



Fist of the Fleet Association

a non profit 501 (c) (19) military organization

NEWSLETTER

January 2012

Preserving the Past, Providing for Today
Promoting the Future

WINTER EDITION

By: Jerry "Ricochet" Fritze

We start 2012 with a look back at the Fist 11 reunion, and also pause to remember those we lost: Marv Duncan, Ron Bolt and Jim Ferguson. Ron's loss is especially hard as he was recently recommended a Silver Star for his actions during the Viet Nam War, a mission that will be presented more fully in coming issues of Newsletter. The reunion was a stunning success! A celebration of 100 years of Naval Aviation, coupled with the Homecoming of the Blues, the new wing of the Museum, the Lang Vei presentation at the banquet and our special guests all meshed together for a whirlwind of emotions that will be extremely hard to top in the coming years.

As we recommit ourselves during the new year to honor and fulfill the promise of our mission statement we recognize a new and deeper relationship with the squadron. Because of their understanding of the purpose of this Association, and their willingness to be active partners for the future we bring that future into alignment and steer a straighter course towards it. What lies over the next horizon we don't know, but what lies in our wake is for all to see.

We are pleased to announce in this issue the appointment of Chuck Webster as the new Finance Officer, and of Bob Schreiber as our new PAO. Warner Butler will continue to serve as Vice President and Zip Rausa will be assisting Dennis Laack as a coordinator for the Education Grant Program.

With the squadron deployed we cast a hard eye at our adversaries. We may have left Iraq, but Iran is still trying to position itself as a Middle Eastern Power. There is a leadership change in Korea and no one can forecast where that will lead. At least for the time being Afghanistan should be quiet as there has never been, to my knowledge, a Winter Offensive. On another note, China's new aircraft carrier was recently spotted undergoing sea trials. She is a former Soviet warship, the Varyag, and is rumored to have been renamed Shi Ling. It's a relatively old design that was constructed in the 1980's for the Soviet Navy but was never completed. When the USSR collapsed in 1991, the rusting hull of the Varyag sat in dockyards in the Ukraine. Although Beijing claims that the vessel will be used for training and research any warship is capable of offensive and defensive operations. But they have a very long way to go in order to match skills with U.S. Navy carrier forces. However, let us hope it never comes to that.



USS Carl Vinson CVN-70 Dec 2011

In this issue we will recap the various events of Fist 11. All in all, this was one for the books and will certainly set higher expectations for our next reunion somewhere out on the West Coast in 2013.

Mission Statement

**Perpetuate the history of Naval Aviation Squadrons VT-17, VA-6B, VA-65, VA-25 and VFA-25,
Remember deceased veterans and comfort their survivors,
Conduct charitable and educational programs,
Foster and participate in activities of patriotic nature,
Assist current active squadron members, and
Provide assistance to family members in times of emergency.**

www.fistofthefleet.org

President's Message

At F1st 11 we witnessed a very special event honoring thirteen of our members for their service to our country. After many years of neglect their story was presented to the assembled reunion audience by two former US Air Force Forward Air Controllers (FAC's), Toby Rushforth and Jim Biltz, and the squadron Air Intelligence Officer (AI) Jay Stone who was attached when the events of February 7, 1968 took place. The Battle of Lang Vei, as it has become known, occurred at a small advance US Special Forces outpost in NW Vietnam very near the Laotian border and just southwest of Khe Sanh. A more detailed description of the battle will be presented in future F1st Newsletters. Suffice it for now that the Special Forces camp had and was being overrun by North Vietnamese utilizing tanks for the first time in the South. As USAF FAC's arrived overhead that morning they were calling for any airborne assets to assist in beating back the enemy forces attacking Lang Vei and specifically the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) where friendlies were held up and getting desperate.

Answering the call was Canasta flight with their A-1 Skyraiders from Coral Sea CVA-43. The weather was marginal to say the least with very low clouds over the target area, which was located in irregular terrain. LT Zip Rausa was the first Canasta lead around 0730 and coordinated with the initial FAC on scene, Covey 688, who is still unknown. Zip and flight followed the FAC down through the broken clouds, to evaluate if it was possible to prosecute the target. And so began one of the proudest moments in F1st history. Multiple Canasta flights from Coral Sea arrived on scene and delivered Close Air Support (CAP) to the trapped ground forces under the direction of FAC's Toby Rushforth and Jim Biltz. Due to the bravery and skill of these 13 F1st "Spad" drivers and the FAC's overhead, the trapped ground forces were able to egress from Lang Vei later that day. Much more detail will follow in future newsletters.

