



RESPOT



Hook '07 — Proudly Looking Forward to the Next 50 Years

by Mark Morgan and Barrett Tillman



While Naval Aviation and the Navy as a whole continue to face combat as well as funding, manpower and personnel issues, this year's Tailhook confab — the 51st in a series — proved to be another barnburner. In fact, if there was one item missing from the 2007 gathering of the carrier aviation faithful at John Ascuaga's Nugget in Sparks, Nev., it was controversy. No flying rolls during the banquet, no verbal darts flung at the various panels, just plenty of "it's tough, it's a challenge, but we're moving forward" talk from the panel members and usually upbeat conversation among the participants.

A surprising number of attendees showed up early on Wednesday and started right into forming the TINS groups at the various hangouts at the hotel. The main events kicked off Thursday morning with the opening of 105 exhibits on the floor; if you wanted 1/1-scale examples of Naval Aviation weps, electronics and the odd engine, this was the place to be. Throughout the weekend the F/A-18E/F and F-35 cockpit simulators proved popular, and for those old enough to remember "steam" gauges and the early radar displays, the site of a full panel of multi-functional displays (MFDs) was startling and a thing of wonder. However, the "big" crowd pleaser was probably the "navalized" version of Cirrus's SR22 *Generation Three* turbo light aircraft, complete with tailhook, at the far end of the foyer.

The exhibits definitely packed the floor and got busier as the day progressed. In fact, during the proceedings, one exhibitor mentioned that he wished they'd have room to expand next year. The Naval Safety Center booth with continuous crash and burn footage maintained a pretty good-sized crowd throughout the weekend while the Ready Room Table, hosted by the Mile High Hookers — out of Grand Junction but covering the entire state of Colorado — drummed up business for the various association ready rooms at China Lake, Dallas-Fort Worth, Hampton Roads, Honolulu, Omaha, St. Louis, San Diego, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Naval Aviation Enterprise — presenting once again the concept of "single process ownership" — took up one entire corner of the main pavilion.

Toward late morning Mr. Ascuaga made his first rounds of the proceedings. Those he talked with uniformly thanked him and his staff for hosting Tailhook, and as always, he expressed his thrill and delight at the association's return. About mid-afternoon on Thursday the active-duty types started showing; one group apparently benefited from the ultimate training cross-country — a C-40 load of student NFOs and instructors from VTs -4, -10 and -86 out of NAS Pensacola.

The more "seasoned" (dare we say "old and still bold aviators and aircrew?") also started arriving in goodly numbers for their unit reunions. This year's gatherings included the VF-5/VF-5A/VF-51 *Screaming Eagles*, VT-4/VA-2A/VA-15/VFA-15 *Valions*, VA/VFA-147 *Argonauts*, VC/VAW-12 *Bats*, NavCad Class 5-55, VF-53 *Iron Angels*, VA-145 *Swordsmen* and the VF-92 *Silver Kings*. They and the fleet



types — who arrived in droves Friday afternoon — quickly settled in, hit the floor, renewed acquaintances and started manning the attack (A-4 *Skyhawk* and A-6 *Intruder* Associations), Association of Naval Aviation, VAQ-129, “Strike Fighter Country” (VFAs -122 and -125) and CVW-2 admins.

I Love the Smell of Kinetic Events in the Morning

Early Friday provided the traditional “calm before the storm” with a long line at the Starbucks in the hotel lobby as the golfers prepared to sally forth for their annual event. Concurrently, tennis buffs prep’d for their tourney at the Reno Tennis Center while others boarded buses for the tours of NAS Fallon and Lake Tahoe.

The symposiums commenced at 1400 with the Current Technology/Operations Panel, subtitled “The Stepping Stone to the Future.” To paraphrase the Marines at Wake Island, it could’ve also received a subtitle of “send us more acronyms” as the panel (and the subsequent panels) went heavily into the new systems heading for the fleet. While the presentations did provide an acronym-heavy environment, the descriptions of the systems, their capabilities and the periodic showing of videos kept the audiences engaged.

CAPT Eamon “Buddy” Stores, Deputy Commanding Officer of NSAWC, moderated this first board with CAPT Daniel “Dix” Dixon, CAG-8, serving as leadoff. CAG Dixon stated his wing was “the most technologically advanced air wing we have out there,” with the APG-79 Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA)-equipped F-model *Hornets* of VFA-213. The combination of AESA and the ASQ-228 Advanced Targeting Forward-Looking Infrared (ATFLIR) pod brought “an incredibly capable aircraft” to the fleet.

He further described the *Hornet’s* ability to electronically transmit target and situational data to other aircraft for both air-to-air and air-to-ground operations. “Imagine people coming into a fight from a hundred miles out and having a clear picture of the target before they arrive,” he stated. “The system is incredibly reliable, very well designed and we’re pleased with it ... the maintenance guys love it.”

CAPT Stores then introduced RADM Jamie Kelly, Commander, Navy Region Japan who “... dodged a typhoon to get here.” The admiral noted that on this day of the convention fully nine of the 18 ships that constitute the Forward-Deployed Naval Forces were under way, literally all over the theater. They included the *Kitty Hawk Battle Group*, operating with the *Nimitz Battle Group* in the Andaman Sea as part of the *Malabar Exercise* with India. He mentioned this year’s operations also included Australia and Singapore for the first time.



Otherwise, the big issues were the ongoing construction and enhancements at MCAS Iwakuni in preparation for CVW-5’s planned move in 2014 and preps for the arrival of USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) at Yokosuka. About 1,000 feet of the new Iwakuni runway is already finished, with construction of new support facilities either planned or under way (“if they build it, we will come”). At Yoko, the channel’s been dredged another five feet in preparation for *Kitty Hawk’s* replacement. Following “long, extensive ... very difficult at times” negotiations with local officials including the mayor over “no nuke” issues, Japan has agreed to the GW’s transfer to Yokosuka, and she should move next spring. Apparently, CVW-7 will transfer all four of its VFAs — -143 with E’s, -103 with F’s and -83 and -131 with C’s — to CVW-17 so they can accompany *Washington* to Hawaii and the SwapEx with Hawk, then return on the older vessel for her last trip.

