves. Attu Island to the north and west marks the end of the Aleutian chain and is of interest because of its WW II history, seized by the Japanese early and retaken by the U.S. in bloody fighting in 1944. It is almost entirely precipitously mountainous, but has a short Marsten-matting landing strip along a short portion of its south coast, adequate for WW II fighters.

Instrument take-off

The days and nights blend into each other. Often it is hard to tell whether it *is* day or night. There is very little to do, almost nothing to read (a few dime novels left in our “BOQ” by someone else). We officers spend most of our time in our quarters, often just sitting around in the living room and telling tall tales. And having a drink now and then. We feel that it’s ok to drink since we get 48 hours notice of the next operational flight. That’s the scene one Sunday morning. There’s no place of worship either. The phone rings and our Army Security Agency liaison says we have to take-off in an hour! We put down our drinks. Brownie and I both take this flight.

The fog is really thick. Our driver manages to get us to the hangar by watching the ditch on the left hand side of the road. We get into our flight clothes and exposure suits at the (unheated) hangar and climb into the cockpit. We can see the ground below but nothing straight ahead. A yellow “mule” tows us down to the end of the runway and stops in the middle (we hope that’s where we are). The mule supplies electrical power to start the engines. The ground crew disconnect the power supply and drive off, disappearing into the fog about 50 feet away.

Brownie and I look straight ahead, and see nothing. The fog is indistinguishable from the gray of the runway.

“Now what are we supposed to do”, Brownie blurts out, staring straight ahead into the darkness.

“Take off, that’s what”, I say to myself.

A long silent pause ensues.

“Ever do an instrument take-off”, I ask.

“Nope”.

Another long pause.

“I did one in flight training” (a simulated one under a “bag” in a T-28, with an instructor who could see out, discussed above).

Another pause. Brownie will not ask me to do anything for which I do not volunteer. He is not about to take off, that is clear, although unstated. He still stares straight ahead, never looking in my direction.

“I’ll take it.”

Brownie says nothing. I do not expect him to say anything.

When the engines reach full power I take my feet off the brakes and lean forward, focusing intently on the gyro compass. I need to follow the runway heading (280 degrees), for at least a half mile before we become airborne. Good grief, the plane veers a few degrees to the right! The rudder does not correct that, we’re going too slow. So I step on the left brake. Gently. The plane turns that way, and passes through the runway heading.

Right brake! Left brake! Thinking of how I tried to average time left and right of the prescribed course for the destroyer Brownson in my first midshipman training cruise, from a four degree swing one way I move slowly the other way and try to hold a one-degree swing the other way long enough to get back to the center of the runway and then try to hold that heading. I feel awkward, applying the brakes during a take-off roll. For visual take-offs we watch the runway for directional control, not the compass, and never use the brakes. I am surprised at how our direction vacillates. Fortunately the rudder begins to take hold when we reach 40 knots. It works like a charm. I still worry about where we are in relation to the center-line of the runway. On the right of the runway there are buildings, including the cafeteria. On the left there is a drop-off down to the ocean. The take-off roll seems to take a lot more time on instruments than visually.

At 85 knots I change focus to the attitude indicator, lifting the nose off the ground and keeping the wings level as we become airborne a few seconds later. We climb out straight ahead.

At 500 feet I relax. It’s time for Ivey to plug in the coffeepot. We fly the mission. The weather is better for our return, still foggy but we get in via GCA. It’s good to be able to see where we are going.

“We have three for bridee ” Fraternizing with enlisted men!

The weather is better for our return, still foggy but we get in via GCA. It's good to be able to see where we are going.

"We have three for bridge." Fraternizing with enlisted men!

At Harvard College I came to know Woody Rowe quite well. We worked together at the Brattle Theatre and played a lot of bridge and poker. We lost contact at graduation. I heard later that he had entered the Army and had gone to Monterey. I knew he had majored in Russian studies and that Monterey was the military's primary foreign-language school.

One day I think to myself maybe Woody is here on Shemya, monitoring Russian radio broadcasts. How to find out if he is here? I look around. On the front doors of the buildings where its men work the ASA posts typewritten lists of the names of the men authorized to enter the building.

On the third list that I check, "W. W. Rowe" shows up.

"That's him", William Woodin Rowe!

I cannot enter the building. I find out from our ASA Liaison the building and room where he sleeps. The first time I go there the room is empty, just a double-deck bunk bed. The second and third times Woody is asleep on the lower bunk. I do not wake him. The fourth time he wakes up as I open the door (no knocking), sits up on the lower bed and peers at me. He hasn't seen me in three years and I am wearing nondescript heavy-weather clothing complete with cap.

"Hello, Woody."

"Don, we have three for bridge", says he, awakening with a hopeful note in his voice.

He explains later that it was not until I called him Woody that he realized he was not dreaming. His friends in the Army call him Bill.

Woody and two of his Army buddies, Kirby Baker and Bill Groom, also Harvard grads, are quite good at bridge. All three are mild mannered and polite. Apparently no one else they know has any experience at the game. They have tried to bring some along, but to no avail. They find it frustrating to try to play when one of the four is a complete novice or lacks good card sense.

Yes, I'd be glad to play. In our first game, played on a landing in their two-story barracks, I find myself playing a small-slam contract in No Trump. The opponents hold both the Ace and Queen of Clubs. The King of Clubs is exposed in my partner's hand, "the dummy". I need one Club trick to make the slam, and cannot lose two tricks. I lead a low Club from my hand. The second player plays a low Club. I play the King from the board, hoping that the second player has the Ace. The fourth player comes up with a lower card.

Kirby and Bill stand up to congratulate me! They are delighted that I know enough to realize that the slam would make only if the second player has the Ace and I play the King from my hand on the first round of Clubs. My partner Woody is happy too, we have made the slam.

We play a lot of bridge during the remainder of my six weeks on Shemya. Woody and his buddies are stuck there for a year. Most of the time we play at the small kitchen table in the "BOQ". The refrigerator produces ice. I share my Bacardi and Wild Turkey. My fellow officers have no use for the kitchen, no food there. Our bridge playing does not inconvenience any of them. None of them seem to mind that I have invited the bridge players into our abode. Except Bob Miller, a twidget Lieutenant who has risen from the enlisted ranks, a "Mustang" in Navy parlance. He says nothing for a long time. Then one day just after my fellow bridge players have left his anger gets the better of him.

"You know you are not supposed to fraternize with enlisted men", he shouts.

None of the other officers, including Jack Taylor, also a Mustang, says anything. There is an awkward silence.

True enough, the Navy and other armed services all have a policy against officers socializing with enlisted men. The reason for the policy is to avoid favoritism and even the appearance of favoritism when an officer gives an order to enlisted men. Their comfort, indeed their lives, can be jeopardized by whom the officer orders to do what. But get real, Lt. Miller, Woody Rowe is a good friend of mine from college, I am not in a position to give him or the other two players an order, they are in the Army not the Navy, our relationship will never be other than social – and we are all stuck on this God-forsaken rock in this awful fog, with bridge as our only form of indoor entertainment. I shrug my shoulders and let Miller's outbreak pass. The bridge games continue in the kitchen. I do not tell Woody about Miller's outburst. Or about my Four Oh in Four Dog, which may well

in this awful fog, with bridge as our only form of indoor entertainment. I shrug my shoulders and let Miller's outbreak pass. The bridge games continue in the kitchen. I do not tell Woody about Miller's outburst. Or about my Four Oh in Four Dog, which may well be behind Miller's outburst!

To Adak and back for beer for the crew, an unexpectedly hazardous venture

Near the end of my stint with Detachment Alpha a grizzled electrician Chief Petty Officer, probably selected as the senior enlisted man, approaches me as I get down from the cockpit.

"Mr. Morgan, do you have a minute?"

"Sure, what's up?"

"We have a serious problem. The crew are out of beer."

I realize that's a serious problem. The only available form of recreation and socializing for the men is a brew now and then. They shipped a large quantity of beer to Shemya at the start of the Detachment three months earlier but that has run out. What, however, can I do about it?

"We thought that on your next flight you could stop by Adak."

I ask where beer would fit in the plane; there is no room that I can think of.

"In the bomb bay."

I have not realized there is room there. All I know about the bomb bay is that it is supposed to contain four 350-gallon auxiliary gasoline tanks.

"O.K."

It does not occur to me to ask Brownie or anyone else, like CNO, for approval. When I am the first pilot, I decide where we fly. I would like to see Adak. We are always in a training status, and U.S. Naval Air Station Adak is our next closest landing field. No one outside of my crew and the Chief ever says anything to me about going to Adak. Or back. But everyone knows.

