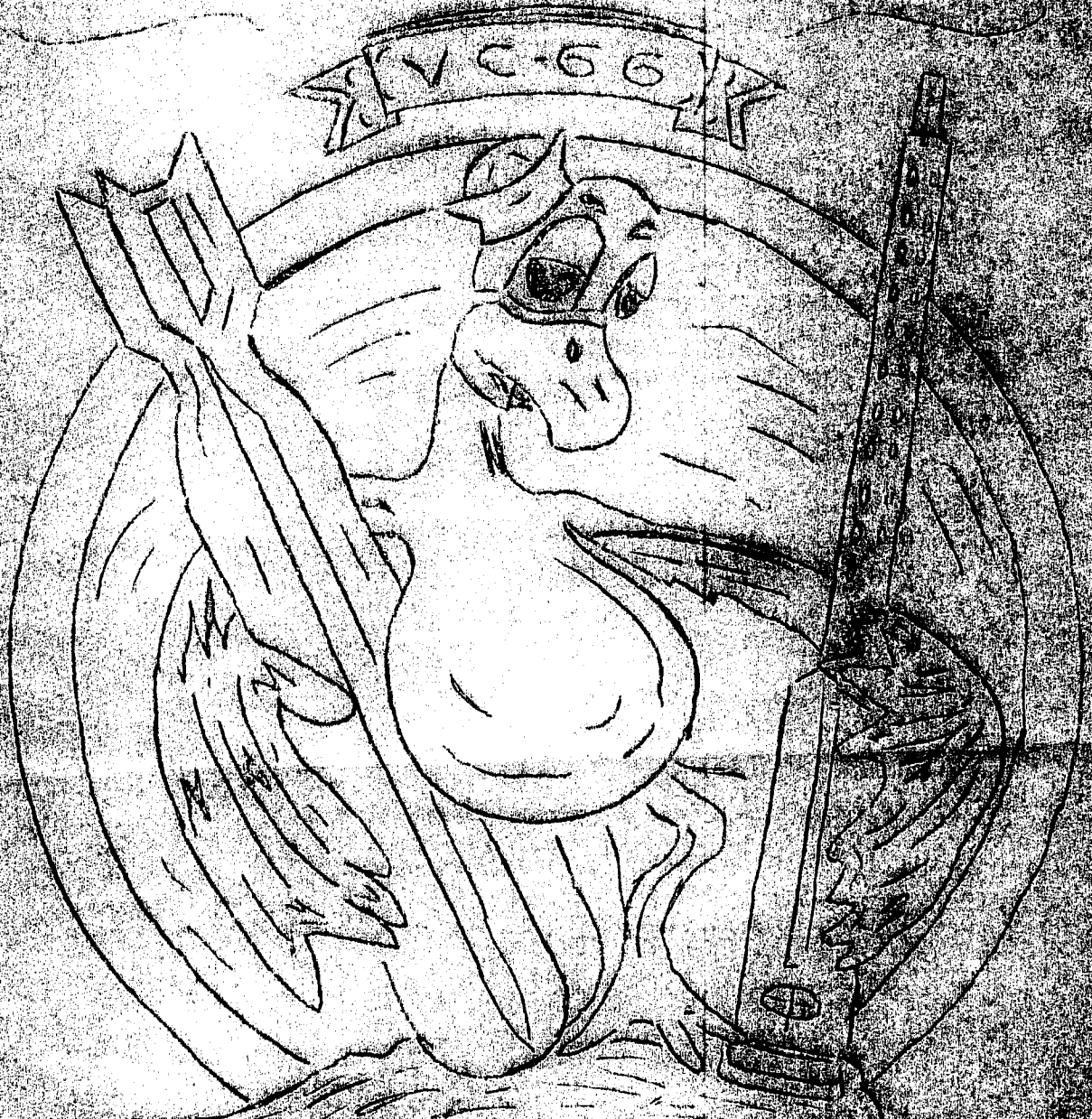


UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET AIR
COMPOSITE SQUADRON SIXTY SIX



FEATS OF DE BOIDES

UNOFFICIAL SQUADRON HISTORY
JUNE, 1943, TO NOVEMBER, 1944

NOTE: This history, compiled from official Squadron
logs, is for the use of Squadron personnel for
reference and recollection. It must not be
reproduced, in whole or in part, without the
Commanding Naval Authority.

G. C. [Signature]
Lieutenant Colonel
Commanding Officer

RESTRICTED:

An

Informal Squadron History
(June, 1943, to November, 1944)

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1943
JUNE:

21--

Composite Squadron Sixty-Six (VC-66) was commissioned today at the United States Naval Air Station, Sand Point, Seattle, Washington. Rear Admiral Richard Wagner, ComFair Seattle, called upon Lieut. G.O. TRAPP, as senior officer present, to read the commissioning orders and place the squadron in commission. The following officers were present at the commissioning exercise:

Lt. G.O. TRAPP (Gerry), VF. Previous duty: Fighter instructor at Pensacola, followed by operational training at Jacksonville. Home: Pomona, Calif.

Lt. G.W. SHICK (Razor or Bill), VF. Previous duty: Instrument Instructor at Corpus Christi. Home: Chicago, Illinois.

Lt. J.P. KLAUS (Santa or Joe), VT. Previous duty: OS pilot on the U.S.S. IDAHO. Home: Duncan, Nebraska.

Lt. W.H. PIPER (Bill or Pipe), Engineering and Materiel Officer. Previous duty: A. & R. at N.A.S. Coco Solo, Canal Zone. Home: Erie, Pa.

Lt(jg) A.R. SCHILLER (Ron), Air Combat Information Officer. Previous duty: Hawaiian Sea Frontier. Home: New York, N.Y.

The following officers came from operational training at Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Ens. J.N. POLSKI (Joe or Jobbo), VT.	Home:	Eveleth, Minn.
Ens. W.A. BENNETT (Ernie), VT.	"	Los Angeles, Calif.
Ens. R.A. WEAVER (Bob), VT,	"	Hollywood, Calif.
Ens. B.E. DAVIS (Ben), VT	"	Danville, Ill.
Ens. F.J.M. McCABE (Moose), VT	"	New York, N.Y.
Ens. J.S. TRICHEL (Trick), VT,	"	Harrisonburg, La.
Ens. J.O. MAYO (Jim), VT,	"	Quitman, Miss.
Ens. A.H. KIPLINGER (Kip.), VT,	"	Bethesda, Md.
Ens. J.F. TERRELL (Mike), VF,	Previous duty:	Pre-Operational training at Miami, Fla.
	Home:	New Orleans, La.