The other presenters in the first session were LCDR Mike “WooG” Wosje, exchange pilot with the Air Force’s 59th Test and Evaluation Squadron at Nellis AFB, Nev.; CAPT Tom “Bigfoot” Tack, ComVAQWingPac at NAS Whidbey Island; and CDR Keith “OP” Taylor, NSAWC Strike Department Head.

LCDR Wosje, who recently screened for command of VFA-131, expounded on the T&E program for the junior service’s F-22A *Raptor* and what the onset of “fifth generation” fighters such as the F-35 will mean for carrier aviation. On the plus side, he announced, “stealth truly transforms air-to-air combat ... you are the guy who is doing the first attack and it reduces the number of aircraft that you need.” Using graphic representations, he explained that aircraft like the F-22 with stealth and supercruise capability reduce the threat kill zone and vulnerability.

However, the big issues in operating a stealth aircraft at sea revolve around security requirements due to the highly classified aspects of stealth technology. The security issues not only extend to the pilots (“if you can’t get a ‘top-level’ clearance, you can’t be a fighter pilot,” Wosje announced) but also will result in a requirement for secure engineering spaces. We will need secure spaces in the O-3 level and secure maintenance spaces due to concerns about revealing the aircraft’s engineering and capabilities. One wag in the audience quietly commented, “That should make underway damage control drills interesting.” Even maintenance debriefs will require fully cleared personnel.





For the proud electronic attack community at “The Rock,” the big news, of course, is the impending arrival of the EA-18G *Growler*. CAPT Tack referred to “exciting challenges we face at Whidbey Island” but allowed that everyone was eagerly looking forward to the new bird and its capabilities. As it stands now, the first G goes to

Whidbey about the first of June 2008, and VAQ-132 will transition in January 2009. All 10 squadrons are scheduled to transition by 2013, supported by VAQ-129 with 14 aircraft. The electronic attack pipeline for the crews will run about 33–40 weeks with many of the maintainers actually receiving their airframe and systems training at NAS Lemoore. He also advised both crewmen — pilot and ECMO — in the new plane will have to participate in the electronic attack mission.

In discussing NSAWC at Fallon, CDR Taylor summed up the current program — four classes yearly, 9.5 weeks in length for eight jets and 12 aircrew; they receive 35 flights, 110 hours in the classroom plus night and day air-to-ground training. The primary drive behind the latter is the increased use of strafing as the preferred means of close air support in *Operations Iraqi Freedom* and *Enduring Freedom*, the result of concerns over collateral damage and efficiently destroying moving targets.

Taylor advised the term now used is “kinetic events” vice “dropping bombs and killing ... instead of laying waste to everything, we now care about what we kill.” For the same reasons, the new BLU-126B Low Collateral Damage Bomb has proved highly capable. A 500-lb. bomb with reduced explosive fill has been used three times in-theater already in support of Special Operations Forces in close contact, with excellent results. “It’s incredible,” Taylor added. “We developed it within a year.”

Concerning the adversary program, *Topgun* is in line to receive Block-25 F-16C/Ds from the Air National Guard to increase its stable to 28. NSAWC also will attain two high-trap E-2Cs in the third quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) ‘08, MH-60Ss and eventually 10 F/A-18E/Fs further down the road.

Jan Jacobs



The Friday afternoon symposium Current Technology/Operations panel. Above: From left, CAPT Ed “Clyde” Langford, CDR Keith “OP” Taylor and CAPT Tom “Bigfoot” Tack. Below: From left, CDR Mike “WooG” Wosje, RADM James “Jamie” Kelley and CAPT Dan “Dix” Dixon.

Jan Jacobs



Finally, CAPT Ed “Clyde” Langford discussed NavSafCen’s efforts to reduce the “Blue Threat” — i.e., operational losses — through the introduction of “aviation intervention strategies” incorporating the Military Flight Operations Quality Assurance program or MFOQA. Borrowed from the airline industry, it will allow aircrew to report on themselves via the Web, anonymously (Anymouse goes digital) and will allow leaders to view a unit’s current and future risk through the Operational Risk Management Assessment System. ORMAS merges multiple data bases including maintenance and personnel information. Langford ran through an extended, involved and rather daunting PowerPoint presentation on MFOQA and ORMAS that described the system’s ability to generate squadron flight schedules with imbedded risk assessments. A retired commander commented from the floor, “Back when I was schedules officer as a JG, the skipper trusted me to take risk, training levels and skill into account when I wrote the schedule using pencil and paper.”

Things took a more serious tone during RADM Joe “Killer” Kilkenny’s presentation on the status of recruiting. The commander of Navy Recruiting Command stressed the news wasn’t all pretty, but “the Navy continues to seek the best and the brightest ... we’re in a battle for talent and we’re in a battle for recruiters.” While undoubtedly not a surprise to those in attendance, Killer iterated that this generation’s

leadership and role models were not recommending the military (“Recruiters typically hear one hundred noes before hearing one yes.”) Fully 72 percent of the current youth population is not qualified for military service due to problems with fitness, drugs and criminal records. Adding to the mix, older prospects often-times have issues with tattoos or sole custody of children.

Fortunately, recruiting bonuses and advertising budgets are enhanced although he noted they were cyclical. Other challenges include finding enough doctors, aviators and qualified SEAL candidates. Kilkenny added the average SEAL was now on his seventh combat deployment, “... with a firefight every night.”

He concluded with an appeal, stating that everyone is a recruiter. He asked everybody to work to ensure continued support from active-duty personnel, veterans, citizens who influence the youth of America and organizations like the Navy League and the Fleet Reserve Association. He closed with, “Get the word out: the Navy provides opportunities.”

Friday’s annual business meeting was convened by CAPT Russell “Gladys” Knight who introduced the new board members — RADM James “Rookie” Robb, USN(Ret); LCDR Kevin “Proton” McLaughlin, USN; and LtCol Hunter “Hamster” Hobson, USMC. Membership remains steady as we go totaling some 11,100 including 4,200 civilian, 3,600 retired and 3,300 active duty. However, the Association benefits from 29 industry sponsors with nine more about to join.