As I am about to climb into our P4M a few days later on June 16 for an operational flight, the Chief approaches me again.

"I put an ignition harness on board. You might need it."

I have never heard of an ignition harness but don't ask any questions. After we fly the mission we head to Adak Island, several hundred miles "down the chain" from Shemya.

"Adak tower, Navy 124366 requests permission to land".

I am curious as to how the control tower will receive an unexpected visitor.

"Permission granted."

No questions asked! I wonder, where's our security? I could be a Russian bomber. Coming over the sea from the north to a long North-South runway, I see a broad, pretty flat area, and no mountains. The runway starts near the shore and runs slightly uphill going inland. The visibility is good, below a cloudy ceiling of a few thousand feet. The landing is easy.

Not until disembarking does it occur to me to consider what to say if anyone asks what we are doing at Adak. John Ballard and I head for the Administration Building while the crew go about their business. In a small room we find three aviators behind a counter. They stand to greet us.

"Hi," I say, "we're from VQ-1 Detachment Alpha over in Shemya. Do you have our paychecks?"

The men behind the counter look at each other..

"Do we have their paychecks?"

Of course not. We feign disappointment.

The crew are ready to go when John and I get back to the plane. During engine warm-up at the edge of the runway the magneto drop for the starboard engine is 350 RPM, far more than I have ever experienced. Over Ivey's protest that the engine is ok, I taxi back in.

The crew go to work replacing the ignition harness. That is difficult and tedious work, particularly without any specialized equipment. That evening John and I visit the hangar where the crew are working. One man lies on top of the engine; { assume he is helping to adjust the harness so that the igniting sparks reach the cylinders at the proper times. Their work continues through the night.

The next day we know the weather is terrible at Shemya, with a ceiling of 100 feet and a 40-knot crosswind on the only runway with GCA equipment, the same as yesterday's weather. I decide to go anyway. We do not want to miss the next mission, whenever it shall be needed. We *have* to get back to Shemya in order to be ready for another mission. Nor do

and a 40-knot crosswind on the only runway with GCA equipment, the same as yesterday's weather. I decide to go anyway. We do not want to miss the next mission, whenever it shall be needed. We *have* to get back to Shemya in order to be ready for another mission. Nor do I want to have to explain to CNO why we are unable to fly that next mission from Shemya.

The mag drop during warm-up is still considerably greater than usual but I assume it is as low as the crew can get it, Ivey is positive about that, and I hope that is good enough. I take off heading south, uphill slightly and inland, as the wind is from the south. There is some overcast but plenty of daylight. I see no hills and foresee no problem other than the starboard engine.

Standard Navy-wide operating procedures call for climbing straight ahead to an altitude of one thousand feet before turning toward a destination. John, Ivey and I closely monitor the engines as we climb. All four are putting out full power. At about seven hundred feet my focus changes and I realize we have entered a V shaped valley between high mountains that narrow drastically ahead. Even worse, we are in the middle of the valley and have only half of it in which to turn around and head back out to sea. We cannot clear the mountains flying straight ahead. I immediately put the plane into a 45 degree bank to the left, my side, so I can get a good look at the mountains on the east side of the canyon. The plane turns with agonizing slowness. As we climb I am surprised to enter a cloud layer. The plane still has not turned 90 degrees, so we are still turning into the mountains. I increase the bank to 60 degrees. The engines are still doing well and we are still climbing, although at only 500 feet per minute. I am afraid to increase the bank further, lest the plane stall or slip down. I hold 60 degrees.

"If we make it, fine. If not, we all die soon, I have done what I can", I say to myself.

I find that realization calming, although I still worry intensely and know that it would have been much better to start turning well below 700 feet. The plane seems to take forever to turn north. At last the compass shows we are heading out to sea, still in the clouds. I never know how close we came to the mountains. I am relieved and happy still to be alive.

More adventure lies ahead. I have to figure out how to land in a 40-knot (or more) cross wind. The standard "slip" approach that we learned in flight training will not work over 20 knots. I think I come up with a solution. Uncertain whether my solution will work, I ask myself if in any respect it is impossible to do what I want. No, so it is possible, if all goes well. I shall try! As we near Shemya we contact the GCA operator for help. John flies the approach. I look out for the surface, and will make the landing. The approach is hectic. Generally the GCA operator will call for a course adjustment of only a degree or two at a time and for only slight changes in our rate of descent. Today he calls for much larger changes. We are in a very strong and changing wind.

At 200 feet above sea level I see whitecaps directly below, really mean looking large green-gray whitecaps. The sea looks very inhospitable. I shudder a bit, imagining how terrible it would be to fall into those waters. I say "Contact" to the GCA operator meaning he need no longer tell us what to do, and "I got it" to John as I take the controls.

When I look ahead instead of down I see nothing but clouds! I keep descending. Some seconds later the runway comes into view, far to the right of our heading. I have drifted off course a few hundred yards to the south of the runway, which heads 280 degrees true. I maneuver the plane northward to line up with the runway, but with the plane heading somewhere around 230 to 245 degrees true. I do not check the compass; I am flying visually, "crabbing" into the wind to maintain a flight path over the ground of 280 degrees. I slow the plane as we get close down to the runway, which is 100 feet above sea level. I lower the left wing and apply right rudder to "slip" into the wind as much as possible. I intend to apply a lot more right rudder when we get close to stall speed. So far, so good.

Very close to the ground I keep slowing the plane, raising the nose more and more. It gets pretty high. I have difficulty seeing down the runway because the starboard engine and wing now obstruct my view. (The P4M is a mid-wing plane, with the wing through the middle of the fuselage.) I can tell from the plane's nose-up attitude and pretty level flight that we are near stall speed. Then to my dismay I realize that I do not know what the stall speed is! One does not do practice stalls and spins in a four-engine plane with a crew of 15 aboard. I glance for an instant at the airspeed indicator. It reads 105 knots. I say to myself that must be close enough to stall speed, time to act. At the same instant I notice that the ailerons are not responding.

around. I glance for an instant at the airspeed indicator. It reads 100 knots. I say to myself that must be close enough to stall speed, time to act. At the same instant I notice that the ailerons are not responding.

“We are *at* stall speed”! I say to myself.

I push hard on the right brake pedal. The rudder turns the plane 40 to 50 degrees so that it is pointing straight down the runway. I am counting on the plane stalling during that split-second turn (just as I put single-engine planes into an immediate stall and spin in flight training, albeit at a safe altitude), and immediately falling the three to five feet that I hope the wheels are above the runway and landing with a loud “thunk” before the cross wind starts blowing the plane to the north across the runway.

I am amazed; there is no “thunk”, but the plane moves straight down the runway, very silently and smoothly. With the “speed of thought” I ask myself whether I am dreaming, why isn’t the plane drifting to the right, with that 40-knot cross wind? No, dreams occur in a nice warm bed; this plane is cold and clammy. Then I think, am I dead? Did we crash into the cliff, is this an out-of-body experience? Am, I looking down at Shemya below? I take no comfort from my supposed ascendancy. Then an epiphany: I realize with great relief that the reason the plane is not drifting to the right *has to be* that its wheels are on the ground!

“Halleluiah”, I say to myself. The plane landed without my knowing it! That must have occurred just as the rudder turned us to the runway heading.

Smoothest landing I ever made! I have made many smooth ones in several airplane types, but I could always feel the plane land underneath me. Why not this time? We might have been only inches from the ground when I hit the rudder hard. I learn later from Lt. Bob Miller that he was on the ground at the end of the runway to watch us land (or crash) and saw the left wing tip almost touch the ground. That is where it was supposed to be, I say to myself then. Another possible reason for the smoothness of the landing is that our landing speed was far less than usual. In any event, the landing is just the right way to avoid shaking up a cargo of beer for the crew!

I keep what has happened and what I thought to myself. No one says anything to me about the landing, with the possible exception that someone, probably Jack Taylor, attaches a note to my log book just below the entry for the June 17 flight from Adak.

“Duly Initiated Member of Shemya Fog Club.”

I never learn of anyone else even thinking of making a stall-spin cross-wind landing. Mine may be unique! I do think at the time that I could do it again if need be, say if the Air Force made off with the cargo and the crew still lacked beer.. I have validated my theory about how to do it, and now have a pretty good idea of what the P4M’s stall speed is.

