



FROM THE CATWALK

CONDUCTED BY "BOOM" POWELL

Tailhook Collection

Bravo Zulu to NAS Kingsville for re-creating the Red Horse catapult (*The Hook*, Wi '08, Page 19). News of the event brought a flood of memories of the Cubi Point Officers Club to a generation of Naval Aviators spanning from the air station's opening in 1956 (*The Hook* Fa '08, Page 18) until the U.S. Navy closed NAS Cubi in 1992. The opening date of the first Cubi o'club is assumed to be soon after the base became operational (unlike the U.S. Air Force which is rumored to build clubs and golf courses before things like runways and hangars).

We always assumed the name was local, but have since heard two other theories:

1. Cubi was named after Construction Unit Battalion 1 or C.U.B.1 — for the Seabees that built the base.
2. ADM Radford's query to the Seabees after laying out the plans, "Can You Build It?" C-U-B-I.

There were two Cubi Officers Clubs. Ye olde original was built with a limited budget and it just grew. It sat on the edge of a veddy steep slope that ended down near the airfield with classic tropical architecture open to the breezes. At some point it was given a real roof and had windows and air conditioning added. But the original rattan ceiling remained, complete with an overhead set of interlocking pipe supports that provided attendees with high "monkey bars" for aerial antics during happy hours.

<http://www.cubioclub.org>



The veranda of the original NAS Cubi Point O'Club after windows and air conditioning had been added. There was another entrance on the other side nearer the main section of the base. The cliff was just off the dirt access road (left side of photo).

TINS. A favorite game of attack pilots when Vietnam heated up, was to go through the kitchen, climb up and crawl along the rafters until over an unsuspecting group of diners and leap through the rattan matting onto the table shouting, "Alfa strike. Alfa strike!"

The rules were also from a more genteel and languid time. Service dress uniforms (tropical whites or khakis with blouse and tie, and hats (covers)) or "appropriate evening wear" (sports coats with ties) were mandatory after 1800. The Pilipino national "formal" dress included a beautifully embroidered, open weave shirt with an open collar, called a Barong Tagalog. It did not take long for flight crews returning from the Tonkin Gulf to discover barongs fulfilled the attire rules.

From Boom's *Book of Barroom Brawls and Other Rowdy Games* (BBBBORG):

Hats — "He who enters covered here shall buy the bar a round of cheer."

Note: the use of he in BBBBORG is gender neutral (we prefer that to the awkwardf he/she construct). In the case of hats, in the more genteel past, ladies were expected to wear hats at all times, and the rule applied



The view looking north from the NAS Cubi Point O'Club at Subic Bay with an aircraft carrier tied up to Carrier Pier; aircraft parked at the air wing hangar and the approach end of Runway 25 visible through the trees in the foreground.

only to men. However, etiquette changes with the times, and in todays military, the sexes have equal chances to buy drinks.

TINS. An ensign (obviously not an aviator, but likely one of the black shoe types strayed up from the Subic Bay piers) came through the front entrance wearing his white hat and despite ringing bells, continued through the bar area into the patio where an air wing of pilots were celebrating surviving another line period. Challenged about his cover, the ensign made the drastic mistake of declaring it a stupid custom. He was picked up and thrown over the adjacent cliff (the aforementioned steep slope). He clawed his way back up to the dirt road 45 minutes later wearing what was best described as tropical (vegetation) greens.

Even in the old club, Cat Shot was a favorite game. Several tables would be pushed together, the surface lubricated with beer and the launchee would be picked up by his mates and slung down the table. Waiting at the end, were other compadres with a tablecloth held as arresting gear. Woe betides those who had angered their pals as the cloth would be pulled away and a painful bolter to the deck resulted.

TINS. The windows that allowed air conditioning were obvious targets for fighter pilot gunnery. One air wing had smashed several. The club manager requested payment from the CAG who shrugged and wrote a check for double the amount because, "We'll be back."

In summer 1967 a new club was built near the old one, but farther from the cliff edge. It was sleek, modern and inappropriate for the clientele. The walls were wood panels with oversize paintings. The bar was low so the bar tenders could stand while the drinkers had to sit in a few, low, overstuffed chairs. There was a flight of stairs between the bar area and the dance floor. Enter the new variety of cat shots.