The Tailhook Educational Foundation (TEF) was described by RADM Ham Tallent, USN(Ret), who noted, “It’s a noble thing we’re doing.” He advised that the foundation presents 53 college scholarships, mostly in the \$2,000 range. However, the immediate goal, \$40,000 from the Hook ‘07 reunion, would provide an annual yield of two grand, forever. (We’ll hear more of that endeavor later).

Another significant development was the announcement of CAPT Denny Irelan, USN(Ret), as editor of *The Hook*.

Board chairman RADM Jay Campbell, USN(Ret), shook the stick to take over the presentation. He reported that treasurer Jim Oliver had compiled a howgozit financial report in the reunion program, showing net assets of \$1.12 million as of 31 December 2006. With steady emphasis on recruiting, Campbell described the association’s strike teams, largely composed of O-3s and -4s to recruit more active-duty members within their respective aviation communities.

The first full day finally concluded — if that’s the proper word. Most of the parties went well into the wee hours with much of the late/early action ending on the gaming floors and the annual “Bug” Roach Memorial Flight Deck Mixer. This year’s mixer featured a few modifications including moving all food tables into the Rose Ballroom and refreshment stands stationed at strategic locations around the floor. Most agreed with the changes — placement of a large number of tables and chairs in the Rose definitely allowed freer movement despite the typically huge, happy and noisy crowd. Otherwise, heroes spanning several generations, old flight jackets bearing the patches of historic units and tales and “Oh yeah? I can top that!” stories dominated.

Susan Mantle



Adding some color to the Bug Roach mixer was VFA-94 and their unique “sierra hotels.”

Leverage, Leverage, Leverage

A Saturday morning prowl of the main floor of the Nugget revealed groups in flight suits still trying for their lucky break at the tables, while the real early risers boarded the buses at 0615 for the annual Happy Hooker 5K run.

The first symposium commenced at 0830 under the guidance of CAPT Jeff "J-Ro" Cathey and covered N88's plans for future systems. Again, the acronyms flew hot and heavy while phrases such as "leveraging technology" and "legacy systems" also played a big role in the presentations. Conversely, no one was heard to utter the now out-of-fashion word "transformation."

J-Ro provided a quick review of USS *Gerald R. Ford* (CVN-78), the "all-electric ship" and noted that as part of the weapons modernization effort, the venerable AIM-7 *Sparrow* finally was going by the boards after almost 50 years of service in FY '12.

Jan Jacobs



The Saturday morning symposium N88 Plans for the Future panel. **Above:** From left, CAPT(Sel) Gordon "Dart" Fogg, CAPT Roy "Trigger" Kelley and CAPT Jeff "J-Ro" Cathey. **Below:** From left, CAPT Dave "Ram" Buttram, CDR Tim "Keymaster" Kuenhas and LCDR Scott "Jojo" Wilson.

Jan Jacobs



CAPT Dave "Ram" Buttram followed with updates on the E-2D program. The first aircraft made its initial flight on 3 August, and the program now has two development birds available. The first of the improved *Hawkeyes* go into service in 2011 with first cruise planned for 2013. "It looks like a *Hawkeye*," Ram announced, "but when you step inside it's a totally different animal." As the centerpiece of "FORCENet," the new AN/APY-9 radar will provide 250 percent greater coverage and is expected to provide greater capacity, flexibility and accuracy over land and in the littoral.

In his segment on electronic attack, CDR Tim "Keymaster" Kuenhas summed up the *Prowler* as "the high demand weapon of choice." Fortunately, the new ICAP III is already in the fleet with VAQ-138, and VAQ-137 goes next. According to Kuenhas, "We're hearing great things" about the system's capabilities. About 25 percent of the *Prowler* fleet is now targeted for the ICAP III system with 15 more going to the Navy in FY '08 and seven to the Marines in FY '10. Incorporating improvements to the ALQ-99 and the USQ-113(V)3 comm jammer, the ICAP III is serving well as the stepping stone to the *Growler*.

He stressed that the EA-18G's AESA radar will mark a big step up from the *Hornet's* current APG-73. The new plane will also incorporate the ALQ-218(V)2 receiver system, ALQ-227(V)1 communications countermeasures set (CCS) and AIM-120s on the fuselage stations for a self-defense capability. The biggest step up is the Interface Cancellation System (INCANS), which will allow UHF communications during Q-99 jamming, something that was "... a pipe dream just a few months ago."

CAPT Roy "Trigger" Kelley expanded on the "straight" F/A-18 plans and programs, noting that with 964 in the current inventory, "this is the primary strike force and has to remain effective for the threats of the future." He thanked the *Hornet* industry team and program management for ensuring the continued health of the program and then focused on upgrades, upgrades, upgrades such as the AESA and the planned 2013 deployment of the infrared search and track (IRST) pod.

He added that 10 of the ATFLIRS have deployed with strike fighter squadrons, 100 have been delivered, and the Navy plans to purchase 410


total. CAPT Kelley illustrated his comments with FLIR video on the big screens. As he narrated the sequence, the FLIR made it possible to assist a group of Iraqi locals doing "roadwork" while implanting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) near Ramadi. The weapon impact made the "road crew's" efforts easier thanks to a much larger hole, but regrettably none survived the assist.

Concerning the still contentious F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program, CAPT(Sel) Gordon "Dart" Fogg announced, "It's coming together and we're talking about real capabilities." Lockheed Martin and the Navy are still planning on F-35B (STOVL) delivery in 2010 (first flight's scheduled for May 2008) with IOC in 2013 and F-35C (CV variant) delivery in 2012, followed with IOC in 2015. The all-up aircraft will perform the deep-strike mission with 20K internal gas, two BLU-109s and two AIM-120s, all carried internally. Dart admitted the F-35's highly touted EOTS — Electro-Optic Targeting System — has sustained "early problems during the test phase" but the contractor was working on performance enhancements.