John Ballard remembers the landing vividly. He commented to me on the first version of this memoir as follows:

“Winds at the ground are generally somewhat lighter than those at even a few hundred feet. When you said, “I got it”, I looked up and saw empty space. I found the runway about 45 degrees to the right. I think we flew approaches at about 110 knots. A 45-degree crab implies a 77.8-knot crosswind component, and a 35-degree crab implies a 63-knot crosswind component at 110 knots TAS. Add maybe 20 % for gusts, and we have quite a ride. The truth is in there somewhere, but you deserve credit for a much more difficult landing than you implied. It was well done.

“Also, wasn’t that the flight that the fog was so bad, in spite of the wind, that we couldn’t find the hangar and somebody sent the jeep out to guide us?”

Maybe however the note in my logbook is for my entire experience with Detachment Alpha. My next flight from Shemya soon takes me back to Japan, into quite a different maelstrom. On the same day as my flight to Adak, the Communists attack one of our planes.

Two MIGS, one Congress, and one CNO all attack

My tour of duty takes place during the height of the Cold War between the United States of America and its allies on one side, and the U.S.S.R. and its hegemony on the other. The USSR is bent on expanding its empire and defeating the American-led policy of

My tour of duty takes place during the height of the Cold War between the United States of America and its allies on one side, and the U.S.S.R. and its hegemony on the other. The USSR is bent on expanding its empire and defeating the American-led policy of containment of Communism. As post-Glasnost revelations from the Kremlin reveal decades later, when in January 1950 the American Secretary of State Dean Acheson gave a speech outlining the U.S.'s vital geographic interests and ticked off Japan and Formosa but omitted mention of South Korea, Stalin concluded that he could take the lower half of the Korean peninsula for his own. Word soon went forth to his puppets in North Korea to ready an attack on the south. The Korean War ensued, starting in June 1950.

Sporadically from 1950 onwards, Communist fighter aircraft, all Russian made MIGs, their latest and fastest jet fighter planes, attacked U.S. military aircraft around the Communist perimeter on at least 30 occasions. Fourteen of the attacks took place offshore from Communist Asia, killing 36 U.S. airmen by 1958. The June 19, 1959 issue of TIME magazine states at page 12 that since the Korean Armistice of 1953, 14 attacks occurred along Asian coasts and 36 U.S. airmen were shot down and lost. At page 11023 of the Congressional Record for June 17, 1959, Senator Javits said the attack was the 33rd since 1950 and that 112 U.S. airmen were dead or missing from such attacks since the end of WW II. The attacks were separated in time and space and did not give rise to American counterattack on the U.S.S.R. or its aircraft. The attacks continued in later years. According to THE U-2 AFFAIR by David Wise and Thomas Ross, Random House New York 1962, an Air Force "RB-47 was shot down on July 1, 1960, while conducting a peripheral snooping mission near the Arctic Circle." Two of the crew survived and the Russians capture them. The Russians release them just hours before President Kennedy's first press conference, on January 25, 1961, presumably as a good-will gesture to Eisenhower's possibly more malleable successor. They are our first surveillance airmen downed in the Cold War ever to see freedom.

P4Ms are easy targets, solitary craft lumbering along the coast at about 235 knots only eight miles outside the 12 mile territorial limit that the Communists then claimed and the U.S. recognized as the limit of their sovereignty under international law. The P4Ms are also important targets, for their electronic intelligence gathering could play a strategic role in the advent of a full-scale war. VQ-1 itself lost one of its P4Ms and crew of 14 offshore from Shanghai on August 23, 1956. All that I could learn about that from the squadron was that the plane had gone down, one Jim Deane had been lost with the rest of the crew, and U.S. search planes had found only a tire floating on the water.

In 2006, media reports (occasioned by the fact that Deane and his bride had been close friends with Donald Rumsfeld in Pensacola where both he and Deane were flight students) would provide much more information about the attack. The night had been clear. A single Chinese jet shot the plane down offshore from Shanghai. It seems likely that the plane had strayed inside the 12-mile limit, according to the May 7, 2006, Detroit News. Its story, MIA pilot shot down by China was Rumsfeld friend, also says that VQ-1 lost 47 men during the Cold War including 31 shot down in an April 1969 attack by a North Korean fighter jet. The cover story of the May 7, 2006, Washington Post Magazine was The Spy Who Loved Me. A daughter of Deane's wife wrote it about her mother's search for information and conflicting reports about his possible survival. According to these accounts, the P4M had radioed the squadron that it was under attack, and four bodies were recovered, two by China (later handed over to the U.S.) and two by the U.S.

The MIGs attack one of our planes

By 1959 the U.S.S.R. decides it is time to take out another P4M. From early 1959 on, every one of the squadron's daylight P4M reconnaissance flights attracts harassment from MIG fighter planes, usually a formation of two planes. From offshore of the U.S.S.R. in the far north to the south coast of China they come, and come, and come again. They fly the same pattern, starting potential firing runs from high above, behind and to the left of the P4M. The MIGs usually close in on their targets in a steep dive, passing just underneath them and moving off to the right at supersonic speed, then circling back up for another run. In one such incident, on March 20, 1959, I feel like a sitting duck in a shooting gallery. We are paralleling the coastline heading south about 20 miles offshore from the Kamchatka Peninsula, on an operational flight from Shemya to Misawa. Alerted by a report from the tail gunner, from the navigation station I see MIGs as they start a run from high above and to our left. To say that I feel uneasy would be quite an understatement. Someone in the cockpit gets a photo of one of the MIGs, so intelligence agencies will accept the report of

tail gunner, from the navigation station I see MIGs as they start a run from high above and to our left. To say that I feel uneasy would be quite an understatement. Someone in the cockpit gets a photo of one of the MIGs, so intelligence agencies will accept the report of further harassment.

For months, we encounter just harassment, no gunfire. The squadron develops detailed plans for how to deal with the harassment. Our main worry is that a tail gunner will open fire on the MIGs, inviting a disaster. No way can a P4M, with only two manually operated, visually aimed 20 millimeter cannons in the tail turret hope to win a gunfight in those circumstances. Maybe if the guns had radar control like newer planes including our A3Ds had, they might score a lucky hit or two. The bow turret guns would be superfluous given the supersonic speed and route of attack from the rear.

“Don’t open fire until the cockpit tells you to. If the MIGs fire, tell the cockpit on the intercom and await word,” are our standard instructions to the tail gunner.

The long-planned attack comes on June 16. The target is Brownie’s and my plane, Number 9, Serial Number 22209. He and I are in Shemya, however, and I fly to Adak that day as noted above. Number 9 leaves from Misawa, heads north towards the coast of Asia, turns southwest along the Russian coast, passes Vladivostok and continues south offshore from China and then North Korea. It heads home and is at least 35 miles offshore, above the Sea of Japan. The crewman in its tail turret, 20-year-old Aviation Electrician Mate Donald Corder, sees two MIGs diving in the usual pattern. He reports the sighting to the cockpit.

“MIGs coming in from seven o’clock high”.

“Don’t open fire at them, hope they are just trying to scare you and won’t shoot at you”, Corder recalls the pilots saying over and over again during the preceding months.

The MIGs open fire. Corder reports this, but the cockpit’s ok to return fire is blocked by others on the intercom. The MIGs’ machine gun barrage finds its mark, ripping through the tail section. Corder suffers 40 shrapnel wounds as some of the bullets cause his own ammunition to explode and set fire to his flight suit.

The MIGs pass under Number 9 before the pilots have time to react. The attackers are not done. Number 9 still flies. The MIGs circle up high for another firing run.

“Tell me when they open fire”, co-pilot Lt. Commander Vince Anania tells everyone on the intercom.

A crewman in the rear of the plane goes to Corder’s aid. Anania puts the plane into a steep dive, hoping to get so close to the sea that the MIGs would have trouble completing firing runs. He also knows that jet engines use fuel much faster at sea level than at altitude and the attackers have limited time on station.

The MIGs come in again from above and behind on Number 9’s left. When word comes that they have opened fire, Anania’s fighter-pilot experience and coolness under pressure come in handy. He pushes sharply forward on the yoke, and Number 9 ducks under much of the hail of bullets. As Anania knows, fighter aircraft have trouble adjusting their course downward. They nonetheless score more hits to the tail section and the right wing, disabling the rudder and damaging the two engines clustered together on the right.

The same pattern repeats four more times. Number 9 levels off 50 feet above sea level, making it quite difficult for the MIGs to do further damage. Low on fuel, they break off the attack and turn toward North Korea.

The badly wounded plane limps to Japan

While Anania takes evasive action, the pilot, Don Mayer, shuts down the damaged reciprocating engine on the right side, reducing fire hazards and the chances of mechanical damage. The other starboard engine, a small jet in the same nacelle as the reciprocating engine, is obviously damaged and unusable. Mayer had shut it down shortly after taking off from Misawa, following standard procedure to conserve fuel and increase cruising range.