The following officers also came from operational training at Miami, Florida:

Ens. M.W. BARRETT (Marty), VF,	Home:	Washington, D.C.
Ens. O.J. CLARK Jr. (Bud), VT,	"	Albuquerque, N.M.
Ens. Sam TAKIS (Sam), VF,	"	St. Louis, Mo.
Ens. C.T. EDWARDS (Charlie), VF,	"	Bethlehem, Pa.

Ens. W.E. COOK (Cookie), VF,	Home: Tupelo, Miss.
Ens. F.W. HAMILTON (Ham), VF,	" Pecatonica, Ill.
Ens. J.K. MACDONALD (Mac), VF,	" Portland, Ore.
Ens. D.J. BIRDSONG (Bird), VF,	" McCracken, Kansas.

28- Lt(jg) G.B. CATTERTON (Cat), VT, reported from Instructor's duty at Livermore, Calif. Home: Oakland, Calif.

JULY

- 2- Lt Comdr H.K. BRAGG, VF, reported and assumed command of the squadron. The skipper served aboard the U.S.S. ENTERPRISE. Home: Seattle, Wash.
- 4- Lt(jg) R.H. TRAYNOR (Hap or Link), VF., reported from OS duty in the Guadalcanal Area. While there, he picked up a case of malaria and a great longing for white women. Home: Detroit, Mich.
- 22- Lt(jg) A.J. MAYER (Al), VT, reported for duty. He was an OS pilot aboard the U.S.S. NORTHAMPTON. When his ship was sunk, Al was transferred to a squadron in the Guadalcanal Area. After returning to the States, he was sent to a PV squadron at Whidbey Island, from which he came to VC-66. Home: Fresno, Calif.

AUG.

11- Lt(jg) J.P. FOX Jr. (Jay-Pee), VF, reported from Instructor's duty at Grosse Ile, Mich. Home: Buffalo, N.Y.

Ens. G.W. BROWN (Brownie), VF, and Ens. Reynold RODRIGUEZ, (Rod), VF, reported. Both came from Pre-operational training at Miami. Brownie hails from Stockton, Calif. and Rod from New York, N.Y.

- 12- Pictures were taken of the squadron for a General Motors publication, the "Eastern Aircraftsman". VC-66 was chosen because it is the first Navy squadron completely equipped with planes manufactured by General Motors.
- 13- Ens. John McNEELAND (Andy), VF, reported from pre-operational training at Miami. Home: Bridgewater, Mass.
- 17- Marty BARRETT was married today. The bride came from Washington, D.C. Bill Shick and Hap Traynor were with Marty at the ceremony but the rest of the gang were taken by surprise.

The tour of duty at Seattle came to a close with some regrets on the part of the squadron. The new Auxilliary Air Station at Shelton, Wash. looks like a rugged outpost to the devotees of Seattle social life. Seattle will be remembered for a variety of things, including:-

~~The early days of flying before the squadron was assigned its own planes.~~ CASU-SEVEN Operations Office was a mecca for everyone who wanted an SNJ hop just to keep his hand in.

~~The tribulations of getting the squadron organized.~~ Everyone started without previous experience in a composite squadron. In retrospect, the early gropings will seem comical. After each day's operations, the squadron would marvel that anything got done. But the flights went out, the planes continued to fly, and little by little things rounded into shape.

~~Lt Comdr Sam Silber's work with the fighters.~~ Lt Comdr Silber, a fighter expert, helped train the squadron VF pilots in weaving and other combat tactics.

The torpedo attacks on the islands of Puget Sound. When the facts are known, it probably will be recognized that some of the peaceful and wooded communities of Washington State have sustained more attacks than all the islands in the Solomons.

The Basketball Team, usually made up from Moose, Trick, Ernie, Weaver, Takis, Birdsong, and Brownie. They were undefeated by any squadron at Seattle, though some hard games were handed out by the squadrons of Air Group TEN.

The Grueling Swimming Tests, which consisted of periodically drowning oneself. Macdonald set a new pool record for the nautical obstacle course.

Ben Davis' habitual rush to catch the six o'clock bug. Every attempt included at least two return trips to the B.O.Q. to pick up forgotten items. Every sally was made in full "zoot suit" uniform.

The parties !! The squadron commissioning was the excuse for the first blow-out at the B.O.Q. where it became obvious that Moose had the greatest capacity west of the Cascade Mountains. Thereafter the squadron found plenty of excuses to celebrate, including the Skipper's arrival and other momentous happenings.

The big beer-bust at Lake Sammamish, which was high-lighted by a softball game, and hit it's climax when the enlisted men tossed all the officers in the drink.

23- The squadron moved to Shelton, Wash. VC-66 is the first squadron to be based here. Shelton is a small lumbering community on the Hood Canal, about sixty miles from Seattle. The country around is full of small lakes and streams, and most of the land is covered with timber. The station, an outlying field of N.A.S. Seattle, has just been commissioned. The roads are dirt, the hangar is small. Quarters are O.K., but not up to the luxury of the main B.O.Q. at Sand Point.

SEPT:

11- Ens. Hamilton was married at the Methodist Church in Shelton. After the ceremony, the gang piled into cars and drove around the town honking horns, yelling, and scaring Hell out of the local citizens. The celebrants then retired to the B.O.Q. where the wedding cake was cut and refreshments were consumed. Aside from Hamilton, Macdonald was the No.1 celebrant.

14- The torpedo pilots left for Whidbey Island to practice dropping torpedos.

18- Lt. E.C. Springate (Springy), reported for temporary duty as Ordnance Officer. He has had previous duty at Pearl Harbor, and is to report for duty to the carrier to which VC-66 is assigned. Home: Gary, Ind.

21- Ens. Ben Davis was killed today. Ben spun in at Whidbey Island, while tracking torpedos in a Piper Cub. The plane sank soon after hitting the water, and although the "Meck" got out and was rescued, Ben went down with the plane. The Squadron will miss Ben's warm friendliness and good-natured manner.