During the reunion banquet program the story of Lang Vei was presented and it was announced that all the participants were now finally being recommended for awards long overdue. We were very fortunate to have seven of the pilots present plus Lawana Ritzman, wife of "Speed" Ritzman, now deceased.

Recommended for the Silver Star are: Ron Bolt, Cliff Church, Bob Hagen, Ted Hill, Jack Jordan, Bruce Marcus, Al Nichols, Dale Pellot, Speed Ritzman, Stu Skelton and Chuck Thom. On a sad note Ron Bolt passed away shortly after the reunion.

Recommended for the Navy Cross are: Larry Gardiner and Zip Rausa.

The recommendations have been forwarded to the Secretary of the Navy and on to Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) with very strong endorsements from senior officers. I know the membership joins me in strongly recommending the the granting of these awards and thereby recognizing these brave men, though long overdue, for their distinguished service to their country and their significant contribution toward saving the lives of several of their countrymen.

Gary Kerans - President FOFA

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McDonnell-Douglas F-4J
Phantom II

VF-154 CAG 2 circa 1978

There were a few old friends at our reunion this time around. Seems a few Fighter Jocks from the old Black Knights of VF-154 dropped by on the the last night for some good old fashioned rooster fights! It was an extremely boisterous time, the sound of which carried all the way down to pool side. The next morning the Ready Room had the air of a well-used Olongapo bar!

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ **FINANCIAL REPORT** \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

By Chuck Webster

Financial Report

The Association will remember 2011 as a very successful and eventful year. Thanks to the generosity and contributions from our Membership the financial health of the Association continues to improve. As of December 31, 2011, the Association has a balance of \$23,881.95 in assets and savings/checking with the Navy Federal Credit Union.

One of the main indicators of the Association's financial health and stability is the continued growth of its dues-paying members. While this number increased during 2011, we need continued growth in our membership with past and present members of Fist squadrons in 2012. During 2011, a total of eight new Life Members and 35 Annual Members were added to the membership list. Currently the Association's total membership count is 299, with 121 Voting Members. Annual Members are reminded to make their 2012 payments either via PayPal or check.

The Educational Fund had contributions of \$2,285 either as gifts/donations or given in memory of fallen shipmates. With the turnaround schedule for VFA-25, squadron members had very little opportunity to take any outside classes. The Association made no Educational Grant payments during 2011. Contact with VFA-25 appears that there will be usage of the Grant, possibility beginning during the present cruise and most surely during the next extended turnaround. Remember, that any donation to the Educational Fund is deductible for federal income tax purposes and a letter will be sent to you for your tax preparation.

Finally, the year was capped by the highly successful Fist 2011 Reunion in Pensacola, FL. last November. Reports from those who attended confirmed that it was a "Great Successful Reunion." A very special thanks goes out to Nick and Barb Johnson, Al and Jo Anna Gorthy, and Bob and Susie Schreiber for their extra effort before, during, and after the reunion. The Association also wishes to thank all those members who have given financial support during 2011. I'm sure Association members are aware that Lynn Hughes has stepped down from the Finance Officer position. The Association and all members owe Lynn a **special thanks** for his years of service to the Association and for bringing me up to speed on the software and his support during this turnover.

Chuck "Pooh" Webster

REUNION – FIST STYLE

Initially, I would like to thank the FOFA for the invitation to your reunion festivities. It was truly an honor to meet with Naval Aviators who have excelled at their profession over the years. Although the aircraft and tactics may be different, the mission has remained the same throughout Naval Aviation history... Take the fight to the enemy from the deck of an aircraft carrier. I was regaled with many such stories at the reunion and was overwhelmed by the patriotism and spirit of those "senior" aviators.

Hopefully, you all enjoyed seeing the "Rhino" (F/A-18F) that I flew in for display with its "tactical" Centennial paint job! The entire weekend was definitely a Navy "good deal." I was able to meet many of the squadron-mates that my Dad has spoken of for years, attend a party at the ready room and log a few Super Hornet hours. What could be better than that?

Thanks again for the invite. If any of you "Fisties" get through Lemoore, please give me a call. I would love to repay the hospitality. Very Respectfully: LT Nicole "Bad Dog!" Johnson
VFA-122 NAS Lemoore, CA



Lt Nicole "Bad Dog" Johnson with parents Nick and Barbara.