Mayer tries to start the undamaged jet on the port side, but it fails to start. Only the port reciprocating engine has power. He struggles to maintain flight, having only the trim tabs to move the rudder for directional stability.

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The P4M, built by Martin Aircraft soon after World War II in a contest with Lockheed to supply the Navy's future needs for antisubmarine patrol aircraft, proves sturdier than Anania and Mayer have any reason to hope. Even after all the damage the MIGS had inflicted, 209 hits to the tail section and right wing, Number 9's reciprocating engine maintains altitude and flying speed. Mayer tells the crew to lighten ship as much as possible. The crew open the hatch in the floor of the rear section that they ordinarily use to get into and out of the plane. They hurriedly toss out everything they can, top-secret black boxes and mundane garment bags full of civilian clothes alike.

The radioman reports the attack to the squadron. The squadron notifies Chief of Naval Operations Arleigh Burke. As Burke is in Washington, the squadron or CNO also notifies the top Navy officer in Japan, Rear Admiral Frederick Stanton Withington in Tokyo ("COMNAVFORJAPAN"). The plane struggles on for 300 miles before making an emergency landing at the U.S. Air Force base at Miho, on the northern shore of western Honshu and fortunately suitable for an almost sea-level approach. Mayer has achieved an almost miraculous feat.

The brass stage a disastrous press conference

Beginning a public relations disaster, Admirals Burke and Withington decide to fly the crew, Corder included, not to their home base in Iwakuni 90 miles away but instead 500 miles to the Atsugi Naval Air Station near Tokyo. There Corder receives medical attention; he will recover. Admiral Withington leads the rest of the crew, fatigued, still in their rumpled khaki flight suits, and with no briefing about what they can or cannot say about their top-secret mission, into a press conference for American reporters. The reporters resent the crew's lack of responsiveness to their questions about the route the plane had flown and the purpose of the flight. What else could the brass expect from a crew that military law and federal statutes prevented from disclosing such highly classified information?

Why had not the bow turret guns fired back, the press ask. The answer given is that those guns are inoperative. When asked why, Mayer explains the reason is a lack of spare parts, which "are very difficult to get."

The bow turret lacked a "structural interrupter", a copper cam about the diameter of but thinner than a hockey puck that was shaped so as to stop the firing of the guns when they were turned so far to the rear that their bullets would hit the plane's propellers or wings. No one explains at the press conference that those guns would have been useless in any event, as the attacking planes had approached from the rear. Nor does anyone say that the squadron has for years sought permission to remove the guns, as the guns and related ammunition and armor plating would prove futile in any attack and add significantly to the weight of the plane. Nor is any mention made that such extra weight had proven to be an almost fatal problem a few years before. A P4M suffered engine trouble far from any friendly airfield. Fire broke out. The front part of the engine fell off, leaving the plane with a big flat firewall to push through the air rather than a streamlined airfoil. The pilot used both jet engines as well as the other reciprocating engine to maintain flying speed. The craft almost ran out of fuel before making it several hundred miles back to the nearest friendly airfield.

To make matters worse, when a reporter asks whether the parts would be made available, Admiral Withington says lamely,

"I will sure do my best".

Congress shoots first, may aim later

So, the initial big story line in the press back in the States is simply that the P4M was defenseless because its bow turret was inoperative, implying that otherwise the plane could have taught the Communists a lesson and shot the MIGS down. Later on the same day as the attack, Senator Wiley takes the floor of the Senate to express outrage at the attack. He is good at outrage. The next day Representative Sikes and, according to Time Magazine, other "politicos cried for courts martial of the brass responsible for the parts goof". In a more balanced tone, Senator Javits of New York expresses surprise at the timing of the attack, coming as it does in the midst of negotiations to limit nuclear weapons and to resolve problems of Allied access to West Berlin, entirely surrounded as it was by the Soviet Occupation Zone. Unbeknownst to the squadron, which is isolated in Japan (no evening news on TV, indeed no TV) and going about its business, President Eisenhower publicly demands an immediate report on what has happened.

The attack figures prominently in a June 18 press conference held by Secretary of

evening news on TV, indeed no TV) and going about its business, President Eisenhower publicly demands an immediate report on what has happened.

The attack figures prominently in a June 18 press conference held by Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy. He correctly notes that the P4M's inoperative guns were unimportant as they "would have been no match for the jets". He incorrectly also says that no parts were missing, even when Mayer's comments at the Tokyo press briefing are called to his attention; he presumably has been misinformed or has in mind only some waist, belly and top turrets that the Navy had removed from the P4Ms years before to make room for electronic surveillance gear. The Secretary also rejects as impractical suggestions that the Navy provide fighter escorts for the flights, noting the prohibitive expense and provocative nature of doing so. Meanwhile, he secretly orders suspension of the flights so as to reassess the need for them.

He fails to quell the uproar in the media and the Congress. On the 19th Representative Johannsen attacks McElroy on the floor of the House for the "defenselessness of the planes". Hostile editorials about the attack appear in newspapers including the June 22 Concord, New Hampshire, Daily Monitor. That causes New Hampshire Senator Styles Bridges to complain to the Senate on the 25th about "the distressing lack of functioning plane armament". A column for the Washington Star on the 19th wryly bears the caption, "Russia attacks one of our planes and Congress declares war on the Pentagon." The Hearst papers run an editorial on the 21st denouncing the unwillingness to provide fighter escorts, saying "Send 14 Admirals on the next flight and it will surely have full escort."

To little avail the June 23 New York Times runs a thoughtful and balanced editorial on the pros and cons of the surveillance flights, and the June 29 issue of Time Magazine observes that the solitary flights are lawful, important, and "part of the hazardous duty that crewman long ago came to accept as normal in the Asian no man's land."

While the uproar in the Congress and the U.S. press subsides, inquiries within the Navy proceed vigorously. Ike wants a report, and some in Congress have demanded that *admirals* (not identified, apparently any admirals will do) be court-martialed.

Commendations for the crew that survived the attack

On June 23 the squadron stages a full dress parade, everyone including our Crew Number 9, dressed in white and the officers sporting swords, to honor the crew that survive the MIGS attack. The pilots, Lieutenant Commanders Don Mayer and Vince Anania, receive Distinguished Flying Crosses.

Life in the squadron otherwise goes on as usual. The flight crews are accustomed to danger and seem unaffected by the attack, which after all injured only one crewman, who will recover. Unbeknownst to me, concern about the attack is much higher back in the States, among relatives of squadron members there, the Administration, and the Congress.

The brass resort to hanging someone (me in fact!)

Something like the following surely happens in Washington. I am not there, but the circumstantial evidence is compelling. The Navy brass obviously need a scapegoat and in a hallowed tradition they convene a hanging party. They realize that the cam was indeed missing, and decide to hang someone for that, down at the squadron level of course. Actual fault and causation of injury are immaterial, what does the Secretary of Defense know. *Admirals* are at risk!

The day following Eisenhower's demand, CNO "31 Knots Burke" of World War II fame for his Destroyer exploits in the Pacific Theatre convenes a small high-level meeting at his residence. That is on the grounds of the Naval Observatory along Massachusetts Avenue in Northwest Washington, named Embassy Row as it is home to numerous foreign embassies. The residence seems safe from the prying eyes of the Navy's politically potent Army and Air Force rivals, who might notice a meeting in the Pentagon.

Burke has summoned Admiral Gerald Jones of his staff, thinking that Jones' experience as a Naval Aviator will be helpful. Jones is accompanied by one of his aides, Lieutenant Ronald Dawson, also an aviator. The Navy's most senior Supply Corp officer, Admiral Ben Streers, a Naval Academy classmate of Burke's, also attends. Another Academy grad, Captain Sam Noddins, is pulled in because of his involvement in the Navy's relations with the Congress and the Administration.

Their conversation goes something like this: CNO Burke starts:

"OK, fellas, you know Ike is furious and we are really on the hot seat. Congressmen are calling for *Admirals* to be court-martialed. *Admirals*, for God's sake! And the parents of

then conversation goes something like this: CNO Burke starts:

“OK, fellas, you know Ike is furious and we are really on the hot seat. Congressmen are calling for *Admirals* to be court-martialed. *Admirals*, for God’s sake! And the parents of one of the pilots, Lt. Commander Mayer, have complained to their Congressman, a Democrat from Connecticut. What you may not know, and this is important, is that that plane was under my direct operational control. It belongs to Electronic Countermeasures Squadron One, which competes with a much larger electronic countermeasures effort of the Air Force, which as you also know all too well, gets ten times the funding from the Congress that we get for exactly the same operations. It’s under my direct control because it is involved in gathering critical information about the Communists’ radar and radio capabilities along the east coast of Asia. We and S.A.C. [the Air Force’s Strategic Air Command] would use that information in a “thermonuclear exchange” if the Russians attack us. Electronics Countermeasures Squadron Two plays the same role in Europe, flying along the Iron Curtain.”