22- The torpedo gang returned from Whidbey Island today and were glad to get away from the place where they had lost one of their best pals.

OCT.

10- Ens. F.T. STEPHENS (Steve), VT, reported from operational training at Jacksonville. Home: Topeka, Kansas.

17- Lt(jg) M.J. STACK (Marty or Lucky) VT, reported for duty. He has seen action in the Guadalcanal Area with VT-11. Home: Seattle, Wash.

Ens. Rodriguez gave the squadron a scare and a laugh today. He was flying an SNJ, towing for a gunnery hop, and got lost coming home. The fellows flew searches for him and then sat around the rest of the afternoon until word came in that Rod had landed at a small unused field at Kelso, Wash. Al Mayer and Ernie Bennett were sent down to escort him home. The weather closed in so they will remain over night.

18- Al and Ernie returned, guiding the lost sheep, Rod. Things were rough at Kelso with a soft field, no place to sleep, and not too much money among the crowd. Ernie came out on the bottom. He was the only one who had money, so he is now broke and also caught a cold.

Andy McNeeland made a water landing today. While returning from a gunnery hop, his engine quit and he set his plane down in the Sound. A passing tug picked him up and took him to Seattle. The incident set some of the superstitious boys thinking, because just before Andy's flight went out, the Skipper gave a talk on water landings. They hope he never gives a talk on what to do if your girl gets pregnant.

23- George Brown gave the squadron today's thrill. Brownie and Fox got tangled in a tail chase and the prop of Fox's plane chopped off Brownie's tail. Fox managed to fly his plane back to the base, but Brownie lost control and had to bail out. A group of hunters saw the accident, located Brownie, who was just a little shaken up, and guided him out of the woods.

The following officers were promoted from Lt(jg) to Lt to rank from October 1: Mayer, Catterton, Fox, Traynor, and Schiller.

27- The squadron started its trek from Shelton, Wash. to Holtville, Calif. Part of the squadron's officers and most of the men left by special train, while the remainder took off in the squadron's 19 planes.

Shelton in Retrospect:

The Shelton tour of duty, which looked at first like a farewell to civilization, turned out to be one of the squadron's most enjoyable periods.

The squadron rapidly became acquainted with station officers and townspeople. Lt Walt Lunsford, station athletic officer, lived in Shelton and introduced the squadron to the town's belles. The movement of town-and-station was furthered by the colony of squadron wives, including the spouses of Trapp, Klaus, Catterton, Barrett, Clark, Takis, Edwards and Hamilton. Jerry Macdonald's mother, who came up from Portland, Oregon, added to the homelike atmosphere of the town.

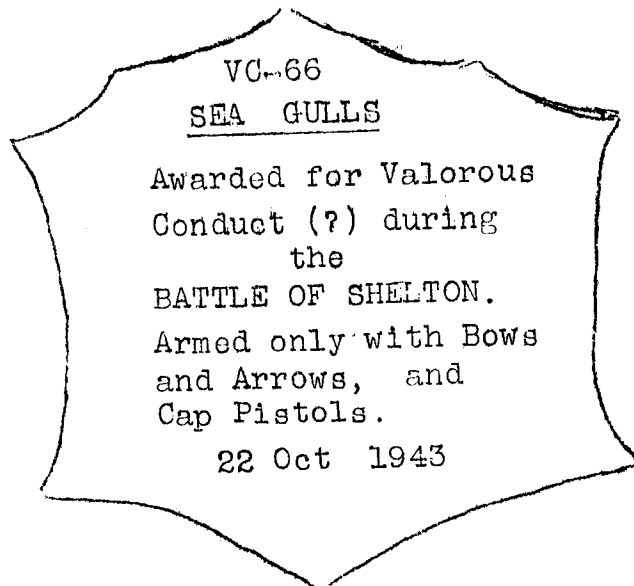
Although the athletic program often consisted of a vigorous game of Hearts (while a low overcast closed the field), a number of good basketball games developed between the officers and crew, and between the officers and teams from surrounding communities. The crew's most spectacular player was Bill Nowak, AMN1c.

The Shelton area was also a paradise for the burly out-of-door men, which included the Skipper, Trapp, Macdonald, Birdsong, Chief Stoffer and Chief Sheridan. Most of the officers indulged in visits to a lumbering camp and watched a day's operation among the Douglas firs.

Everyone, officers and men alike, became highly polished in the art of hitch-hiking. Transportation was too scarce for the desired number of trips to Seattle and Olympia, where some of the squadron had extra-curricular interests.

The crew over-flowed to Olympia and wayside points, traveling mostly with the thumb. One of the boldest attempts to solve the transportation problem was made by MacNeill, AEM3c (familiarily known as the Gremlin), who purchased a random assembly of automobile parts, claiming he had bought a genuine operating auto.

One gala social event was a party thrown by the Skipper for the squadron and station officers in the newly-opened B.O.C. bar. As at all parties, the squadron revels were aided by a station contingent consisting of McGee, McGrow, and Wilson. When the smoke had cleared next morning, Hap Traynor found himself with a patch of white adhesive tape on his head, and the squadron was in possession of a heraldic plaque awarded by station officers to the squadron.



The daily flight schedule included dummy gunnery runs up and down the Hood Canal, firing runs over the ocean (when weather permitted), over-water navigation flights, bombing on the Dungeness target in Puget Sound, and combined squadron attacks on ships in the Sound. Night flying was considered, but the idea was abandoned because of poor lighting facilities and the fir trees around some of the approaches to the field. Toward the end of the Shelton stay, bounce drill was conducted at Moon Island with Ensign Ed Sackett waving the flags.

As VC-66 prepared to leave for Holtville, the cloudy summer weather began to give way to autumn. On the morning that the planes took off and headed south, the Olympia Mountains were capped with their first fresh snow of the season.

OCT:
27-

Shelton to Holtville by train:

The men and officers boarded the train at the Shelton station. The train, consisting of two baggage cars and six Pullman cars, was the longest train that had been in Shelton in six years, according to the old timers. Stops were made at Portland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles for about a half hour each. The men were permitted to leave the train, and miraculously, when the train arrived in El Centro, all were present.

30- The train arrived in El Centro about six in the morning and, after a twenty mile ride, the squadron contingent arrived at U.S.N.A.A.S., Holtville.

31- At 1600, the squadron planes arrived.