Rich "Raccoon" Muller said, "Having been one of the original group from VF-114 to start catapulting aircrews from the Cubi O'club bar down seven steps to the dance floor, this (the construction of the Red Horse cat) was good news. The first "cat shots" in the new club were Ken Oden (pilot) and Ernie 'Bo-Bo' Brazil (RIO), in tandem, crouched in an oversize laundry basket. The basket only lasted for three or four cats before the aluminum frame sustained Alpha damage. Next were the lounge chairs that lined the bar. These chairs were much more sturdy — and there were more of them so that turn-around time for the cat officer was minimal. These chairs had castors and rarely made it to the dance floor upright. 'Night cat shots' had the launchee wearing a blindfold. Two guys at once were called 'F-4 night cat shots.'"

Wiser people realized "combat" losses in the club were unacceptable and an adjunct called the "Red Horse Cathouse," also known as the "Ready Room," was built with cinder block walls, minimal windows, plain metal furniture and a long, stand-up





Canasta 402, an A-7E Corsair II of the VA-25 Fist of the Fleet, traps on board USS Ranger (CVA-61) during the summer 1974 WestPac cruise.

bar with only plastic cups allowed. It was in this recreational part of the club that the Red Horse cat was constructed with its bolter pond festering outside special double doors.

UP AND DOWN THE HILL

Transportation from the carrier pier to the exchange, gym, library, bachelor officers quarters and o'club — all on the top of the hill — depended on a stream of Blalock taxis run by a local entrepreneur. Additionally, many squadrons bought used cars (vans and wagons preferred) from preceding squadrons and sold them to the next squadron to arrive. Some of those wrecks survived for years. *The Hook's* own Jan Jacobs remembers one.

After arriving in Subic, VA-25 *The Fist of the Fleet*, callsign *Canasta*, procured an old pickup truck from one of the other Lemoore-based squadrons. The beat-up International had seen hard times in a previous life belonging to a mining company, or something like that, where it was rode hard and put away wet on a daily basis. It was painted an overall sinister black with the only markings on it a large, white triangle painted on both driver- and passenger-side doors.

A favorite movie in the air wing on the 1974 USS *Ranger* (CVA-61) cruise was *Evil Roy Slade*, which was a couple of episodes from an unsold TV show rolled into one quirky movie. John Astin starred as Evil Roy, and there were cameos by Milton Berle, Mickey Rooney, Dick Shawn, Edie Adams and more. There were plenty of puns and sight gags, and everyone in the air wing loved it. The truck became "Evil Roy" and its legend grew, especially after the Marine Corps Det XO fell out of the back while on the hill in transit to the Cubi o'club.

Fast forward to NAS Miramar about eight months after return to the continental United States. We were deep into work ups, and since *Ranger* was operating in the SoCal OpArea, Miramar was the air wing's base of operations. I wasn't going to make the cruise, so I was in charge of a small beach det at Miramar while the rest of the squadron was bagging traps. We were also tasked with hosting VA-25 A-7s that had to bingo to the beach. One day one of the pilots binged out and came into the ready room. On his green flight jacket was a black patch with a white triangle in the middle and the words "100 missions in Evil Roy."

CONVERSATIONS

One of the first F-4 *Phantom* squadrons in *Midway* (CVA-41) had the crew jump out of their airplane during SoCal ops. Later the same night, the squadron landing signal officer boltered and diverted to NAS San Clemente Island. He landed downwind to save fuel, but forgot that his hook was down. The F-4 slashed through the field arresting gear going the wrong way, careened off the runway to the north, crossed yards of dirt, sand and came to a stop in the sea. Fortunately, the wayward *Phantom* had gone across a slope and not over the cliffs that exist on most of the north side of the runway. The pilot's half of the call to his CO over the ship-to-shore radio was a slow buildup that might have gone like this:

"Hi, Skipper, had to divert to San Clem."

"Uh no. We went into the chain gear the wrong way."

"Um, well, couldn't keep it on the runway."

"Fairly far. No, no ejection. Airplane stayed together."

"Well, no obvious damage. Flat tires. The salt water may cause problems."

The late John "Pirate" Nichols tells of one Yankee Station story, circa 1966:

CAG Billie, self-proclaimed "Worlds Greatest Fighter Pilot," Phillips humps past Tico [*Ticonderoga* (CVA-14)] at his normal 600 knots, 300 feet, in his F-8 *Crusader*. Aware of things near the ship, he transmits, "F-8 at the 180, you're damn wide."