“The Air Force is already using this screw-up on Capitol Hill”, Captain Noddins responds, “trying to force us out of the electronic surveillance business. Our Embassies all around the world are being swamped with questions from our allies about whether the Navy knows what it is doing. We need to do something quick.”

“That’s right”, Admiral Streers joins in. “The Supply Corps is also on the spot, or soon will be, when the media realize that it is our responsibility to supply parts like that cam. We need to hang somebody quick. I don’t think we need to hang anybody high up, certainly no one in the Supply Corp, anyone down in VQ-1 will do.”

“I agree completely”, CNO Burke nods affirmatively. “I’ve been involved in lots of hangings, and we should be able to get away on this one with somebody pretty junior.”

“Are we going to make an investigation to find out what really happened and why? I hear that VQ-1 didn’t even want the guns, and McElroy knows that they would not have helped”, Lieutenant Dawson whispers to Jones:

“Lieutenant, that’s a damn fool idea. We don’t need an explanation, we just need a scapegoat. We need someone we can say was at fault, and then we’ll lower the boom on him”, Jones says loudly.

“So, have you guys got a candidate”, Burke asks. “Gerry, you know how squadrons work, and Ben you know the Supply Corp and how it interfaces with aviation squadrons, what do you suggest?”

: “Well, there are a number of possibilities”, Admiral Jones replies. “Before any plane takes off, some officer in a squadron’s Maintenance Department has to certify that it is airworthy, the plane is safe to fly and ready to function. This particular plane had been flying for at least a year without the cam, so it might not sell very well to hang whoever signed it as safe for the flight that got shot up. That might raise questions why the plane had flown so long without the cam, and people might realize that the whole bow turret was useless against the attack. Of course, we could always blame one of the plane’s pilots; when nothing else works, we always fall back on ‘pilot error’. That has always worked. The problem here is that these pilots are heroes, only their exceptional skills enabled the plane and the crew to make it back to Japan. In fact, on the 23rd, VQ-1 will hold a full dress review at which the pilots will receive Distinguished Flying Crosses.”

“Don’t squadrons assign someone to order parts from the Supply Corps”, asks Admiral Streers.

“Yes, you’re right. Great idea”, says Admiral Jones. “He’s some aviator assigned for collateral duty as the Material Officer. One problem with hanging him is that the only job for which he receives any training is that of flying airplanes. He is simply told that he is the Material Officer; the enlisted men who theoretically work for him, ‘Storekeepers’ they’re called, do get training and in fact they do all the work. If anyone screwed up in ordering the cam, they would be the ones.”

“Jones, you are going soft in the head”, rebukes Burke. “This case demands an officer’s head, and the Material Officer sounds like a perfect target. Let’s *get him!*”

“Yes sir, we’ll get him for you”, says Streers. “We understand the supply system. It can get very intricate, particularly when a part is on order for so long. There are very detailed procedures for when and where follow-up requests must be made. I’ll bet you ten to one that we can find some screw-up for that very cam and then we can safely blame the whole thing on the Material Officer. There’s another reason we should take the lead on this. If the squadron isn’t at fault. I mean if we can’t even blame the squadron, then the Supply

to one that we can find some screw-up for that very cam and then we can safely blame the whole thing on the Material Officer. There's another reason we should take the lead on this. If the squadron isn't at fault, I mean if we can't even blame the squadron, then the Supply Corps might be blamed. In fact we could actually *be* at fault, but there's no reason to go into that, is there?"

"No, let's get the Material Officer", Burke agrees. "By the way, do we know anything about him? You know, does he have any political connections, come from an important family, you know, things like that? For example, Captain Noddins tells me that the pilot Donald Mayer is from Connecticut and his Congressman, Representative Monaghan, has complained to the House and the President that the plane had no escort."

"We know a little and there doesn't seem to be anything to be afraid of. He's Lieutenant j.g. Donald Morgan. Not an Academy grad", says Admiral Jones dismissively. "No known connections or influence. Went through Harvard College on Admiral Holloway's N.R.O.T.C. Program. That paid his way through college and he owes us three years. He volunteered for flight training, and if he didn't get that, for submarine duty. He's been in the squadron about a year and apparently is a very good aviator."

"Well I don't like that he went to Harvard", Burke muses. "He may be smart enough to make trouble for us. But I agree, let's hang him anyway. Ben, how long will it take to pin something on him?"

"Not long. We'll have the head of our Supply Corps facility at Iwakuni check the squadron's records on ordering the cam and follow-up, and report back right away."

"OK. Any questions", says Burke.

"Should someone talk to Morgan and see what he may have to say for himself", asks Lieutenant Dawson.

"That's exactly the *wrong* thing to do," Admiral Jones again. "Nobody is to say anything to Morgan, or anyone else in the squadron. The first thing he'll know is that he has received a Letter of Reprimand, that will be the end of his career, we'll denounce him publicly and it will be too late for him to do anything about it. That's the way hanging parties end. Got it?"

"Let's get on with it. Ben, the sooner the better" says Burke. "In a week?"

A three striper snoops (two hours), then a four striper (two days)!

The first person to measure me for the noose is Commander Thomas Beck, the senior Supply Corps officer at Iwakuni. Tom knows me, we get along well. We see each other at social occasions and serve on the base's golf course committee. Tom represents the Supply Corps and I represent VQ-1. I am reading at my desk in the Material Office when Fitzsimmons sees Commander Beck enter. Fitzsimmons startles me.

"Attention on Deck", he bellows in his husky baritone.

Attention indeed, what is a three-striper doing in the hangar anyway? Three is a lot of stripes in Iwakuni. VQ-1 has only two three-strippers, the Captain and the Executive Officer. I have one and a half stripes by now, having received a routine promotion to Lieutenant Junior Grade.

"Don, I'm sorry, I have to check some of your records", says Tom calmly.

I am surprised but naively do not attribute any significance to the "I'm sorry".

"Go right ahead, Tom. Fitzsimmons here can show you whatever you want."

I knew about hanging parties but never dream that I or anyone else is a potential hangee. I sit down and resume reading. After about a half hour Tom tells me politely that he has finished. Saying nothing more, he leaves.

His report to Washington clearly does not meet with favor. The records concerning the cam are all in order! All that should have been done, Fitzsimmons has done.

"What now, Ben", says a querulous CNO to Admiral Streers.

"Arleigh, we'll take a harder look."

"Attention on Deck", two weeks after Commander Beck's unannounced visit Fitzsimmons again bellows.

Lo and behold, a *four* Striper has entered, Captain Blue, the top Supply Corps officer in Japan, from the staff of Admiral Withington, he of press conference fame or infamy in the States, the Commander of Naval Forces in Japan.

Captain Blue says very little and keeps largely to himself, occasionally asking Fitzsimmons about where certain records can be found. He spends two full days checking records, and then departs without comment. I remain oblivious of any possible personal

Captain Blue says very little and keeps largely to himself, occasionally asking Fitzsimmons about where certain records can be found. He spends two full days checking records, and then departs without comment. I remain oblivious of any possible personal danger, from the Supply Corps that is. There is to be sure danger enough, from hostile Communist fire, antiquated aircraft, shortages of parts, poor training and bad flying weather. I am completely unaware of the furor back in the States. At a briefing of VQ-1's officers in July the Executive Officer holds up a page from the June 29 issue of *Time* magazine that displays a crude map of the route that Number 9 flew on June 16. The Exec is dismayed that the supposedly top secret route, secret only from friends and loved ones of the crews, certainly not from the Communists, has been revealed. I note with silent amusement that someone has stamped the page "SECRET" in red, one-inch high letters. It will be decades later when I am writing this memoir that I find and read the page. It does report the hullabaloo in the press and Congress.

Life in VQ-1 goes on as normal. I fully know that the squadron has encountered severe difficulties in getting necessary parts. Maybe the Supply Corps brass can help out, if that's what they are here for. Over 100 parts have been on order for more than a year on an "Emergency" priority basis.

The only higher priority is "A.O.C.P.", Aircraft Out of Commission for Lack of Parts. If we assign that priority to an order for a part, the aircraft needing the part has to remain on the ground until the part comes in. VQ-1 is reluctant to use A.O.C.P. It has only seven planes for operational flights and also needs them for training flights. It plainly would have been out of the question to use A.O.C.P. for the missing cam.