Shelton to Holtville by plane:

27- Nineteen planes (10 FMs, 9 TBMs) took off shortly before noon. By early afternoon, the group had landed at Portland Army Air Base, and had taken off again for Medford, Oregon. By late afternoon, the nineteen planes were circling the field at Medford.

28- Fog this morning. The day was spent playing hearts and sweating in an Army B-25 whose radio was out.

29- Fog again. Last night everyone went to town, where the Skipper found it difficult to fight off the good looking women, but the squadron came to his rescue. The crew, paced by Chief Stoffer, spread a thin veneer of money over a wide area.

30- Took off from Medford and landed one hour and ten minutes later at Red Bluff, California, after climbing to 11,000 feet to clear the mountains west of Shasta. Next hop took the flight to Fresno, where the caravan encamped overnight.

31- Two hops: Fresno to March Field, and March Field to Holtville. At all Army fields along the coast, the TBM's folding wings and opening bomb-bays gave the dogfaces a thrill.

The Naval Auxiliary Air Station, Holtville, Calif., is in the midst of sand and scrub sage brush, at the edge of the irrigated Imperial Valley, and about twenty miles from the Mexican border. Buildings are frame, low, and long. The station accomodates three squadrons for night flying, and one day a week, serves as touch-and-go landing field for the big boats from San Diego. The flight schedule runs from about 1900 to 0400, or 0500, the next morning. Breakfast is at noon, dinner in the evening, with supper at mid-night. The other squadron here is VC-69, with VC-68 expected soon from Alameda.

NOV:

9- Lt(jg) M.J.STACK today was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross at a squadron inspection. The citation, read by the Skipper, reviewed his record as an Avenger pilot with VT-11, based at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal.

20- Squadron packing is in full progress for the move tomorrow to Otay Mesa, Calif. The era of planes-for-liberty is over, because Otay Mesa is close to San Diego, and trains run regularly to Los Angeles. While at Holtville, every day off has seen a mad scramble for TBMs to fly to Palm Springs, Los Alamitos, San Diego and Albuquerque.

Every day-after-day-off brings flamboyant tales of life in Hollywood, as observed by Macdonald, Stack, Stephens, Bennett, Weaver, Fox, Schiller, and other "plungers".

Holtville will be remembered for the trips to Mexicali, Brawley, and El Centro; for Macdonald's and Moose's wild excursions in the jeep; and for the good squadron flying record of 836 hours without an accident to plane, pilot, or crew. It will also be remembered for the nights when everyone thought he had "that stuff" called vertigo, and for the numerous attempted join-ups on stars, obstruction lamps and automobile headlights.

21- The squadron moved from Holtville to Otay Mesa, Calif. The move was made by plane and bus. Otay Mesa is "the jumping off place"; the last station before reporting to our carrier. The squadron is scheduled to complete the training syllabus and concentrate on bounce drill. Otay is about ten miles south of San Diego and about five miles from the Mexican border town of Tijuana. The station is a barren place with wooden buildings and meager facilities.

Lt(MC) D.B.GREER reported for duty, to remain until the squadron is attached to a carrier.

25- Ens.R.W.DOUGHERTY (Rex), and Ens. R.L.DOLTON (Bob), Landing Signal Officers, reported for duty, also to remain until the squadron is attached to a carrier.

26- Ens. E.B.DEGENKOLB Jr., (Deg), VF, reported from operational training at Jacksonville, Fla. Home town: Los Angeles, Calif.

8-

The squadron moved to the U.S.S. MANILA BAY (CVE-31) for a short period of qualification in carrier landings. Six Avengers and Six Alleycats were taken aboard.

9 to 12- The cruise aboard the MANILA BAY will be remembered for Sam Takis' (Changing Sam's) trips to the head; the FM-1 (from another squadron) that went over the side; and Weaver's and Barrett's sojourn in sick bay.

13- The squadron returned from the MANILA BAY and the Skipper passed out the dope that the U.S.S. TRIPOLI (CVE-64) definitely is to be our carrier and that we report aboard tomorrow. The squadron is to go out on a ten day shakedown cruise, return, then out to the long awaited action.

What the Otay period lacked in luxury was made up by a bustle of preparations for sea. During flying hours, the preparations consisted of squadron attacks on ships at sea, bounce drill with Lt Forrest Auman at the paddles, catapult shots and arrested landings at Ream Field, and a memorable movie on carrier operation explained by Lt. Jim Daniels of "give-her-the-needle" fame. During off hours, the preparations ran in a different direction. Bill Shick found life pleasant at the El Coronado, where an evening muster would catch most of the squadron wolves. The 4 o'clock train to Los Angeles would account for most of the rest of the officers and crew on the afternoon before a day off.

14- Reported aboard the U.S.S. TRIPOLI. The ship left for the scheduled 10 day shakedown cruise.

16- Lt Comdr Bragg made the first landing aboard the TRIPOLI.

23- Ens. Degenkolb was killed in a midair collision with Andy McNeeland. Deg was in the act of joining up when he brought his plane up and under Andy's, and severely damaged Andy's tail surfaces. Andy lost control and bailed out, but Deg did not get out of his plane until it was 200 feet from the water. The destroyer guard picked up Andy, who was not injured, and also picked up the body of Ensign Degenkolb. The squadron was shocked by the event and was more than glad to hear that we are returning to North Island tomorrow.

24- The TRIPOLI returned to North Island and VC-66 moved off the ship for a couple of days while she is being used for carrier qualifications. "Bragg's bone pile", as the gang called the pile of assorted planes in all conditions, was moved off to be repaired or traded for new planes. "Changing Sam" Takis and his upset stomach were temporarily forgotten as was the "Lieutenant's Club", with the motto "Barriers Reserved for Lieutenants Only", which the Ensigns formed because the Lieutenants seemed to have most of the trouble with "those wires".

25- Christmas Day. The squadron got the day off except for unfortunate Charlie Edwards, who had the duty.

26- Big news today. The TRIPOLI is to be used around San Diego for carrier qualifications for several months, and since there are no other carriers available, the brass hats plan to send the squadron to Los Alamitos for at least two months. The Los Angeles boys greeted the news with cheers.

Lt. L. E. CARR (Larry), VF, from Chicago, Ill, and Ensign W. D. COPE (Bubbles), VF, from Hollondale, Miss., reported. Larry was instructor at Glenview, Ill. and then took operational training at Jacksonville. Bubbles came from operational training and photographic school.