Blue Angels Tour Dates

- Mar 10 NAF El Centro CA
- Mar 17/18 St. George UT
- Mar 24/25 Punta Gorda FL
- Mar 31/Apr 1 Tuscaloosa AL
- Apr 14/15 NAS Kingsville TX
- Apr 21/22 New Orleans LA
- Apr 28/29 Warner Robins AFB GA
- May 5/6 MCAS Cherry Point NC
- May 12/13 Smyrna TN
- May 19/20 Andrews AFB MD
- May 21/23 Hudson River NY
- May 26/27 Jones Beach NY
- May 29 USNA (graduation fly-over)



Have you paid your 2012 Dues?
 Annual Dues: \$25/YR
 Life Time Dues \$200
 Mail dues to Financial Officer:
 Chuck Webster 39224 132nd St. Bath SD 57427

Only Voting Members receive a copy of the Directory
 Become a Voting Member!
 Visit the Base Exchange at
www.fistofthefleet.org

Profile: **Charles C. Webster**, Finance Officer



Chuck "Pooh" Webster is a retired Maintenance LDO having been assigned to VP, VR, VC, VU, and VIP in aircrew positions. After attending University of Houston on a Navy scholarship, he was assigned to the Rice University NROTC unit as the freshman instructor. While attending UH he was appointed to Chief Warrant Officer and later while serving with the Fist of the Fleet, received a commission and appointed a LDO Ltjg. His last assignment was with VT-24 in Beeville, TX. After retiring, moving back to Indiana, and farming for a couple of years he went to work for 3M as a field engineer in Southern Indiana. After several years he was promoted and moved to St Paul, MN where he developed and started the first training programs for 3M engineers to use IBM personal computers to collect data on different research programs. Several years later he was selected to be the Chief of Maintenance for the 3M corporate aviation unit where they had a fleet of six

Gulfstream IV's.

After 25 years with 3M and the death of his wife, he retired and moved to Aberdeen South, Dakota where he is farming, doing some work with horses and loads of hunting pheasants and deer. Since retiring, he does several days of volunteer work each week. On Mondays he drives the DAV van taking veterans to their VA appointments in Sioux Falls, SD and on Fridays he does "meals on wheels". He is on the Legion's Ceremonial Burial Unit. He has been the local DAV Chapter Adjutant/Treasurer for the last eight years. He is a life member of the VFW, DAV, VVA, and a dues paying member of the Legion, Tailhook and FRA.

I am honored that the membership entrusted me with the financial business of the Association. I remember attending my first Fist reunion in 2005 where Kison requested that some of the A7 squadron members should step forward to help lead the Association. Looking at the present leadership, the A7 guys have stepped forward. We all need to thank those that came before for their hard work to form and lead the Association. I too want to take this time to thank Lynn Hughes for his years of work as the Finance Officer and for his assistance and training since the last reunion to complete this turn over.

We have received a \$25 donation check, dated 12/27/2011 from Mr. & Mrs. Dan Ertz, 3030 W. 69th St., Mission Hills, KS 66208 in memory of Marvin H. Duncan, deceased, FOFA Lifetime Member. I credited the donation to the Fist Education Fund and have prepared a tax receipt letter to send to Mr. & Mrs. Ertz. This donation from third parties, in memoriam of Marv Duncan, now totals \$125.00.

Departure Notification



Jim Ferguson, 84, on Dec. 11, 2011. He proudly protected his country for 21 years in the U.S. Navy, enlisting in 1944 when he was 17; and retiring in 1964 as a Chief Petty Officer. Jim was in training in air gunnery while stationed at various naval bases when WWII was coming to a close. He sailed aboard several ships, including the USS Boxer, USS Valley Forge, USS Philippine Sea, USS Midway and USS Shangri La. He served during the Korean War including the Battle of Inchon and the Formosa Blockade. His service would also take him to the Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Arctic



In his 21 year career Jim took on many duties, including loading ammunition as an aviation ordnance officer. He later became a nuclear weapons technician when he was stationed in Sanford. Of his service his daughter Lisa Lochridge says "He didn't talk specifically about his war experiences and specific battles, but he talked about being in the Korean War and being on the ship during the battle of Inchon and the people he met." He enjoyed the camaraderie of his many friends and fellow veterans at VFW Post 10147 in Apopka. The highlight of his last day was riding with VFW members in the Apopka Christmas Parade. Jim was a lifetime member of the Fist of the Fleet Association and at the recent reunion he was pleased to meet current squadron members Lt. Mike Anderson (Left, Above) and Lt. Mike Jennings (Right, Above). A donation will be made to the Fist Education Grant Program in his honor.