The JO replies, "Bite my a\$\$."

"I will when I get on deck," barked Phillips.

The JO was grounded and banished to Cubi for a week. That afternoon there was a brief for an Alfa strike into downtown Dodge [Hanoi]. The ever-smiling intel officer reported there were 1,600 surface-to-air missile sites five miles from the target with 40,000 guns and 1,500 MiGs. The weather was perfect — they will see you coming for 500 miles. One pilot asks his buddy, "What did the JO say?"

"Bite my a\$\$."

"Damn. And for that he gets to miss all this."

Memories rolled in of another "Pirate," Jim Pirrotte, the only pilot with more than 2,000 hours in the RA-5C *Vigilante*. On his second day as air ops officer of *Enterprise* (CVA(N)-65), the weather for a night recovery was terrible. There was no bingo field and airplanes were running out of gas. The squadron reps were all yelling that their guys needed fuel. Finally Pirate slammed his fist on the desk and said, "Everybody wait a minute and quiet down! One great thing about our profession is we only kill our weak ones." [Ed note: *All the planes made it safely aboard.*]

On another cruise, days were spent cycling C-2 carrier on-board delivery aircraft through the deck taking minesweeping gear to Haiphong. This meant no flying for the air wing and everyone was bored to death. Pirate came up to the tower one afternoon and said in that slow drawl of his, "Hopefully the North Vietnamese will launch a strike and sink us. ... It would be a mercy killing."

Bob Balsler



Pilots from VF-653 with polka-dot helmets man their F4U-4B Corsairs along with other ATG-1 pilots on board Valley Forge (CV-45) during the aircraft carrier's 15 Oct '51 to 3 Jul '52 Korean War deployment. The Grumman F9F-2B Panthers belong to the VF-111 Sundowners.

POLKA DOTS

A picture of pilots manning up wearing white dots on red helmets generated some interesting e-mails. The squadron pictured is VF-653, which flew F4U-4 *Corsairs* as part of ATG-1 in *Valley Forge* (CV-45) deployed to Korea in October 1951 to July 1952. VF-653 was mostly Reservists from the Philadelphia area and known as "Cook's Flying Circus" (which explained the choice of a clown's red and white polka dots, painted by squadron pilot Bob Balsler) after their famous CO, CDR Cook Cleland.

Bob Bennett wrote:

The only polka dot helmet (white with green dots) in VA-195 in *Princeton* (CV-37) belonged to LTJG Nels Gunderson. While on an engine change run in a squadron AD-4 *Skyraider* on a winter's day in the late afternoon, the





engine gave up on him, and he was forced to ditch. Although he had been circling the task force, the ditching was not observed, and he was not found by nightfall. After 1900 he had been in the very cold water for over four hours, and in the ready room we were beginning to divide up his gear. No, not really, but optimism was ebbing. About 1930 air ops called on the squawk box and said a tin can [destroyer] wanted to know what kind of signaling gear he had. We advised night flares and 38-cal. tracer, and the can said they might have seen a tracer round. He was fished out shortly thereafter and subsequently became the squadron survival officer proposing and equipping himself with quite an array of survival gear — one piece of which was the polka dot helmet. Another was extra socks sewed into the back of his green winter flight jacket, and I also seem to remember that he had fabricated some sort of radar reflector that he could attach to his helmet. The destroyer had seen his last available tracer round. His hands were so numb that he could not reload his revolver.

Years later, another special helmet marking was created. The crew of an EA-6B *Prowler* was forced to eject one dark, cold night. All were saved, but one of the ECMOs spent considerable time in the ocean before being the last to be rescued. When he was issued a replacement helmet, he used red and white reflective tape to spell out SAVE ME FIRST.

YOU KNOW YOU ARE, OR WERE, A PLANE CAPTAIN IF ...

- You've ever said, "Oh yes sir, it's supposed to look like that."
- You've ever sucked LOX to cure a hangover.
- You know what JP-4 or JP-5 tastes like.
- You've ever used a piece of safety wire as a toothpick.
- You ever used soot from the tailpipe to blacken your boots.
- You can't figure out why maintenance officers exist.