Finally, air-to-ground requirements officer LCDR Scott "Jojo" Wilson drew appreciative laughter when he announced that after four months on the job, having come directly from the fleet, he has seen "behind the curtain" in weapons procurement and "things aren't as messed up as I thought." The main thrust remains to develop, prove and field weapons that provide all-weather, stand-off and moving target capability. The systems include the Advanced Precision Kill Weapons System (APKWS) laser-guided 2.75-in. rocket and the Direct Attack Moving Target Capability (DAMTC), a retrofit to the existing JDAM.

Someone asked about the future of the C-2 *Greyhound* during the Q&A session. According to CAPT Buttram, the Navy is doing "everything we can" to extend the old standby's service life. He added that efforts to fund the C-2 follow-on continue; work is being done, but the project is in early stages.

Next up was the Future Technology for Naval Aviation panel, moderated by RADM Frederick "Bad Fred" Lewis, USN(Ret). Tom Burbage, Executive Vice President-Program Manager, F-35 Program Integration with Lockheed Martin (a USNA and TPS grad, to boot), added to the discussion of the desirability of the "fifth generation fighters," as represented by the F-35. He noted combat aircraft these days have to handle double-digit SAM systems while they're outnumbered by "fourth generation" fighters; therefore, they need to integrate all-aspect stealth, performance, situational awareness advances and advanced sustainment. His comment about the F-35's 40,000 pounds of thrust brought an appreciative gasp from the crowd.

VADM Dave "Arch" Architzel, outgoing Program Executive Officer (PEO) for carriers, showed a slide depicting the planned inventory of carriers through CVN-83. He pointed out that the Navy intends to retire USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65) in FY '13, but the intent is to keep *Nimitz* (CVN-68) in service through FY '23, vice FY '19. "There will be gaps," he admitted. "They can't be resolved through acquisition ... we will have to carefully manage the extension of service life beyond 50 years to sustain the required force structure." 

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He also noted problems with CVN-78's EMALS and the advanced arresting gear, but efforts continue to work through the difficulties.

There was some discussion about the recent Norman Polmar article in *Proceedings* saying it was time to cut CVNs and buy more LHDs with F-35B. As you can imagine, the response wasn't positive; carriers will remain at the forefront of the Navy's strike capability for the foreseeable future.

John "Spider" Lockard, President, Precision Engagement & Mobility Systems, The Boeing Co., happily announced the System Design and Development phase for the EA-18G was now 85 percent complete ... and on schedule, on cost and below weight. Boeing will deliver the first production aircraft a month early.

For his part, RADM Tim "Heels" Heeley, PEO for Strike Weapons and Unmanned Vehicles commented that in "third-party targeting," the third party does not necessarily have to be manned. One leading example is the broad area maritime surveillance (BAMS) system that will give the battle group commander extended intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capability. He also touched on the fact that the only pilot-operated UAV/UCAV is the RQ-1/MQ-1 *Predator*. This leads to the question of awards for the operator/pilot, such as the Air Medal. Reportedly the Air Force has authorized issuance of the Distinguished Flying Cross for its *Predator* pilots.

Mr. Mike Deitchman, the Office of Naval Research's department head for Air Warfare and Weapons, took time to explain the operation of his office: To identify high-risk technologies and bring them to the point where they can enter RDT&E for possible use in the fleet. He briefly covered HIFLY — a mach 6, dual-combustion ramjet capable of flying 400 to 600 nm in about 10 minutes (more gasps from the crowd) — and RATTLS (Revolutionary Approach to Time-Critical Long-Range Strike), a mach 3 turbofan. Mr. Deitchman said his office is continuing research into directed energy weapons as shipboard defense/tactical ballistic missile defense/surface target engagement systems, possibly in combination with mirror-relay systems, which would allow over-the-horizon targeting and strike. Another long-term effort involves requests for proposals and ideas for the next-generation airborne electronic attack program.

Finally, LtCol Dick "Jug" Ewers, USMC(Ret), of the NASA Dryden Flight Center at Edwards AFB, Calif. — and the self-described "only grunt on the panel" — gave a lighthearted and very well received presentation on the autonomous airborne refueling demonstration (AARD). The program to develop a remote-controlled air refueling capability began in March 2005, and thanks to the efforts of numerous techies and twidgets, the project demonstrated a successful hands-off inflight refueling 15 months later, using a NASA F/A-18B and Omega Air B707 tanker.

Toward the end of his presentation, Ewers almost brought down the house and put the attendees in the mood for the subsequent recognition luncheon. Obviously, as a career military pilot — a hands-on kind of guy, so to speak — he said the test pilots had some concerns about letting said techies, twidgets and computer nerds install a computer-driven system in the *Hornet* that didn't require test pilot inputs. This led to another new acronym, "Software or Hardware Induced Trauma." However, the system worked, the engineers solved the problems, and, as Jug concluded, "The computer doesn't fear, the computer has no ego ... and the computer doesn't engage in last-minute heroics."

Recognition Luncheon

The RADM James D. "Jig Dog" Ramage Recognition Luncheon followed Saturday's morning panels with a full slate of awards. Tailhook Association president CAPT Russell "Gladys" Knight emceed the proceedings; the color guard from Reno's Damonte Ranch High School Navy Junior ROTC unit led off the event.

First was Ms. Avery Glize-Kane who traveled from France to receive well deserved accolades for her generous USO hospitality for Tailhookers cruising the Med.