Lt Bill Shick and Lt Hap Traynor were detached today. The boys were sorry to see the two happy-go-lucky fighter pilots leave.

27-- Today's dope cancels the news of yesterday. A carrier is waiting, somewhere in the Pacific, to take us aboard for two months' duty. The squadron is to leave the States on the U.S.S. WHITE PLAINS (CVE-66) on the 29th of December. The questions in everyone's mind are: "What are we going to do in the two months duty, and what will happen to the squadron when that duty is completed?"

28-- The squadron is now buzzing with feverish activity, trying to do the million and one things necessary before leaving the States.

29-- The squadron embarked on the WHITE PLAINS and sailed from San Diego. It was announced that the ship's destination is Pearl Harbor. The complement of the squadron, now streamlined, is as follows:

VF

Lt Comdr Bragg	Ens. Terrell	Ens. Cook	Ens. Cope
Lt Trapp	Ens. Barrett	Ens. Hamilton	Ens. McNeeland
Lt Carr	Ens. Takis	Ens. Macdonald	Ens. Brown
Lt Fox	Ens. Edwards	Ens. Birdsong	Ens. Rodriguez

VT

<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Combat Crew</u>		
Lt Klaus	Yagodzinski, T.F.	AMM3c	Hawbaker, M.E. ARM3c
Lt Catterton	Whitlock, I.W.	AOM2c	Chamberlin, L.P. ARM3c
Lt Mayer	Stamper, S.	AMM3c	Muse, R.P. ARM2c
Lt(jg) Stack	Molash, W.W. Jr.	AOM2c	Salmon, J.L. ARM3c
Ens. Polski	Gander, J.	AMM3c	Irvin, D.R. ARM2c
Ens. Bennett	Hebert, E.J.	AMM3c	Lavin, M.T. ARM3c
Ens. Weaver	Shoemaker, R.A.	AOM3c	Kelly, V.A. ARM2c
Ens. McCabe	Keough, R.L.	AMM3c	Shaffer, H.L. ARM3c
Ens. Trichel	Jensen, R.P.	AOM3c	Jones, J.J. ARM3c
Ens. Mayo	Hart, J.	AMM2c	Kennon, R.L. Jr. ARM2c
Ens. Kiplinger	Fernandez, J.	AMM3c	Swenson, D.R. ARM2c
Ens. Clark	DeVore, A.A. Jr.	AOM3c	Jones, C.R. ARM2c
Ens. Stephens	Banks, D.A.	AM2c	Stoops, T.D. III ARM3c

A-V(S)

Lt Piper (Material & Engineering) Lt Schiller (A.C.I.)

CREW

Leading Chief:	Summers, W.A. ACFM	Ordnance:	Deloach, H.E. AOM1c
Engineering:	Stoffer, B.H. ACFM		Smith, R.W. AOM1c
	Bennett, M.W. AMM1c	Radio:	Mitchell, D.K. ACRM
	Taylor, L.V. AMM1c		Naylor, R.J. ARF1c
	Bowditch, W.J. AMM2c	Par.	Schleicher, R.O. PR1c
	Muzzy, R.B. AMM3c	Yeoman:	Ketcham, L.C. Y2c

1944:

JAN:

1-- The following men were advanced to the rate shown: -

SHOEMAKER, AOM2c; FERNANDEZ, AMM2c; DeVORE, AOM2c.

4-- The WHITE PLAINS arrived at Pearl Harbor, and docked directly forward of the U.S.S. NASSAU (CVE-16) which is to be VC-66's parent vessel for two months. Squadron gear and personnel were moved aboard immediately.

During the cruise to Pearl Harbor, the squadron stood round-the-clock security watches, caught up on sack time, received an authorization to wear the American Theatre and Asiatic-Pacific Campaign ribbons, and traded in scuttlebutt on the future assignment.

- 4- Ens. Polski, Weaver, and Bennett were promoted to Lt(jg) to rank from January 1, 1944.
- 5- The NASSAU stood out to sea while the squadron was having bounce drill at Barber's Point with Lt Joe Kerwin waving the flags.
- 6- The squadron landed aboard for its first landings on the NASSAU. After a long day of qualifications, the ship returned to Ford Island.
- 9 to 13- Planes were undergoing a general check at CASU-1. Officers and men lived aboard the NASSAU but went ashore every day to work and play. A favorite diversion was to watch the salvage crews dynamite the hull of the old battleship UTAH, sunk during the December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor.
- 15 to 18- Participated in a joint exercise with many other ships and ground troops on Maui in a rehearsal for "the big show".
- 19 to 23- Back again at Ford Island for final preparations. Everyone saw friends from the many carriers and other ships that filled the harbor. Weaver was busy seeing buddies from Santa Monica J.C. and "good old class 4-A" at "Los Idos".
- 24- Shoved off for the big show. The word is out that the Marshall Islands are to be invaded. As the NASSAU weighed anchor at 0800 12, the ComAirPac Band played the beautiful melody of "Aloha Oe".
- 25 to 27- Practice, practice, and more practice; message drops, group attacks, strafing, bombing, and, of course, carrier landings, take offs, and catapults.
- 28- Entered the combat zone and started working red time in the Log Book. CAP and ASP were the order of the day, around the twenty-two ship convoy we are escorting.
- 30- The squadron and the ship were shocked today by the loss of Lt(jg) Bennett and his crewmen, E.J. Hebert and M.T. Lavin. Bennett got a little slow in an approach to the ship and the plane spun into the water. Several people who were near the stern, were sure that one or two of the fellows came to the surface, but the plane guard destroyer was unable to locate anyone when it arrived at the scene shortly after the crash.
- 31- Today was "D" Day. Our carrier is co-ordinating with the NATOMA BAY (CVE-62), the cruiser PORTLAND, several destroyers, and a flotilla of troop transports, with orders to attack and take MAJURO ATOLL in the Marshall Group. Lt Mayer lead the first hop. After a pre-dawn takeoff and rendezvous, the small unit of soldiers put on Majuro the night before to scout the atoll, reported the Atoll was ours, and not to drop any bombs. When the news was spread, the squadron didn't know whether to sigh with relief, or to feel cheated in its first chance for action.