SKIPPERS CORNER

Greetings from the USS CARL VINSON and Happy New Year. VFA-25 got underway for deployment the last part of NOV and has enjoyed an uneventful transit to the Fifth Fleet AOR and the Northern Arabian Sea. In fact we are recovering sorties tonight closing our first week of successfully supporting Coalition Forces during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM over Afghanistan. Our Sailors, aircraft and the entire Carrier Strike Group ONE team have made the transition seamlessly to combat operations. The men and women of VFA-25 have performed above and beyond expectations, grooming our aging aircraft fleet into some fine flying machines ready to carry pilots and ordnance downrange to the bad guys. As you are probably aware, this area of the world has changed quite a bit since last year during our deployment. The environment remains quite dynamic and pressurized, with the increase in tension over Iran's quest for nuclear technology, heightened tensions with Pakistan due to civilian casualties on their border and the beginning of the transfer of responsibilities from the US Coalition over to the government of Afghanistan. The demands placed on our aircrew remain high while



mistakes in their daily duties could have strategic ramifications. As we press forward after a much needed "down day" tomorrow, I have no doubt the FIST team will continue to rise to the occasion with the same professionalism, teamwork and discipline that sets them apart from other squadrons around the Navy. Finally, we cannot complete this mission without the support of our families, friends and the Fist of the Fleet Association. Thank you.

Until next time,

Fist One

FROM THE COCKPIT A Nugget's Perspective on Deployment by Lt. Kirk "SLAB" Jackson

Nugget(noun)-(1)A lump of something, as of precious metal. (2) A naval aviator who has not yet completed a deployment on an aircraft carrier. WESTPAC 2012 for the FIST OF THE FLEET kicked off on 30 Nov 11 when the USS CARL VINSON sailed west from San Diego. I'd spent some time underway previously but this cruise marks the first time I've been embarked for a long period of time. So far, being aboard the VINSON has lived up to many of the expectations I had prior to deployment. The food is every bit as repetitive as the other JO's had promised but midrats still makes up for it nearly every day. The transit across the Pacific offered just as many opportunities to work out, study, and sleep and just as few opportunities to fly as I had been promised. The obnoxious 1MC in my stateroom managed to "break" within days of leaving port just as I had been told it would. There have also been quite a few surprises, both pleasant and not, that have kept me on my toes and made cruise an adventure thus far.

Our first port visit in Hong Kong was a very pleasant surprise. Anyone who has been on a ship for any length of time understands how nice it is to set foot on solid ground and breathe air that's not laced with the smell of salt and various fuels and lubricants. Pulling into Hong Kong promised to be a great reprieve from boat living as well as an opportunity to experience a foreign country that I hadn't visited previously. I didn't realize how awesome port visits with the FISTs would be or how incredible a city Hong Kong would turn out to be. The squadron had been in Hong Kong at the end of last deployment, a mere 7 months prior, so every JO was intimately familiar with the city. Thanks in large part to the experience of these JOs, the entire 3 days we spent in Hong Kong were a whirlwind of good times. From visits to the world renowned giant Buddha statue with Waylon and PD to enjoying cocktails with the rest of CVW-17 on the streets of Lan Kwai Fong, every minute in port was an experience I won't soon forget.

Another aspect of cruise that I didn't expect but was pleasantly surprised by was the way the squadron smoothly transitioned into combat mode as we approached 5th Fleet. While the FISTs have always struck me as consummate professionals, the focus and intensity demonstrated by the squadron in preparing for combat was incredible. During the transit across the Pacific, we had the opportunity to fly in several training areas from Hawaii to Midway and Saipan. Gone was the standard building block training I had experienced thus far with relatively canned scenarios and simplified tactics. Instead, we began to train to the exact sorts of situations we'd soon find ourselves in over Afghanistan. Instead of dropping simulated bombs on non-descript boxes in the desert we began to simulate Close Air Support missions over urban battlefields. As a nugget, it was incredible to watch the rest of the squadron shift into combat mode and begin to ready themselves and the jets to support the troops in OEF. The entire FIST team gelled together during the numerous no-fly days we had crossing the Pacific and by the time we'd reached our last fly days before combat, the squadron was working together in a way I hadn't seen before. As I write this, FIST jets are airborne over Afghanistan providing outstanding support for Coalition Forces and I can't wait for my turn to come in the next few weeks.