During the luncheon, attendees were invited to empty their baskets of dinner rolls. Experienced Tailhookers eagerly complied, anticipating revival of a long-lapsed custom to "greet" a featured speaker. However, the nascent celebrants were disabused of the notion when they were asked to kick in loose cash for the Tailhook Educational Foundation (TEF) scholarship "surge." Going into the luncheon, the TEF had accumulated \$28,000, well short of the 40 grand needed to provide a

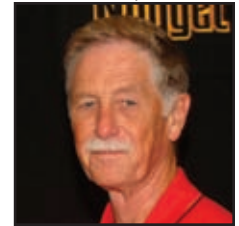
Photos by Susan Mantle



Top Hooker
CDR Todd Kiefer
VT-9



Corporate Support
John Griffing
Northrop Grumman



Contributor Award
Doug Siegfried



Radford Award
CDR William Park
VAQ-131



Akers Award
CDR Tom Watkins
VAW-113



McClusky Award
LT Mike Mathis
VFA-27



Hoff Award, Lant
LCDR Matt Potheir
VFA-83



Hoff Award, Pac
LCDR Fitzhugh Lee
VFA-22



Bush Award
LT Shaun Bellemare
VFA-83



Pilot of the Year, Pac
LT Peter Lauder
VP-47



NFO of the Year, Pac
LT Chad Redmer
VFA-2



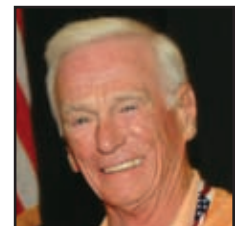
LSO, Pac
LCDR Trevor Estes
CVW-2



LSO, Lant
LT Pascal Holmes
VAW-120



Cormier Award
LCDR Ed McCabe



Lifetime Achievement
Gene Cernan

permanent annual scholarship. When the results were tabulated, \$8,340 had been donated, putting the goal within range for the rest of the event. Bravo Zulu to all who contributed and participated.

The audience participation awards are always the most enjoyable at Tailhook, and this year was no exception. The "last man standing" event to search for max trappers present was first. CAPT Rodger Welch led the pilots with 1,450, and former *Nimitz* skipper CAPT Ted "Slapshot" Carter topped NFOs with 1,810. Someone let out with a hearty and affectionate (?), "Baggers all!" Those in attendance showed their appreciation and recognition with a thunderous outburst of applause.

Grand Club Members Receive Plaques

Photos by Susan Mantle



RADM Robert Besal



RDML David Philman



CAPT Richard Butler



CAPT David Woods



CAPT Tom Lalor



CAPT Richard Thayer



CDR Roger Myers



CAPT Mike Warriner



CAPT Thomas Hills

CDR Dean “Diz” Laird, USN(Ret), scored a double by claiming the earliest trap (November 1942) and lowest hull number with *Saratoga* (CV-3). Meanwhile, CDR Dominic DiMatteo led everyone present with 552 straight-deck arrested landings.

Top Hooker honors went to CDR Todd Kiefer who recruited 44 new members in the past year. CDR Doug Siegfried, USN(Ret), received *The Hook* Contributor’s Award for his three-part series on Navy TraCom in World War II.

After the active-duty squadron and personal awards (see Pages 68 and 69), the Zeke Cormier Honorary Tailhooker of the Year was presented to LCDR Ed “Tick” McCabe for his work on behalf of the Association. Finally, Two Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented. The first went to Mr. Wesley Fry, Association attorney who rendered sterling service when the Navy, DoD and the U.S. Government went through hard times with our Association, and who helped establish the scholarship fund. Also honored was astronaut CAPT Gene Cernan, USN(Ret), for his longtime advocacy of Naval Aviation, of which we heard more at the evening banquet.

The Flags Take the Stand

The traditional final event before Saturday night’s gala reception and banquet was the Flag Panel, and as with most years, attendees packed the house to SRO status. ComNavAirForces VADM Tom “Killer” Kilcline served as the moderator for the board that included VADM Dave “DJ” Venlet, NavAirSysCom; RADM Al Myers, N88; RADM Mark “Waldo” Emerson, NSAWC; RADM John “Goody” Goodwin, ComNavAirLant; RADM(sel) Jeff Lemmons, ComNavAirForcesRes; BGen Robert “Whaler” Walsh, Deputy Commandant for Aviation; and RADM Mark “Guads” Guadagnini, CNATra.

The inimitable RADM J. Lloyd “Doc” Abbot, USN(Ret), once again did his usual outstanding job of preparing the audience for the serious stuff by engaging in commentary about other serious stuff. This year Doc had us roaring with his comparison of carrier operations then and now, providing details on one of the most important aspects of the old straight-deck CV days: “time in gear.” As he described it, this was the



From left: RADM Han Tallent, Tailhook Educational Foundation president; Adam Pence, scholarship recipient and Ed “Whales” Whalen, Lockheed Martin; with the ceremonial check for Adam’s \$10,000 scholarship.

length of the interval between the cut signal to the recovering aviator and the raising of the barrier in preparation for the next landing. It was about 15–17 seconds. RADM Lloyd apologized for the language he was about to use, but stressed it was crucial to understanding the importance of this aspect of straight-deck ops. As he put it, anyone who took over 20 seconds became known as someone who was “guilty of scratching his ass on company time.”

That brought the house down and left a tough act for others to follow. The Flag panel recovered and persevered.

VADM Kilcline set the ground rules — three minutes for each panel member to present, then questions — and reminded the attendees that all questions were “non-attribution,” i.e., “nobody gets shot.” He also advised the fleet types in the audience to “Stay Navy, guys; we need everyone right now.”

VADM Venlet summarized current aircraft, weapons and support programs and announced that his personnel saw their place in life as representatives of Navy and Marine Corps Systems Command. RADM Goodwin followed with a discussion of one of the subjects that keeps him awake at night: *Enterprise*, the oldest nuke carrier at 46 years. “She’s like a ’61 Chevy that’s doing great work in-theater.” Otherwise, he boosted Naval Aviation Enterprise, announcing “It’s not about making Naval Aviation a business; it’s about the business of Naval Aviation.”

RADM Emerson was next, summarizing the operations of NSAWC at NAS Fallon and reiterating the plan to acquire more ex-Air National Guard F-16s, MH-60Ss, two E-2Cs and eventually 10 F/A-18E/Fs. RADM Meyers spoke on future programs and future technologies while BGen Walsh commented on the



Jan Jacobs



The Saturday afternoon symposium Flag Panel. **Above:** From left, RDML Mark “Guads” Guadagnini, BGen Robert “Whaler” Walsh, RADM Mark “Waldo” Emerson and RADM(Ret) J. Lloyd “Doc” Abbot. **Below:** From left, VADM Tom “Killer” Kilcline, VADM Dave “DJ” Venlet, RADM John “Goody” Goodwin, RADM Al Myers and RADM(Sel) Jeff Lemmons.