In the late morning, Lt Joe Klaus came back to the carrier to announce that he had sighted a small ship near Arno Atoll. When the question of size came up, Joe wasn't quite sure. Finally he arrived at a length of about 250 feet. When the news was flashed to the Admiral, he sent back instructions to bomb and destroy the ship. The Cruiser was sent to investigate, and a flight of two VT and four VF took off to attack. Upon arriving at the lagoon, they found the ship was nearer 50 feet than 250 feet. However, they strafed and bombed it until it sank. When the news of the ship's size was released aboard the carrier, Joe Klaus took an unmerciful kidding.

Lt Catterton and Lt Joe Klaus flew the 300 mile afternoon patrol to Jaluit, Mille, and back. Coming into Jaluit, after a very dull morning at Majuro, they were caught completely off guard. They flew in at about 1500 feet as Cat put it "Fat, Dumb and Happy". The Japs there were not cooperative and put up a heavy anti-aircraft barrage. Although Joe and Cat had the doubtful honor of being the first to encounter Jap fire, they were completely unappreciative and put out the word, on their return to the carrier, that the Japs were "playing for keeps".

FEB:

1- The following men were advanced to the rate shown:

YAGODZINSKI, AMM2c; JENSEN, AOM2c; JONES, J.J., ARM2c.

3- After the uneventful days of ASP and CAP, the squadron had an occurrence of importance. Eng Cook made the 2,000th landing aboard the NASSAU. He was caught completely by the surprise and could not figure out why his presence was requested on the bridge.

4- Had a chance today to look at our handiwork, as the NASSAU steamed into Majuro lagoon and we saw at close range, the immense size of the lagoon and the tremendous collection of floating power assembled there. Fighting for the original objectives has ceased and most of the carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and assorted craft are at anchor in the lagoon to wait for further orders. This marks the first time that the bulk of the new Pacific Fleet has assembled in one harbor, and what a sight it is! We boast (among ourselves) that this is the Atoll that VC-66 captured and has patrolled since "D" day.

6- We got word today that Eniwetok Island is to be invaded and that our job is to keep out of commission, two of the Marshall Atolls that are still in Jap hands, namely Maloelap (with Taroa Airfield) and Wotje (with its airfield). In this job, we are to act in conjunction with our carrier companion, the NATOMA BAY.

7- VC-66 went into action with strikes by both VF and VT against Taroa and Wotje. Andy McNeeland brought back one plane with a hole in the prop and Kip Kiplinger brought back an Avenger with a hit in the bomb-bay and left wing. To top it all off, Sam Takis was shot down at Taroa. The engine in his plane was hit while he was making a run on anti-aircraft positions, so he used his speed to get out into the middle of the lagoon and landed downwind. He was dazed from the landing but got out of the plane, inflated his life jacket, and pulled his dye marker. Capt Michael of the NASSAU requested an OS from the cruiser, Salt Lake City, and while our planes patrolled the area, the OS landed, picked up Sam, and returned to the cruiser where Sam was treated in the sick bay, 90 minutes after he was shot down.

10- Eng Stephens gave the squadron a thrill today. On an early morning ASP hop his plane was hit in the port wing by a large caliber shell fired from Wotje Airfield. The hit resulted in the explosion of his wing gun ammunition and started a fire in the wing. Steve ordered his crewmen, Banks and Stoops, to prepare for a water landing and glided toward the water. At this point, the fire went out. Steve looked over the situation and decided to continue his hop, so, for about two hours, he flew his plane with the large hole in the port wing. When he landed aboard the NASSAU, the life raft was half way out of its compartment, with Banks trying to hold it in with one hand. Steve was quite conchalant about the whole thing, but Banks and Stoops had the firm opinion that flying was not here to stay.

12- Lt Denman and Ens Thompson from VF-36 (later VF-18) arrived aboard with replacement planes from the U.S.S. WHITE PLAINS. Tony and Tom are to remain with the squadron until we reach Pearl Harbor.

21-

The last flights for VC-66 in the Marshall Campaign were landed aboard and the NASSAU returned to Majuro Lagoon. While here we will give away to the U.S.S. ENTERPRISE all our planes that are in good flying condition and then back to Pearl Harbor.

The following is a summary of operations by VC-66 from Jan. 6 to Feb. 21, 1944, while aboard the U.S.S. NASSAU:

Attack Operations

Strikes (including individual bombing and strafing attacks):

	<u>VF</u>	<u>VT</u>
TAROA:	8	11
WOTJE:	<u>5</u>	<u>8</u>
TOTAL:	13	19

Miscellaneous Missions

	<u>VF</u>	<u>VT</u>
Spotting for battleships and cruisers:	1	9
Long range patrols to Jaluit & Mille:		4

Plus numerous Combat Air Patrols and Anti-Submarine Patrols.

SUMMARY

	<u>Flights</u>		<u>Catapults</u>	<u>Carrier Landings</u>	<u>Barrier Crashes</u>
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Hours</u>			
TRAINING:	198	536.6	131	196	4
COMBAT:	<u>487</u>	<u>1,477.6</u>	<u>273</u>	<u>487</u>	<u>4</u>
TOTAL:--	685	2,014.2	404	683	8

(Note: 2 crashes at sea, Lt(jg) Bennett and Ens. Takis)

MAR:

1-

The following men were advanced to the rate shown:

STAMPER, AMM2c; HAWBAKER, ARM2c; CHAMBERLIN, ARM2c; DeLOACH, ACOM(AA).

3-

The NASSAU arrived at Pearl Harbor today. The 'squadron' anxiously watched the Skipper leave for ComAirFac, waiting, wondering, what assignment we would get now that our two months duty with the NASSAU is completed. Finally, the word was passed for all officers in VC-66 to report to the Junior Officer Bunk-room. There we got the word that Barking Sands, on the Island of Kauai, will be the squadron's next base.

To VC-66, the NASSAU will always rank high on the list of memorable ships. As days went by and the early roughness of operations wore off, squadron and ship fused into a good team. As Commander Born, the Air Officer, expressed it, "When we started you boys were plenty rugged, but right now I think we've got a good outfit....Roger?"

When the squadron encountered friends from the bigger carriers, the NASSAU always managed to come off well in the conversation, and Comdr Born frequently was the object of SIXTY-SIX's praise. He was chief inspiration as well as No. 1 nettle when things were fouled up. On the subject of Ensigns, he remarked with a leer, "I like 'em, I eat 'em raw."