FOFA REUNION by Lt. Mike “Waylon” Jennings

With the short turnaround between deployments, most of the current Fisty pilots found it pretty difficult to find some time off to relax and not think about work and the upcoming deployment. When Skipper Barber approached me and PD about taking a trip to Pensacola to attend the FOFA reunion, I did not hesitate at the opportunity. I have already written a few articles for the newsletter and I was really looking to meeting the people I have been talking with and that were reading my articles.

I was really excited to get down to the reunion and meet with the former Fiesties, as I just figured it would be great to experience the history associated with the squadron and hear some great sea stories. I can say without a doubt, for both PD and myself, that the weekend exceeded both of our expectations, and for me personally it is something I will never forget and look forward to hopefully being able to attend again before my tenure is up with VFA-25.

I guess I will just start with Thursday, when we showed up at the admin. We really didn't know what to expect at the admin, as we know how admin's work these days, and when we walked in, it brought a huge smile to my face. It was great seeing groups of people catching up and bonding over a few cocktails, and it made me and PD feel right at home, and definitely made the introductions easier after a few Budweisers (not sure if I can include alcohol in the article, but I figured you guys wouldn't mind!). We were planning on coming up to register to get ready for the next day's events, but we ended up staying for around 5 hours I think, just trying to hear as many stories as we could, and trying to tell a few of our own, with as few embellishments as possible! It was a great first day and I knew the rest of the weekend was going to be a blast.

Friday was another great experience, having a delicious dinner and getting even more sea stories from the Fiesties, and seeing how the Navy has changed over the years, some changes good, and some changes not so good. The dinner was pretty amazing, just hearing the random banter between old friends, and chiming here and there when someone asked a question. I was quite content on just listening for the whole weekend, hearing the amazing stories and shenanigans that happened over multiple careers.

Saturday was the most memorable for numerous reasons. Starting the day off with the trip to the base and museum, I had probably one of the best history lectures in my life, hearing more detail about Midway than I have ever heard before. I knew a little of the history of the bar in the PCola museum, but it was refreshing to get firsthand knowledge of it from people that saw it in Subic Bay. We then returned to the hotel for the big event of the day, the banquet dinner, and memorable it was. I heard a little bit of the story beforehand, and I was just thinking that it was so amazing that it sounded like something out of a war movie. Actually hearing it from people that were there was something I will never forget, and I would be lying if I said that it didn't give me goose bumps and a shiver down my spine while airborne air controllers were describing the events of that day.

I'd be lying if I said that my career in the Navy up to joining VFA-25 has been tough. Flight school was one of the best times in my life, flying and just having a great time. 25 was the first time that really the Navy got their return on me with the deployments, and I thought my time flying in OEF has been extremely rewarding. Without hesitation, I believe presenting the lithograph to Mr. Rausa has been and always will be one of the most rewarding and memorable events I will ever be a part of. I just wish we had lithographs for the other pilots that participated that day, as they were all heroes in my book.

To wrap up, and I apologize for the long rant, that the reunion was one of the best times I have ever had and it came at a perfect time, between deployments where we PD and I could both relax for a couple of days before getting back into gear for round two. I want to sincerely thank everyone that was there for being so warm and welcoming to both of us, as you really made us feel at home. There are too many names to mention, so I decided to leave them out of here otherwise the article would be twice as long! Thanks again for the fun times and memories, as I will never forget that dinner and of course the rooster fight in the admin that night! Take care and I hope to see you all again at another reunion in the future!
Sincerely: LT Mike “Waylon” Jennings LT Andy “PD” Peterson



VFA-25 as currently deployed aboard USS Carl Vinson



Special Guests at FIST 11 from VFA-25

Mike Waylon Jennings and Andy “PD” Peterson and their friend Brea Harper

Fist 11 in Pensacola was a huge success and many thanks to all who attended. I think all will agree it was a wonderful opportunity to renew old friendships and begin new ones as we link together the long past and future of Fist of the Fleet. We were fortunate to have a picture perfect day for the Friday Veterans Day air show and the Blues were "right on" fantastic. The visit to the Naval Aviation Museum Saturday was equally enjoyable including the excellent presentation by Captain Kevin Miller on the Battle of Midway. We were honored to have two active duty "Hornet Drivers" from VFA-25 join us in Pensacola. LT's Mike "Waylon" Jennings and Andy "PD" Peterson were a very welcome addition to the reunion and helped significantly to strengthen our liaison with our active duty shipmates. I think they were pleasantly surprised to see that there is still a spark in these older salts. Waylon and PD also brought a special presentation from the squadron for Zip Rausa recognizing his leadership at Lang Vei. Coupled with two superb meals and the program honoring our fellow Fists from the Battle of Lang Vei it was a reunion that will remain a fond memory for us all.