Barbara Woodbury



Leadership, Estocin and Boola-Boola Awards Presented at Saturday's Luncheon

Susan Mantle



Navy and Marine Association Leadership Award winners, from left: RADM Jay Campbell (Tailhook Chairman of the Board), CDR Jeffrey Davila, LT Zachary Kirby, CDR Drew Basden, LCDR Matthew Pothier, LCDR Joel Becker, CDR Daniel Cheever, CDR Louis J. Schager Jr., LCDR Tabb B. Stringer, CDR John J. Thompson and Barbara Woodbury, (President, Navy and Marine Association).

Susan Mantle



The CAPT Michael J. Estocin Award, sponsored by Boeing, was presented to VFA-97. Back row, from left: RADM Jay Campbell, Storm Foley (Michael Estocin's granddaughter), Marie Estocin (Estocin's widow), CDR Russ "Beacon" McCormack (CO), VADM Tom Kilcline (ComNavAirForce) and Bob Gower (Vice President, Boeing F/A-18 programs).



Susan Mantle



The ComNavAirPac Boola-Boola Award, sponsored by Raytheon, was presented to VFA-94 by Zack May Director Business Development for Raytheon Missile Systems Strike Product Line (back row, second from left). The award is presented to the strike fighter squadron which has demonstrated the highest capability to maintain and utilize air-to-air missile weapon systems. Accepting the award was the Mighty Shrike's CO, CDR William "Billy Ray" Ipock (back row, center) and other squadron members making up the front row.

ongoing Tactical Air Integration Plan — it will continue — adding the Marines have operated from the Navy's carriers since 1931. He reminded the audience that this Navy and this nation are in for a long war (official pronouncements from U.S. Central Command over the use of the term). He listed the five phases of the war from the radical Islam point of view, including the destruction of Western economies and eventual subjugation of the planet. His comments quieted the audience a bit but also resulted in approving nods, or at least looks of understanding of the threat.

RADMs Lemmons and Guadagnini wrapped up the formal portion of the panel. The latter asked for the combat veterans in the audience to raise their hands and then recommended everyone to mix that evening over stories and beer. His stated intent was to give those who hadn't "seen the elephant" an outstanding chance to learn from those who had flown the green ink missions.

It's a Wrap: Banquet Night

The highlight of each Tailhook reunion is the Saturday night banquet, featuring presentation of several significant awards. First up in 2007 was the RADM Jig Dog Ramage Ship/Air Wing Team Award, presented to USS *Eisenhower* (CVN-69) and *Air Wing Seven*. Tailhooker of the Year was CAPT Mike "Nasty" Manazir who responded via satellite phone from "the best seat in the house," the bridge of *Nimitz* on deployment. The Marine Tailhooker of the Year, LtCol Hunter "Hamster" Hobson, also replied telephonically.

Delivering more good news from the head table, Gladys Knight announced that the TEF goal was achieved and then some — a total of \$42,000 including some \$2,000 checks delivered on-site. He saluted the exceptional extra effort of Donald Hume who donated \$40,000 in memory of his wife, Annette, and all Navy spouses who support their husbands/wives and families day by day, year after year.

Jay Campbell then introduced the featured speaker, announcing that Gene Cernan "is going to illuminate us" about the manned space program.

An A-4 pilot of the Miramar persuasion, then-LT Cernan began his NASA career as one of 400 applicants for the *Gemini* program. Surviving the cut to 36 and the final 14, he admitted that the one disappointment of making three space flights was never having a squadron command. Nevertheless, he flew in *Gemini IX* (1966), *Apollo X* (1969)

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At Saturday night's banquet, representatives of USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN-69) and CVW-7 receive the 2007 Ramage Award for the Navy's best ship/air wing team.

Individual Awards Presented at Hook '07

The following individuals were recognized for their professional performance in the year 2006:

ComNavAirPac Pilot of the Year:	LT Peter Lauder, VP-47
ComNavAirPac NFO of the Year:	LT Chad Redmer, VFA-2
ComNavAirPac LSO of the Year:	LCDR Trevor Estes, CVW-2
ComNavAirLant LSO of the Year:	LT Pascal Holmes, VAW-120
ComNavAirLant Enlisted Aircrewman of the Year:	AW1 Joshua Benschoff, HS-3

Navy and Marine Association Leadership Awards

Strike Fighter Wing Pacific

CDR Daniel Cheever
LCDR Robert Loughran
LT Mark Kircher

Strike Fighter Wing Atlantic

CDR Louis J. Schager Jr.
LCDR Matthew R. Pothier
LT Brad S. Anderson

Sea Control Wing Pacific

CDR Jeffrey D. Davila
LT Zachary T. Kirby

Airborne Command and Control Logistics Wing Pacific

CDR Drew Basden
LCDR Joel Becker

VAQ Wing Pacific

CDR John J. Thompson
LCDR Tabb B. Stringer

and *Apollo XVII* in 1972, becoming (until further notice) the last man to leave footprints on the moon.

Cernan asserted that as much as he values his NASA record, he considers himself first and foremost a Tailhooker. With obvious pride he reminded the audience that the first American in space, the first to orbit Earth, first and last to walk on the moon, and five of the six to land there had one thing in common — they all wore Wings of Gold.

In terms the attendees readily understood, Cernan said that landing *Challenger* on the moon was "a piece of cake compared to a night carrier landing." He also noted that he felt better knowing that an F-8 *Crusader* pilot was orbiting the moon, with Ron Evans flying "top cover" for Cernan and geologist Jack Schmidt. The tailhooking astronaut also claimed three OK-3s in his logbook for bringing spacecraft to a landing within 1.5 miles of the



Susan Mantle



Hook '07's banquet speaker was Gene Cernan, a Tailhooker and veteran of three space flights, the last being *Apollo XVII*, the final manned mission to the Moon.