Captain Michael, with his torn selvy shirt and sun-burned face, flinging semaphore at top speed to anyone who could take it, also rated a 4.0 from the boys in 66.

Food was tops both in the wardroom and general mess. The "one-armed bandit" in the wardroom helped to keep the officer's Mess bill down.

Despite a large amount of bitching, the squadron's quarters were not too bad. The combat crew had its own bunkroom, and the Junior Officers hung out in the J.O. bunkroom, which developed into a combination gymnasium, card room, country club, and boulevard for aimless traffic. One of the chief bitches of some of the junior officers concerned the late poker games. Nevertheless, the bunkroom was scene of the squadron's greatest evenings, which usually took place after Captain Michael's tea parties. These occasions called for raucous renditions of "One Ball Riley", accompanied by Lt Comdr Swede Hanson and his inimitable jig.

In combat operations, the squadron accomplished its mission of neutralizing Taroa and Wotje, even though the bulk of hours in the air were spent on CAP and ASP. The gang had enough close scrapes to feel indoctrinated in the business of war. Takis' plane was the only one shot down, but Macdonald made a flashy emergency landing in the nick of time with smoke streaming from his engine. The pre-dawn catapult shots at anchor when the ship was in the Lagoon gave the torpedo pilots a kick in the butt.

As the NASSAU steamed back toward Pearl, stripped of her planes and ammunition (and beer), but carrying seventeen Jap prisoners, the Seagulls of 66 decided that they had been to war, for a while at least.

- 5-- Moved off the NASSAU today and commenced the transfer to NAF, Barking Sands. Lt Carr, with several other officers and about half of the men, embarked the squadron gear on the U.S.S. SWAN, a 110 foot boat, which gave the boys the right to claim to be sailors. Most of the squadron will fly over as soon as the new FM-2s and TBM-1Cs are commissioned at Ford Island.
- 10-- Move to Barking Sands completed. VC-66 has the whole station to itself, as the only squadron based here. The station is an Army field taken over recently by the Navy. Many Army officers and enlisted men are still based here to get the Army gear moved out. The field itself is good, but the quarters, "O" Club, ready room and officers mess are strictly "forward echelon" Army. Plenty of dirt, indifferent food, little or no furniture, and a million mosquitos. Marine field shoes (Guadalcanal slippers) are a necessity. Barking Sands has played an important role in the Battle of Midway. As the westernmost airfield in the Hawaiian chain, it was the landing field for numbers of battered B-17s. The present squadron office was a decoding room during the battle.
- 12-- Ensigns McCabe, Trichel, Mayo, Kiplinger, Terrell, Barrett, and Clark were promoted to Lt(jg) to rank from March 1st.
- 15-- All VT pilots and crewmen left for N.A.S. Kaneohe for a two weeks' anti-sub school.

BOWDISH and MUZZY were advanced to AMM1c today.
- 24-- All VF pilots left for a 5 day stay at the Chris Holmes Rest Home, in Honolulu.
- 28-- The squadron received orders today to report aboard the U.S.S. ALTAMAHA (CVE-18) immediately and to be ready to sail in a day and a half, Lt Piper, with Chiefs Summers, Stoffer and Mitchell, and six men who were all that remained of the squadron at Barking Sands, stowed the gear in the ready room to be moved tomorrow by plane. The FM-2 planes are grounded because of bad exhaust valve seats and CASU will have to work night and day to enable us to fly the planes to Ford Island by the morning of the 30th.

When the squadron arrived at "Barking Dogs", the outfit was not very happy over the outlook. The big operators went to work, however, and soon the countryside from Kekaha to Hanapepe had been completely scouted. Al Mayer divided his time between the laundry at Hanapepe and the nurses quarters in the cane field. Cope, et al, with the aid of McManus' weapon carrier, made frequent sallies to the Wramps and Laytons. There were few evenings when either the Fayes, Gays, Bols, or Robinsons, didn't play host to a Sixty-Six raiding party.

The gang hunted goats, caught the colorful Hawaiian fish, picked up suntan at the beach near the end of the runway, and used the back roads to evade the M.P.s after curfew. The crew got the lowdown on the whole island -- all the way to Kapaa, where, according to Jones and Hawbaker, all the dissolute ladies had gone to the horse races.

When the torpedo pilots left for Kaneohe anti-sub school, the fighters had the social swirl to themselves until they moved to the Rest Home. The whole island idyll came to an end with the orders to go aboard the ALTAMAHA.

29-- Three PBOs took off from Barking Sands for Ford Island with squadron gear. Most of the fighters have left. At Ford all VT planes are being traded for new planes equipped with rocket rails.

30-- Gear and planes are aboard the ALTAMAHA. The planes are in lousy condition. It will take at least a couple of days to get things squared away.

Lt(jg) J.L.DWIGHT, Ens.E.F.KEYSER, Ens R.E.HOLLEY, and Ens R.F. KROST, all VT pilots, reported from VT-100, the training and replacement squadron at Barbers Point, Ens J.F.MORLEY Jr, A-V(S), reported aboard for duty in administrative work. Jack Dwight is from Upper Darby, Pa., Kay Keyser, Philadelphia, Pa; Bob Holley, Corsicana, Texas; Dick Krost, Mankato, Minn; and Jack Morley, Chicago, Ill.

Eight Combat Aircrewmen also reported and were assigned as follows:

<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Turret Gunner</u>	<u>Radionan</u>	
Lt(jg) Dwight	Rathbun, J.A.	AMM3c	Tappan, R.A. ARM3c
Ens Keyser	Mardarello, E.J.	AOM3c	Summers, D.H. ARM3c
Ens Holley	Calderon, M.V.	AOM3c	Plouffe, R.L. ARM3c
Ens Krost	Ruthman, V.T.	AMM3c	Riffle, C.S. ARM3c

The U.S.S. ALTAMAHA stood out to sea.

We have been informed by the Skipper that we are on an emergency Hunter-Killer anti-submarine mission.

30 to 1-- Worked on planes trying desperately to get them in commission in time to commence scheduled operations.

APR:

1-- The following men were advanced to the rate shown:

GANDER, AMM2c; KEOUGH, AMM2c; KELLY, ARMLc; SHAFFER, ARM2c.