We happen to establish inventory control

Captain Blue ruefully and reluctantly reports back that he can find nothing amiss in his inspection of the records he reviewed. Like Commander Beck, he looked only at records in the Material Department office. Had he looked around, he surely would have rejoiced to learn that the squadron possessed hundreds and perhaps thousands of parts for which it had no records, and had records of possessing hundreds of parts that it did not actually have. The written reports of our annual Administrative/Material inspections document these inventory shortcomings. They fortunately are kept at Admin, not here at Material.

Fortuitously and innocently, I believe, I come up with a plan to establish perfect paper control of the inventory. I do this not because of any concern about criticism from the brass, I have no such concern, but to avoid my Storekeepers getting depressed in the next annual Admin/Material inspection.

My plan takes root in a malfunction of a warning light system that indicates to the pilots that the P4M's nose wheel is not down and locked, safe for landing. Such warnings are not uncommon, and the flight crews use a variety of measures to assure that the wheel is indeed down and locked before attempting a landing. For example, one crew connected a fire extinguisher to the hydraulic line that transmits pressure to a cylinder designed to force the nose wheel forward into the locked position. Discharging the fire extinguisher, however, creates maintenance problems.

Another approach, one that I witness on one of my first P4M flights, is to tie a line around the torso of a hefty crewman and have him jump on the back of the nose wheel tire, jolting it forward. From about the waist down, the man is out of the fuselage, holding on to part of the interior but with other crewmen holding on to the line around his torso. He jumps three times and we hope the wheel is locked. On landing we realize it is.

A few months before the June 16 attack, a third crew uses the barrel of a carbine to pry the nose wheel forward. Not surprisingly to any hunter, the carbine barrel bends during that process. No one should try shooting around a corner with it. Promptly following the plane's return to Iwakuni, the carbine arrives in the Material Office for proper disposal. That proves complicated. A storekeeper takes it to the base armory. The men at the armory have no record of issuing it, or of ever having had it. They refuse to take custody of it. We then cable armories at other bases at which VQ-1 has previously been home-ported, Guam, Sangley Point in the Philippines, and Naha, Okinawa. No one has a record of it.

At one of the briefings that the Captain and Exec conduct from time to time for the officers, I recount the difficulties of getting rid of the carbine and sardonically ask that if anyone bends another one, please just drop it into the ocean, and not bring it to the Material Office. Mysteriously, the bent carbine disappears shortly thereafter, a result with which I

officers, I recount the difficulties of getting rid of the carbine and sardonically ask that if anyone bends another one, please just drop it into the ocean, and not bring it to the Material Office. Mysteriously, the bent carbine disappears shortly thereafter, a result with which I have nothing, or nothing more, to do.

Since the squadron does have a record of possessing the carbine and it seems lost, I ask Fitzsimmons what one can do to get the item off the squadron's books.

"We can try surveying it."

To survey an item, one fills out a multi-copy form explaining why the item is no longer to be found, and presents the form to the Supply Corps. If the Supply Corps accepts the form, which some clerk readily does when handed the form for the carbine, we can properly remove it from our records. We "surveyed" it!

It occurs to me shortly after Captain Blue's visit that surveying holds a possible key to improving my storekeepers' morale.

"Fitzsimmons, I have an idea. Let's survey all of the items on our inventory cards that we cannot locate. As to what happened to them, we'll say that we presume they were thrown overboard into the Sea of Japan when the crew was lightening ship after the attack on Number 9. As for equipment that we have out in the hangars but don't have a card for, we'll just make up a card."

The idea greatly appeals to Fitzsimmons. He is concerned, however, about appearances and what the Supply Corps might say.

"But Mr. Morgan, there's no way that everything could have gone overboard, you're talking about thousands of items."

"That's right, Fitz. But what I have in mind is surveying them one at a time. It is possible that any one item was in fact thrown overboard. No one can say that it wasn't, there are no records of what went overboard other than the crew's garment bags."

I reassure Fitzsimmons that we aren't saying that any of our missing equipment actually *was* tossed into the Sea of Japan, only that we *presume* that it was. Fitzsimmons' face brightens, his eyes light up. He happily tells one of the men to prepare a batch of survey forms, about 20, for a trial run to the Supply Corps.

I sign the survey forms the next day. We wait anxiously for the return of our man who carries the forms to the Supply Corp's facility.

"No problem", he reports! "It worked!"

The "inventory-correction" work begins in earnest. Over the next few weeks the storekeepers work virtually full time preparing survey forms. I almost get writers' cramp signing them. The Supply Corps clerks accept all of them, no question asked. Almost certainly, they do not even talk about them to Commander Beck. Preparation of new inventory cards for items the squadron possesses but lacks cards for also progresses rapidly. We have the inventory records in perfect shape, a matter of only months after the devastating Admin/Material inspection.

A flight CNO should remember: 18 July 1959

Having suspended VQ-1's operational flights shortly after the MIGS and reassessed the value of the flights, the Secretary of Defense approves their resumption. Brownie and I, perhaps expendable as Reservists, but perhaps because we are the best pair, who knows, perhaps otherwise, go out on the first resumed mission. It occurs after the snooping visit of Captain Blue

We start with an airways, non-operational flight from Iwakuni to Tainan in southern Formosa (Taiwan). On July 18 our night operational flight takes us down the Straights of Formosa, then west offshore the southern coasts of mainland China and its Hainan Island, then south along the coast of what I know at the time only as French Indo China.

Actually that is North Vietnam I realize a few years later. We pilots receive no briefings whatsoever on what parts of Asia are hostile. The U.S.S.R., North Korea, and the Peoples' Republic of China of course we know well in the aftermath of the Korean War. The defeat of the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and the division of its former colony into north and south Vietnam are another matter. The only city in the area that shows up on the navigational charts that we use is Vientiane. I always think that if an emergency landing were necessary in that region I would head there. No country names or boundaries appear on the charts and I do not know that Vientiane is the capital of Laos, or that I would have to fly over North Vietnam to get there. Fortunately I have no occasion to try.

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Our operational flights routinely radio their positions to home base every hour, by Morse Code on the P4M's medium high frequency transmitters, designed for long range communications. Whenever possible, that is, they report. Our flight was an exception. Probably due to unusual atmospheric conditions, our radioman simply cannot get through.

That has happened before. None of our crew is alarmed. Not so CNO when he receives word that there is no position report from the first post-attack mission. Hour after hour his worries increase. Close to panic, he orders the launch of fighters from U.S. carriers at anchor in Hong Kong to go out and look for us in the darkness. He also initiates a formal Search and Rescue Incident, Number 54, notifying all commands in the area that our plane is missing.

When we get close to Sangley Point in Manila Bay and call on our short-range UHF radio for permission to land, the Commanding Officer there follows the book and sends out a terse cable to all relevant commands.

“SAR 54 terminated”.

That calls off all search efforts. That is what the book says to do. Send those words, nothing more. Isn't concision wonderful? Those words, of course, provide scant solace to Burke, who can only speculate whether the remains of our plane have been sighted off Hainan Island, the plane has crashed on Corregidor, fallen into Manila Bay, or landed safely somewhere. Burke cannot complain about the book. He is a man of the book, black-shoe Navy after all.

Frustrated, he sends a cable to every airbase in the Western Pacific, hoping for an answer.

“To: Commanding Officer, P4M 124363. Where are you? What happened? CNO.”

Crew 9 are asleep, and no one at Sangley Point wants to wake us. Several more anxious and frustrating hours pass for CNO before Brownie learns of the cable. We confer mid-morning, and cable back.

“Sangley Point. MHF failure.”

Touchy-feely messages are just not in vogue in the United States Navy.

Burke knows that in a few hours we are to leave on another operational flight. No doubt wanting to get a good night's sleep, he orders that from now on our flights return to the airfields from which they have taken off if they are unable to get out an hourly position report. Issued in haste, the order is seriously flawed in several respects. For example, suppose the communication failure occurs seven hours out but only two short of the intended destination? Suppose the flight has transited the Straights of Formosa and then turns around, would the trigger happy non-English speaking fighters of Chiang Kai-shek's air force know not to shoot it down? Chiang's forces are ordinarily informed well in advance of the time and altitude at which an operational flight is expected to transit the Straights, providing a “window” for safe passage. VQ-1's pilots are vigilant to fly during the window, precisely at the assigned altitude. Or suppose the plane is only a half hour from a friendly field other than the one from which the flight started? As our next flight shows, there are other flaws.