Both permanent Tailhook Association staff and volunteers made Hook '07 happen.

Fiscal Year 2006/'07 In Review

compiled by Mike Weeks and LCDR Richard R. Burgess, USN(Ret)

*The following information reflects the official effective dates of the actions reported.
Ceremonial dates may differ considerably from the official dates and are not listed.*

Aviation Ships Commissioned

Aviation Ships Decommissioned

- USS *Belleau Wood* (LHA-3), 28 October 2005
- USS *Saipan* (LHA-2), 27 April 2007
- USS *John F. Kennedy* (CV-67), 30 September 2007

Aviation Units Established

- VFC-13, Det Key West, NAS Key West, Fla., 1 October 2005
- HSC-22, NavSta Norfolk, Va., 1 October 2006
- HSC-23, NAS North Island, Calif., 1 October 2006
- HT-28, NAS Whiting Field, Fla., 1 November 2006
- HSM-71, NAS North Island, Calif., 1 January 2007

Aviation Units Deactivated

- VP-65, NAS Point Mugu, Calif., 31 March 2006
- VP-66, NAS JRB Willow Grove, Ill., 31 March 2006
- VP-94, NAS JRB New Orleans, La., 31 March 2006
- VS-33, NAS North Island, Calif., 31 July 2006
- VS-41, NAS North Island, Calif., 30 September 2006
- NAS Keflavik, Iceland, 3 November 2006
- HCS-5 NAS North Island, Calif., 31 December 2006
- VS-24 NAS Jacksonville, Fla., 31 March 2007
- HS-75 NAS Jacksonville, Fla., 1 April 2007
- VS-30 NAS Jacksonville, Fla. 20 April 2007
- Commander Helicopter Wing Reserve, 31 May 2007
- Commander Reserve Patrol Wing, 30 June 2007
- VFA-201, NAS JRB Dallas, Texas, 30 June 2007
- HC-4, NavSta Norfolk, Va., 30 September 2007

Aviation Units Redesignated

- VF-11 to VFA-11, 18 October 2005
- HC-5 to HSC-25, 24 October 2005
- HC-3 to HSC-3, 31 October 2005
- Commander, Carrier Strike Group One to Commander, Strike Force Training Pacific, 7 November 2005
- HC-11 to HSC-21, 7 November 2005
- HSL-41 to HSM-41, 8 December 2005
- HC-2 to HSC-2, 24 August 2005
- HC-85 to HSC-85, 8 February 2006
- VF-103 to VFA-103, 27 April 2006
- VF-143 to VFA-143, 27 April 2006
- VF-31 to VFA-31, 1 August 2006
- VF-32 to VFA-32, 1 August 2006
- VF-213 to VFA-213, 1 August 2006
- HSC-4 to HSC-84, 1 October 2006
- VFC-13 Det Key West to VFC-111, 1 November 2006
- HS-8 to HSC-8, 1 April 2007
- Commander, Carrier Air Wing Reserve 20 to Commander, Tactical Support Wing, 1 April 2007
- Commander Helicopter Sea Combat Wing U.S. Atlantic Fleet to Commander Helicopter Sea Combat Wing, Atlantic 22 May 2007
- Commander Naval Air Force U.S. Atlantic Fleet to Commander Naval Air Force Atlantic, 23 May 2007
- Commander Sea Control Wing U.S. Atlantic Fleet to Commander Sea Control Wing Atlantic, 23 May 2007

Aviation Command Home Base Change

- VR-56 from NavSta Norfolk to NAS Oceana, 21 August 2006

THE LAST CUT

ramp. He hastened to add, "That's a lot better than it sounds. When you call the ball from 200,000 miles away, give me a little slack!"

Cernan wove a spellbinding account of space flight — from the exhilaration of riding 7.5 million pounds of thrust atop a *Saturn V* to achieving escape velocity of 25,000 mph (that's 21,750 knots by Golden Wingers standard.)

But there was more. In a reflective mood, Cernan recalled looking at planet Earth "from God's front porch" and wishing he could punch the "freeze action" button as he did in simulators. But time was always a critical factor, and he reflected that the spiritual aspects of space flight are perhaps best addressed afterward, with earthly time to reflect on the spiritual meaning of man's place in the firmament.

"We're going back," Cernan insisted, guesstimating a return to the Moon in the next 20 years. He stated that a manned Mars flight is feasible, but the likely astronauts to make the trip currently are in the fourth grade.

Some of them will wear Wings of Gold, too.



MAIL CALL

Navy Rescinds Low-Visibility Tactical Paint Scheme

Another version of the "Story Behind the Photo" from *The Hook*, Wi '06, Page 17, "Navy Rescinds Low-visibility Tactical Paint Scheme."

The RA-5C was installed on pylons in the lawn behind the main administrative building at NAS Cubi Point circa 1978 or 1979. There was no miniature golf course at the time the RA-5C was towed up the hill and firmly ensconced on the lawn. Credit for this feat goes to LCDR Charlie Koeber, O-in-C FAWPRA det Cubi, CDR Tom O'Connor, AIMD Cubi and LT Dwayne Currie, Staff Civil Engineer Cubi. The BUNO and squadron markings, as shown in a family photo, differed from *The Hook* article. Since none of us were Vigi drivers we had no parochial reason to alter the aircraft's appearance as left behind. I'll have to stick with the facts as related above and shown in our family photo.

Perhaps you can find room for this in a future article in *The Hook*. *The Hook* is a must read. Keep up the great work.

CAPT Tom Durant USN(Ret)
Wilmington, N.C.

Finally got around to reading the Winter [2006] Edition of *The Hook*. The article on the NAS Cubi Point, Republic of Philippines, mounting of the RA-5C was a little inaccurate.

Indeed the aircraft was left behind at Cubi Point when USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65) departed. It had been used primarily for towing practice and for crash crew training. Cubi Point Commanding Officer, CAPT Tom Durant, decided that the lawn quadrangle adjacent to the main administration building that housed the NAS and Commander Fleet Air Western Pacific staffs should have an aircraft displayed to honor all that served. By the way there was no miniature golf course in that lawn!