Leading up to the reunion Bob and Nita Kison were always available to answer my many phone and email inquiries. Lynn Hughes handled the initial contact with the hotel and was a constant source of information from past reunions and advice for me as we moved toward Fist 11. Thank you all for your valuable input.

Every reunion requires a great deal of preparation and preplanning. More importantly it must have on site assistance from members willing to volunteer their services. A very special thank you to Nick and Barbara Johnson who were our on scene advance party, Al and Jo Anna Gorthy for our new banner and the Fist glassware and Bob and Susie Schreiber for check-in assistance and all the web-site updates etc. John "Chalks" Chalker provided attendees with a Fist lapel pin that is simply outstanding. Thank you Chalks! Thanks to Jay Stone for leading us in "God Bless America" and handling the Lang Vei program as well as continuing the effort towards the approval of awards due our shipmates.

We have two retiring officers from the FOFA BOD that I would like to recognize. Zip Rausa, Public Relations, and Lynn Hughes, Finance, have both served two elected three-year terms for FOFA. On behalf of the membership I would sincerely like to extend our appreciation to you both for stepping forward and tirelessly serving your Association. Zip has concurrently served with Dennis Laack as Educational Grant Coordinator and has agreed to continue in that capacity. Thank you, Zip. Lynn has expertly performed the vital function of handling Fist Finances and advising myself on many matters. I am indebted to you Lynn.

Elections were held and I am pleased to welcome Bob "Pistols" Schreiber as our new Public Relations Officer and Chuck "Pooh" Webster as Finance Officer. Warner "Rifle" Butler was also reelected for a second term as Vice President. Thank you gentlemen for volunteering even if I did coerce you a bit. Bob is also serving as Webmaster another vital role for the membership. Chuck is working with our new finance software and Lynn has agreed to remain available for assistance as the transition is completed.

As we begin 2012 your Association is in a strong position and has some renewed interest from the squadron and new members. We are hopeful that we can stimulate interest in the Educational Grant program as the squadron returns and transitions to newer aircraft. Their deployment schedule has been vigorous to say the least. Skipper Barber is very supportive of our efforts and maintains open communication with FOFA.

Keep our deployed shipmates in your thoughts and prayers as they operate in the challenging environment around the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. With the leadership in Iran spewing their daily diatribes, I'm sure the familiar phrase "Where are the carriers" has been of continued interest to both our military and civilian leadership. Equally if not more so than in the past, the US Navy's ability at forward force projection is paramount to protecting both our allies' and American interests abroad. We wish them well.



A-7E Corsair II 1979



Skyraiders last mission, Feb 68.

Deck Dancing

G. Fritze Dec 29th, 2011

There is a space upon the sea where a dance occurs each day;
When the wind comes sweeping across the deck where men
and machines will play.

It's no wonder so few have ever heard the music that fills the air;
When the ballet begins as the engines start of the aircraft
waiting there.

Young men and women in colorful clothes dancing in
synchronized steps;
As their partners are thrust in to the sky , a raucous chorus of
jets.



Stealing a glance now skyward, at starboard fly birds hook down;
Then they break to enter the pattern that leads them back to this
pitching ground.

A bolter! He missed and around he goes his throttles are firewalled
As another now streaks across the stern prepared to call the ball.

A trap! He crashes hard on the deck; he raises his hook and
quickly moves; the deck is cleared and rapidly so as another one
enters the groove. Hours of dancing in a deadly space leaves them
tired, dirty and worn; shedding sweat, blood and sometimes tears as
day turns to night once more.

But the dance is un-forgiving; it doesn't stop when the day is gone;
It just becomes more deadly until the return of the dawn.

No wonder to me that so few know of the dance played out on the sea.
And so few would ever care to know how we dance to keep them free.



I danced on a deck on the face of the sea in the
days of my youth, in the light and the dark;
A deadly ballet filled with thunderous noise that
left on my soul its mark.

I heard the wind whistling past my ears
As I watched a horizon that never drew near;
And as flights of planes like angels circled above
as I craned my neck;

Tired I knelt and prayed ere I danced and left
tear-stains on the deck.

NEXT TIME IN FISTORY: APRIL 7TH, 1945 CONCLUSIONS AND EPILOGUE