NAVAL AIR STATION FORT LAUDERDALE MUSEUM



During World War II the current Fort Lauderdale Airport was a U.S. Naval Air Station where VTB-1 trained TBM *Avenger* aircrews. Since 2002, one of the Navy buildings has been saved and renovated and currently houses the Navy Fort Lauderdale Museum on the airport grounds, dedicated to preserving the NAS legacy. We are a not-for-profit, volunteer facility operating with membership fees and private donations seeking to expand and improve. We extend to you an invitation to join or support Navy Fort Lauderdale.

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- You consider "Moly-B" smudges on food an "acquired taste."
- You have ever jumped inside an intake to get out of the rain.
- You looked for pictures of "your" jet in aviation books and magazines.
- You can't figure out why two weeks of advance per diem is gone after three days.
- You ever used a wheel chock or tow bar for a pillow.
- You ever stood on wheel chocks to keep your feet dry.
- You ever used a pair of dikes to trim a fingernail.
- You ever pulled the trigger while riding brakes.
- You ever wiped leaks right before a crew showed.
- You ever had to defuel your jet an hour after fueling it.
- You refer to QA as "the enemy."
- You know the international sign language for "pull your head out of your a--."
- You've wanted the jet to start just so you can warm up.
- You have ever bled hydraulic fluid into a Gatorade bottle or soda can because it was too hard to get a hydraulic bucket.
- You used the "Pull Chocks" hand signal to tell your buddies it is time to leave.
- You ever flighted in bad weather only to learn that the flight was canceled hours ago.
- You've ever been told to go get some prop wash, a yard of flight line or the keys to the jet.
- You fix \$30 million jets, but can't figure out what's wrong with your \$150 lawnmower.
- Your toolbox at home has wheels and foam cutouts, just like the ones at work.
- Some of the tools in your toolbox at home have numbers etched on them.

SOVIET TRAWLER ABUSE, PART II

We made an attempt to find the author of this tale sent in response to the fuel dump on the Russki trawler (*The Hook*, Wi '08, Page 16) without success. If you want recognition, speak up. Everyone else, read and enjoy.

I was a Radar Intercept Aircrewman in the Grumman WF-2/ E-1B *Tracer*, usually called the "Willy Fudd." One of the most boring missions we had was to keep track of the Russian trawler shadowing the fleet. We would launch at dawn and go out and find the trawler and report its position to the ship every half hour for the next five hours. (Gee, do you think they were listening?) Because the mission was so long, we got box lunches. You remember those: a hard-boiled egg, an apple or orange, a greasy chicken leg, a dry sandwich and, of course, the little can of Bluebird pineapple juice.

We would find the trawler, and after we had it on radar, we didn't have to maintain visual contact. We just flew around boring holes in the sky.

So, what did we do to relieve the boredom?

After the four of us finished our box lunches, we gathered up the garbage and trash and stuffed it all into one box. The Willy Fudd had an aft hatch to get access to the radome. There was a three-step ladder to get to the hatch, and the aft stanchion holding up the radome was immediately aft of the hatch. One of us would open the hatch and climb up two rungs, wrap one leg around the third rung and wrap an arm around the stanchion. That would leave one hand free to hold the box of garbage.

The pilots would make a bombing run on the trawler. About 100 yards out, they would pull the landing gear handle, and the landing gear doors would open like bomb bay doors.

They would give me the signal, and I would dump the garbage overboard. I could look back and see chicken legs, juice cans and eggshells bouncing down the deck of the trawler.

The Russian trawler had women aboard at the time. They were often out on the deck to get a suntan. I recall one in particular. She was about three axe handles wide, but had a cute little mole on her left shoulder.

A few weeks later one of the guys got a newspaper clipping from home: RUSSIANS COMPLAIN TO UNITED NATIONS, American Navy warplane harassed peaceful Soviet fishing vessel in the Mediterranean Sea.



A VMC-1 Douglas AD-4W Skyraider taxis at K-3/Pohang, Korea in 1953.

HANGAR QUEEN

Cavanaugh Flight Museum's Marine Spad [Douglas Skyraider] driver Ken Branscome:

I was flying with VMC-1 at the time. We'd go up in groups of two and fly up the coast using our radar detection equipment.

We were flying at about 10,000 feet. I looked over at my leader and noticed he had smoke coming out of the cowl. I called him; we were near a place called Chodo Island. He said okay, I'll land at Chodo. He proceeded to an emergency landing; it was getting worse.