Our operational flights are all highly classified. Security is a joke, however, at Sangley Point and apparently elsewhere. After sending the reply cable, Brownie and I walk out the gate heading south toward nearby Cavite City to get breakfast, accompanied by our navigator-pilot and our electronics officer, all in civilian clothes. A Philippine driver looking for a fare for his jitney startles us with a hearty greeting.

“Good Morning, Commander Brown.”

As if that were not enough, when our crew assemble at the plane for takeoff at sunset that evening, we have an audience of about 200 Filipino civilians who we assume work at the base.

An hour into the flight the navigator gives our position to the radioman for transmission to Iwakuni. Ten minutes later the radioman comes on the intercom and tells us pilots that he has been unable to get the report out. Whenever he tries, all hell breaks loose, with many other transmissions on the same frequency -- jamming from mainland China, no doubt! Some security! Brownie and I tune to the report frequency and ask the radioman to try again. Same result, instant jamming. Time and time again he tries. The jamming

with many other transmissions on the same frequency -- jamming from mainland China, no doubt! Some security! Brownie and I tune to the report frequency and ask the radioman to try again. Same result, instant jamming. Time and time again he tries. The jamming continues. Thinking it foolish to turn around but not so imprudent as to defy CNO so baldly, after another hour we reverse course and return to Sangley Point. Brownie has me make the landing, confident that I will get the heavily loaded plane down smoothly in the darkness.

When Burke learns of the jamming he orders us to scratch the mission and fly airways back to Iwakuni. He or other brass soon realizes that it is stupid to let the Chinese put the Navy out of the surveillance business by mere jamming. He rescinds the order to go back if position reports do not get out.

A three star admiral snoops (two weeks!)

The relaxed and happy attitude that prevails in the Material Office following perfection of our inventory records ends abruptly not long after I return to Iwakuni.

“Attention on Deck”, Fitzsimmons bellows for the third time.

There, in three dimensions, is a *three star admiral*, sleeves full of gold braid, seemingly more braid than all of the officers of VQ-1 could collectively muster. Not just an admiral, but a three star one! A large beefy man, Admiral Kuhl is the second ranking officer in the entire Supply Corps. He is stationed at Pearl Harbor and is in charge of supplying the Pacific fleets. With merely a “hello” he sets about reviewing all of our records. All of the ones we have in Material, that is.

The Admiral does not choose to mention that a week before, CNO summoned him to Washington. Being in the chain of command within the Corps, he is aware that Commander Beck and Captain Blue have found nothing amiss in the records that selected to inspect. He is nonetheless surprised by the ferocity of the briefing the Washington brass deliver. His sole Supply Corps superior, Admiral Streers (four stars), is desperate.

“We really need to find something to blame at VQ-1”, says Streers, “The Supply Corps is on the line if we don’t. Stay there as long as necessary. We are under terrible pressure to explain what went wrong, and it has to be down at the squadron level.”

“I’m catching all kinds of flak from the Joint Chiefs”, CNO Burke chimes in, “The entire Air Force is laughing at us, the White House can’t believe we don’t already have an answer for Ike and Congress is still raising hell. Damn it, we need a culprit and we need him now! I have to tell you I’m running out of patience with the Supply Corp. Ben assured me six weeks ago you guys could hang that Material Officer in a single week! I have to testify before the House Appropriations Committee next month about our budget for Fiscal Year 1960 and I absolutely have to have an answer by then. Get the hell out to Iwakuni and get us a scalp. This is serious!”

Thus chastened, Admiral Kuhl spends a full two weeks in the Material Office and out in the squadron’s hangars. Unlike his predecessor investigators, he appropriates me as his companion, not for reviewing records or anything like that, for which I would have to rely on Fitzsimmons, but for lunches and drinks at the Officers Club after work.

the admiral salutes

More than a week into his work and quite frustrated by the fortuitous perfection of the records he is reviewing, he tells me it’s time to go to lunch. Walking along a sidewalk in a broiling sun towards the Officers Club, we pass a Seaman Recruit walking the other way. A full ten steps later Admiral Kuhl turns around abruptly and shouts.

“Just a minute sailor, come back here! Don’t you know how to salute?”

Of course the seaman, about 17, had not saluted, no one salutes in Navy aviation outfits unless doing so is part of some formal ceremony. The camaraderie of fliers who are prepared constantly to face death together changes their perspectives, for example why worry how spit-shined everyone’s shoes are, and why not have a drink after returning to a carrier from a combat mission. The “Black Shoe Navy” is different, and officers, to say nothing of admirals, always draw a ton of salutes aboard ships (other than aircraft carriers, all of which aviators captain), Naval bases, and everywhere else.

I am quite worried about what will happen next, but the Seaman Recruit is not. Looking first at the gold wheat clusters on the Admiral’s sleeves that signify that he is a staff officer, and at the contrasting single star on my sleeve that signifies that I am a line officer with combat command responsibilities, the kid feigns surprise and comes up with a very offensive reply.

“I didn’t know we were supposed to salute *staff officers*”

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Kuhl is simply breathless in his fury. His face turns purple. He struggles to speak. He regains the power to talk about ten seconds later, and then can speak only huskily, choked up with anger.

“You go back there and try it again”, he shouts hoarsely and points.

The kid backs up about fifteen feet and comes up with a very casual, sloppy salute. The Admiral and I duly salute back. The kid moves on.

Lunch at the O Club is subdued. We make no mention of the incident. I keep my amusement to myself.

I continue calm and serene, in retrospect amazingly unconcerned with having a three star admiral poring through records and equipment for which I am officially responsible. I just don’t feel responsible. After all, my primary duty is piloting airplanes, and I feel very skilled and accomplished at that. It is Fitzsimmons who maintains the records. He really knows what he is doing. And I worry not.

The depth of my naivete is such that it never occurs to me to ask myself why no other squadron officer even comments on my string of visitors from the Supply Corps. No one asks “What is that 800 pound gorilla with three stars doing on your back for two weeks”, or anything else. Surely at least some of them are aware of the Admiral’s visit. Perhaps they sense, or know, that a hanging party is in progress and want to stay well clear of getting involved in it. Maybe they have already given me up for hanged. All that is lost on me. I wonder instead whether Admiral Kuhl can help Fitzsimmons get the parts the squadron needs. I go on flying the T-Bird from time to time.

the admiral sails on and sets a trap!

Admiral Kuhl looks at everything imaginable during the two weeks. But not over in the Admin Department! Having found nothing that could be characterized as a mistake, he decides he is through at VQ-1. He undertakes to demonstrate, however, that the squadron could have done more to get the parts it needs. For each of the more than 100 parts that have been on order for more than a year on an Emergency priority basis, he sends a separate cable to his Supply Corps subordinates requesting the parts. Each cable ends with the attention-getting “Kuhl sends”.

In addition, the day after he departs Iwakuni, Kuhl has a cable sent to the squadron ordering us to report each day on the status of every pending request for parts, including the part number for each item, the date and addressee for our most recent request to the Supply Corps for follow-up, and any responsive information received from the Supply Corps.

Kuhl is confident both that his cables would produce missing parts, and that the squadron’s Storekeepers will sooner or later make a mistake in their reports. The Supply Corps can then denounce me as incompetent, which in a real sense I am, and hang me for the failure to obtain the missing cam.

Kuhl is less than completely right about the parts. Within two weeks of the cabling, 20 of the Emergency priority parts come in – but only 20. They happen to include an *entire* P4M bow turret, hockey-stick-size cam, machine guns, armor plate, electric drive motors, gun sights, plexiglass nose cone and all, obviously sent from storage somewhere in the Supply Corps’ network. I think it’s good to get the cam, even though it may no longer serve any useful purpose. The Navy decides that Number 9 is too badly damaged to be worth repairing. Fitzsimmons mentions to me that the shipping papers for the turret display the parts number for a *tail* turret. We see no reason to call anyone’s attention to the erroneous parts number.

Preparing the newly required daily reports proves extremely difficult, as Kuhl surely realized and probably intended. (Requiring reports is a favorite Navy way to impose punishment.) Overnight responses from the Supply Corps to orders for equipment have to be closely checked. A draft cable must be typed, on Teletype ribbons, and then proofread. The tapes are about 12 feet long and contain thousands of numbers and letters for serial numbers, times of responses, etc. On average Fitzsimmons and the other storekeepers devote about 12 hours a day, seven days a week, to preparing the cables and making sure they are completely accurate.