AIMD Cubi was given the task of prepping the aircraft in conjunction with FRAWPA. We discovered the aircraft had almost a full bag of fuel on board; and ejection seats were still installed and armed.

Spoiler strips were installed on the upper surface of the wings to mitigate high wind conditions during typhoons in PI. Pylons were constructed in the lawn on which the aircraft was installed (one each for the main landing and nose wheels). They were designed by the Cubi Point Civil Engineer. Additionally, the paint job was renewed — engines and avionics were removed.

When it came time to tow the aircraft up the hill we tried the main road but there too many obstacles. We ultimately used the back road, cutting down a couple of trees along the way. We then discovered that this was a violation of Filipino law, which was later resolved with some difficulty. Public Works provided a large crane to lift the RA-5C aircraft and the Cubi Point Civil Engineering group welded it in place.

In all it was a major effort and a labor of love.

I was the AIMD Officer at the time and as I recollect, the Airframes Officer that coordinated most of the work, was WO Ron Mobley.

Sad to see what is probably the most attractive aircraft ever to fly, painted up like a jeepney.

Captain Tom O'Connor USN(Ret)
Gallatin Gateway, Mont.

LCDR Kermit Jamison, USN(Ret), Charter Life 12560
CDR R. Orton Rudd, USN(Ret), Charter 136
MAJ Vance L. "Bud" Yount Jr., USMC(Ret), Life 1699
LCDR Ronald G. Tinlin, USNR(Ret), Life 1879
CAPT Louis R. "Bullet Bob" Canepa, USN(Ret), Life 5753
Aviation Pilot 1/c G. A. "Buster" Gunter, USN(Ret), Life 2068
CAPT Cook Cleland, USN(Ret), Life 1690
LtCol Gordon Holm, USMCR(Ret), Life 1681
CAPT Eward P. Mertz, USN(Ret), Life 321
LCDR Robert A. Steelnack, USN(Ret), 21308
CAPT Robert L. Mueller Jr., USNR(Ret), 33517
LT Newell E. De Puy Jr., USN(Ret), 38845
LtCol George M. Lawrence, USMC(Ret), 41278
CAPT Andreas D. Bothe, USMCR(Ret), 33646
Mr. Jim Murphy, Corporate 21547
Former LTJG Jack F. McKenny, USN, 38631
CDR Benjamin E Colkitt Jr., USN(Ret), 4152
CDR Harry Thompson, USN(Ret), 40822
Dr. Will Irwin, 35451
CDR Frank O. Green, USN(Ret), 24508
CAPT Charles A. Pendleton, USN(Ret), 10818
LCDR John D. Pamp, USN(Ret), 1319
CAPT Thomas B. Mooney, USN(Ret), 3926
CAPT Walter A. Lundin, USN(Ret), 4558
CAPT Richard P. "Deke" Bordone, USN(Ret), 57891
CDR Jim Potter, USN(Ret), 11858
Mr Joseph Kretsinger, 32897

REQUESTS

A British aviation historian is writing a book about HMS *Ark Royal* (R 09) and is trying to locate LCDR George Dammeyer, USN, a B/N who did an exchange tour with the Ark's all-weather strike *Squadron 809* from September 1971 to September 1972. Any help in locating LCDR Dammeyer would be greatly appreciated.

Contact Rowland White at rowlandwhite@btinternet.com.

REUNIONS

- **USS CONSTELLATION (CVA/CV-64)** — 21–25 October 2007, Bremerton, Wash. Ron Despain, (520) 586-8607; connydespain4754@msn.com
- **AIR TASK GROUP ONE (1951–1959)** — 25–28 October 2007, San Diego, Calif., Dave Robertson, (858) 277-0843; robertsonbldw@sbcglobal.net
- **VA-25/VFA-25** — 9–11 November 2007, Pensacola, Fla. (321) 383-4137; fist07@fistofthefleet.org, www.fistofthefleet.org
- **VA-163/VA-164** — 17 November 2007, Pensacola, Fla. Martin Vanover, 4363 E. Windmere Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85048. (480) 706-1133; martin.m.vanover@boeing.com
- **THE SON TAY RAID ASSN.** — 21–25 May 2008, Fort Worth, Texas. John Gargus, 1947 Hobson Drive, Henderson, NV 89074. (702) 914-8709; Gartalon@cox.net
- **USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) ASSN.** — 18–21 June 2008, Nashville, Tenn. Joe Brunner, (619) 466-2132; waldj@cox.net; Hank Byrnside (502) 232-2232, soundtronics1@bellsouth.net; Andy Lewallen (256) 684-7276, andylew@hiwaay.net; www.usnimitzassociation.org
- **USS HORNET (CV-8, CV/CVA/CVS-12) ASSN.** — 10–14 September 2008, St Louis, Mo. Carl and Sandy Burket, USS *Hornet* Association, P.O. Box 108, Roaring Spring, PA 16673. (814) 224-5063; hornetcva@aol.com, usshornetassn.com
- **TAILHOOK ASSOCIATION REUNION** — 4–7 September 2008, Reno/Sparks, Nev., Tailhook Association, (858) 689-9223, www.Tailhook.org
- **ESCORT CARRIER SAILORS AND AIRMEN ASSN.** — 19–26 September 2008, Covington, Ky., (Cincinnati, Ohio). George Manik, 50 North Island Drive, Bayville, NJ, 08721. (732) 269-6767; aceminibaler@earthlink.net
- **USS HORNETZ (CV-8, CV/CVA/CVS-12) ASSN.** — Date TBD, Buffalo, N.Y. Carl and Sandy Burket, USS *Hornet* Association, P.O. Box 108, Roaring Spring, PA 16673, (814) 224-5063, hornetcva@aol.com, usshornetassn.com
- **TAILHOOK ASSOCIATION REUNION** — 10–13 September 2009, Reno/Sparks, Nev., Tailhook Association, (858) 689-9223, www.Tailhook.org