Chodo was an island off North Korea that we had seized and used as an emergency airstrip. You have to understand the "strip" was actually a stretch of beach with mountains all around. He went on in, but didn't have enough power to clear a ridge. So he dropped his flaps; his plane jumped just enough to clear. He then landed on the beach wheels up.

I flew by, powered up ... and then my engine started missing. He'd bellied in on Chodo so I couldn't land there. I tried to gain altitude and immediately started calling mayday. After I got up to 20,000 feet, I figured I could glide quite a ways. We were operating out of K-3/Pohang, but I wound up at K-6/P' Yong Taek. After I landed — I still had power and everything — I learned that I was operating on only one magneto vice two. VMA-121 fixed the plane and I returned to K-3.

The plane I'd flown was our hangar queen — it was always having problems. When I got back, I said, "Well, I got it fixed."

Sure enough, the next guy who went out in the plane suffered a complete engine failure and had to belly in on the coast. The choppers went in and pulled him and his crew out, then they strafed the plane to destroy it. Everyone in the squadron breathed a sigh of relief because we'd finally gotten rid of that particular plane.

BOUNCES

- Among the wittier callsigns we've come across is VIFA. During an exercise out of Davis-Monthan AFB, a nugget pilot noticed a plume of smoke from atop Mt. Tucson. After return to base he allowed he didn't know there were any active volcanoes in Arizona. Quick on their feet, his squadronmates assured him that there were. For weeks he talked of "Volcanoes In 'Friendly' Arizona (VIFA)" before learning it was only a forest fire.
- My pal, an ex-Marine aviator and Vietnam vet, wanted to show off his new twin-engine plane. We were flying along and next thing I knew, we were caught in a violent thunderstorm, with lightning crashing all around us. Next, we lost the radio and most of the instruments. As we were being tossed around in the sky, he said, "Uh-oh!" Fearing the worst, I asked, "Now what's wrong?" He replied, "I got the hiccups. Quick, do something to scare me."
- Flying Instructor's Prayer:
My student is a headache that I do not want.
He maketh me to lie down at night very weary.

He leadeth me beside high-tension wires.
Yea, though he knoweth better, my hair turneth gray.
And though I fly on the clearest days,
I fear much evil, for he is with me. Amen.

Attributed to A.O. Houston, USAAF

- When a ship runs aground, the Navy lightens it by lifting the captain off.
- Jim "Banty" Powell was a nugget in VA-152 during Forrester's (CVA-59) 1968 deployment to the Mediterranean. On a flight led by his CO, CDR Elmer Sheeley, after the four Skyhawks joined up, he heard, "Let's go say hello to Jackie." Only after some low passes over a yacht moored off Skorpis Island did Banty remember Jackie Kennedy had recently married Aristotle Onassis and they were honeymooning on the Onassis' ship *Christina*.

Terry Moore



Above: This 1/72 scale model by Terry Moore, an elaborate April Fool's gag, represents the second XF5V-1 (F-104E). To reflect the naval version, the nose gear strut was extended, the canopy modified to open from the back, the wing tips were extended and the central ventral fin replaced with two fins offset from the centerline. The color scheme was the basic Navy light gull gray top with white under-sides and red "test" markings. **Below:** A fantasy navalized version of the USAAF P-38, called the XFV-1 Trident, with radial engines and folding wings as seen at the 2008 International Plastic Modeler's Society national convention.

Boom Powell



APOLOGIA

Your Humble Scribe has been had and is better for it. I refer to the F5V Starfighter in the *The Hook* Wi '08, Catwalk, Page 18. Yes, our Navy did have F-104 Starfighters at China Lake, but credit for the details of navalizing go to Terry Moore who built the plastic model and wrote an imaginative article to go along with it. Building fictional models requires more skill than manipulating photos on a computer. Here's Terry's YF5V and another navalized Air Force fighter we saw at the International Plastic Modeler's Society national show in Virginia Beach last summer. The name is *Trident* and the designation XFV-1 (V was the Navy designation for Lockheed (Vega, Plant A) from 1942 on). Look for more on navalizing Air Force planes, including a medium bomber with a hook, in the next issue.

Chock 'em, chain 'em and send spoofs, facts and "maybes" to the Catwalk.