The brass denounce me, thinking the trap has caught its prey

Work on the reports leaves little time for ordering additional parts, but that has to be

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The brass denounce me, thinking the trap has caught its prey

Work on the reports leaves little time for ordering additional parts, but that has to be done of course. About two weeks into the reports, the Maintenance Department asks for a component of a P4M tail turret. In the aftermath of the attack, the crews are for the first time practicing firing the guns. I am surprised to feel my entire plane shake and seemingly recoil a bit. The guns do not hold up well. I conclude that the gunners are even having trouble hitting their rocky targets in the Inland Sea. In any event, the wear and tear takes its toll on the aged turrets.

Little do I realize that the order for the tail turret part sets off celebrations in the Supply Corps and CNO Burke's office. Neither have I realized that hordes of Supply Corp personnel have been scrutinizing each report, looking for anything to criticize. When they call the new order to Admiral Streers' attention at his headquarters in the Frankford Arsenal in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he hurries down to Washington to give a personal report of victory.

"We've done it, we've got the squadron at last, we're ready to lower the boom on Morgan!"

"Great! It's about time! What do you have on him", Burke asks Streers.

"They just ordered a part for a tail turret. Only a couple of weeks ago we sent them an entire tail turret. If they had any sense they should have realized that the part they ordered was already on hand. What a wonderful screw-up!"

"Sounds good enough for me", says Burke, "Here's what we'll do, right away. First, Noddings, you notify the White House at once. The Material Officer is incompetent, that's why the squadron never received the part for the bow turret. We're putting a Letter of Reprimand in his Personnel File. Gerry, you take care of that. Second, Ben, you send a cable to VQ-1 slamming it for this incompetence. Be sure to copy every major U.S. military command and U.S. Embassy in the whole world. That should help get us out of this wretched public relations disaster. And Noddings, I want you also to explain that Morgan was at fault, explain that personally and on a one-to-one basis to every single Member of Congress who has made a fuss about the parts screw-up. Got it? OK, get on with it! Let's have a drink later to celebrate."

The denunciation boomerangs, big time

Admiral Streers promptly cables VQ-1 that it has been wasting the Supply Corps' time ordering a tail turret component when it has on hand an entire tail turret that the Corps has just delivered. The squadron's incompetence is simply amazing. No wonder VQ-1 has been delinquent in getting parts all along. Time to shape up!

True to CNO's request, copies go to all U.S. Embassies and major military commands, well over 200 recipients all told.

Streers' cable arrives at our Operations Department on a Saturday morning. Fortunately, both the Captain and Executive Officer are away for the weekend. The duty officer there, in charge of external communications in their absence, promptly routes the cable to me. I am working seven days a week now. I am in the Material Office talking to the men about the daily report. The cable stuns me, but only momentarily. I get really angry. I also know that if I wait until Monday, the Captain and the Exec will be back and would never jeopardize their careers by signing off on the cable I want to send. Seizing the opportunity afforded by their absences, I dictate the text of a reply cable. As soon as one of the men types it up I take it to the Operations duty officer, a Lieutenant I know well.

"This has to go out right away, and you need to sign it."

"What the hell is this?" Burke asks himself. "Who wrote this cable, saying VQ-1 is a bunch of busy hard working aviators trying to complete dangerous and strategic missions but in dire need of parts from the Supply Corps, the Supply Corps recently shipped an entire bow turret after saying for more than a year that it did not have even a cam for the turret, the Supply Corps mis-described the bow turret as a tail turret, the squadron sincerely would like to receive the tail turret part it has just ordered, would the Supply Corps please stop playing silly games and send the part!"

"God Almighty, oh my God, look at all those cc's, every Embassy in the whole world and all those military commands, Army and Air Force included! Get Admiral Streers on the phone, immediately! And call Captain Noddings, tell him to get his butt in here on the double!"

"Goddamnit. Ben. I've never heard of such a colossal screw-up". Burke shouts into

phone, immediately! And call Captain Noddings, tell him to get his butt in here on the double!”

“Goddamnit, Ben, I’ve never heard of such a colossal screw-up”, Burke shouts into the phone, “Now the whole world knows it wasn’t the Material Officer after all, it was you dumb bastards in the Supply Corps. What do we do now? We’re all in this box together, else I’d have no choice but to lower the boom on you, Ben. You know I don’t want to do that, old buddy, but tell me, how can I get out of this fix?”

“I can’t tell you how sorry I am, Arleigh. I really appreciate your support. We do have to stick together. I think the less said about ordering the part the better. Let’s just drop all that. We’ll tell VQ-1 to discontinue these special reports. The more we say about orders for parts, the more attention we will draw to our own screw-up. Don’t worry, I’ll make sure that heads roll in the Supply Corps, somebody will pay for this. Privately of course. Meanwhile, we still need to hang somebody in VQ-1, to divert attention from us. Didn’t Gerry Jones say that some squadron officer has to certify that a plane is O.K. to fly?”

The brass always hang somebody; anybody will do, even a hero.

“Right you are”, says Burke, “he did. Let’s send whoever cleared the plane a Letter of Reprimand for letting it go without the cam, and hope that ends it. We’ll stop the reprimand to the Material Officer, what’s his name, Morgan I think, if it hasn’t gone out. Noddings will just have to do the best he can in dealing with Congress and the White House, that’s what he’s getting paid for, isn’t it? Oh, I really and truly hope that this doesn’t come up during my testimony to the Appropriations Committee next week. What a mess! World War II was never like this!”

Only when I hear that Don Mayer, Number 9’s pilot during the attack and, unfortunately for him the Assistant Maintenance Officer who cleared Number 9 for flight, has received a Letter of Reprimand, do I realize that a hanging has been underway. If I had known that and had been able to foresee that if I didn’t hang, Mayer would, I would have preferred my own hanging. I feel no actual guilt, and will soon be leaving active duty, reentering academia at the Harvard Law School in September, hanged or not.

Mayer on the other hand is career Navy, an Academy man, rather had *been* career Navy, the Reprimand assures that he will never see a promotion to Commander and will have to leave the service prior to reaching the 20 years needed for retirement and will then have to get by in the civilian economy, somehow. The Distinguished Flying Cross that Mayer received on June 23 for bravery and skill under fire at the helm of Number 9 and getting the plane to Miho will not begin to offset the Reprimand. Mayer has a wife and four young children. I recall that one of my first special assignments in the squadron was to go to the Tokyo area in January 1958 to welcome Mayer and his family to Japan and escort them to Iwakuni. I am quite fond of the Mayers, and feel really bad about the reprimand. I am, however, powerless to do anything about it. That makes me feel even worse. Hanging is a sacrifice I would have accepted, had I been offered the choice, and could have survived.

Sayonara, August 1959

My obligated tour of active duty ends in mid-September, two years after I completed flight training. Harvard Law School has admitted me once again. Classes start in mid-September. As other young Naval Aviators in VQ-1 and elsewhere have recently done, I could obtain an early release from active duty in order to attend law school. The Navy is not now short of aviators. I worry about being late to law school but decide not to ask for early release. I need the pay through mid-September. I take my chances.

The squadron’s new Captain, formerly its Executive Officer, Rich James, asks me to stay on for an additional year. He promises me an A3D if I do so. Brownie also asks me to stay on, complimenting me on my flying skill in general and on the recent very smooth night landing at Sangley Point. I am flattered, but not persuaded. I would not mind being required to stay another year, if the Navy really needs aviators. That is not the case, as the early releases show. I have enjoyed my time in the Navy and have had a fascinating variety of assignments in the squadron.

Considerations arguing against staying on for a year, or for making a career of the Navy, include realization that aviators 20 years my senior have not had more interesting work than I have, so the best that I could hope for would be more of the same. More important are indicia of pro-Naval Academy bias that I have seen, including the “37”

navy, include realization that aviators 20 years my senior have not had more interesting work than I have, so the best that I could hope for would be more of the same. More important are indicia of pro-Naval Academy bias that I have seen, including the “37” incident on my first midshipmen’s training cruise. Why should going to Harvard be held against me? Also important is the autocratic way that senior officers at times behave, or misbehave. The chewing out that that obscene instructor gave my flight instructor when I had just saved his life in the cross-wind landing pattern in advanced flight training looms large. In addition, Julie does not want to move every two to three years, thinking it would be hard on the children we expect to have, and on her.

Our Operations Officer Lt. Commander Vince Anania debriefs me.

“Morgan, this won’t take long. You don’t remember anything!”

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I have great respect for the rank and file of those with whom I served, and would like to think that the brass’s decisions noted above were not their finest hour. Institutional imperatives can cause leaders to do things that on reflection years later they may regret. In any event, the entirety of my time in the Navy was educational in a way that the classrooms of academia could never match. I feel fortunate to have survived. I joined the Navy, and saw a world quite new to me. It was quite a time.

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