2-- Practice today in strafing, carrier landings, and, for the first time, rocket firing by the VT.

3-- First combat anti-sub patrols.

4-- Fruitful searches today. Lt(jg) Polski and Ens Edwards made an attack on one sub and Lt Fox and Lt(jg) Dwight attacked another. The contacts were made within a few minutes of each other. The squadron and ship are over-joyed at the news.

- 10- Steamed into Majuro Lagoon.
- 11- Out again for more hunting.
- 15- The hunter is hunted. About 1815, three and possibly four, torpedos were fired at the ALTAMAHA. General Quarters was sounded and the ship zig-zagged away from the line of fire of the torpedos. All the torpedos missed.

SCHLEICHER was advanced to PR1c.

- 18- We were relieved at sea by VC-68 aboard the U.S.S. FANSHAW BAY, (CVE-70). The ALTAMAHA is ordered to return to Pearl Harbor.
- 22- Arrived at Pearl Harbor.

Summary of operations on the U.S.S. ALTAMAHA:

	<u>Flights</u>		<u>Catapults:</u>	<u>Carrier Landings:</u>	<u>Barrier Crashes:</u>
	<u>No:</u>	<u>Hours:</u>			
TRAINING:	36	61.1	10	36	2
COMBAT:	282	859.4	160	280	7
TOTAL:-	318	920.5	170	316	9

(There were no barrier crashes with fighters)

- 23- Jack Dwight passed out cigars today in honor of his seven pound son born on April 19th.
- 24- Squadron moved from the ship to Ford Island. All enlisted men will go to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel for a few days during the coming week. VT pilots and Lt Piper will have a five day stay at the Alexander's Rest Home at Waikiki.

The cruise aboard the ALTAMAHA was a period which most of the squadron would just as leave forget. After a few days, it became a nervous melee of an inexperienced Landing Signal Officer, barrier crashes, water-tight doors, dreary patrols, uncertain attacks on enemy subs, and General Quarters. The end of the cruise brought a mutually welcome separation of VC-66 and the U.S.S. ALTAMAHA.

MAY:

- 1- The following men were advanced to the rate shown:
MUSE, ARM1c; JONES, C.R., ARM2c.
- 8- BOREL, U.R., AMM2c, reported to the squadron for duty. He will be gunner for Lt(jg) Dwight while Rathbun, formerly Dwight's gunner, will switch to Lt(jg) Stack. MOLASH, Stack's former gunner, will enter the squadron's ground crew.
- 11- Today the squadron moved back to the old stamping grounds at Barking Sands. We will be glad to see our old friends there and welcome the opportunity to make new friends. All personal gear, and the vital squadron gear, were flown over in two Commando's. The remainder of the squadron gear remains stowed at Ford Island.
- During the stay at Ford Island, the gang fell into the easy routine of half a day at the hanger followed by beer and swimming at the Tennis Club. Jimmy Mayo received the momentous news from "June Bug" that the answer to his question is "YES".
- 22- Lt S.A. LUDLUM (Sam), A-1V(S), reported for duty as A.C.I. Officer. Sam is from East Orange, N.J. Ron Schiller is happy because he has been waiting for his relief ever since receiving his orders on the ALTAMAHA.

24- Lt A.R. Schiller was detached to report to Cape May, N.J. The squadron gave him a send-off in the form of a wild beer and beach party on the Barking Sands.

JUNE:

- 1- The following men were advanced to the rate shown:
MARDARELLO, AOM2c; PLOUFFE, ARM2c; RIFFLE, ARM2c.
- 5- GIBSON, H.A., ACOM, reported in an exchange with CASU-45 for Chief DeLoach.
- 6- DeLOACH, H.E., ACOM, was detached to report to CASU-45.
- 7- Received orders to move squadron to Ford Island.
- 9- Moved planes to Ford Island.
- 11- Moved all gear to Ford Island by ship, the U.S. METEOR.

The second visit at Barking Sands was an extension of the first, only more so. This time the station was shared with Air Group 28, VC-7 and VC-63, but Sixty-Six maintained the No. 1 spot with the families of Kauai.

The squadron insignia, the baby of energetic Ron Schiller, finally took shape and decalcomanias came into being bearing the motto sparked by Moose McCabe, "Dat's f' de Boids." Above the inscription is the pot-bellied, paunchy, droopy-eyed, listless Seagull, so beloved by VC-66 - a symbol of the "perfect life".

As a farewell to Barking Sands, Brownie, Andy, Kip, and Cookie, paid \$10 apiece to the Provost Marshall for "illegally, unlawfully, and without authority, appearing on the public highway after the hour of curfew".

The move from Kauai this time was necessitated by a reconversion of Barking Sands into an Army Field for B-24s.

- 15- The following men were advanced to the rate shown:
MOLASH, AOM1c; SWENSON, ARM2c.

JULY:

- 3- Received orders to move the squadron to NAS, Kahului on the Island of Maui. The three weeks at Ford Island followed the same routine that VC-66 is expert in. Half days at the hangar, beer, club, luaus by Mac, et al, trips to the Wave's quarters at Fort Shafter, and an occasional softball game.

Shortly before leaving for Kahului, all the officers and crew took an afternoon off for a squadron party celebrating the first squadron anniversary (June 21) at the Fleet Recreation Center, Nimitz Beach. Beer, eats, including delicious steaks broiled over charcoal, baseball and swimming were the order of the day.

The lack of a combat assignment for the squadron is turning the gang into a horde of irritables afflicted with a heavy case of the "old R.A."

- 4- Flew gear and planes to Kahului where all the fighters landed safely, despite a stiff and hazardous cross wind. VC-66 will be the second outfit at Kahului. Air Group 21, a CVL group, is now training at NASKA, and Air Group 44 is expected to come in from the States when 21 leaves.

- 6- Joe Klaus received the news he has been waiting for since the middle of June. He is the father of a 7 pound daughter born June 30th.
- 15- Ens W.J. JOHNSON (Bill), VF; Ens D.S. ADAMS, (Doug), VF; and Ens S. MORRIS Jr. (Tex), VF, reported from VF-100. Bill is from St. Paul, Minn; Doug from San Pedro, Calif., and Tex from Ballinger, Tex.
- 23- (Sunday) The squadron was awakened at 4 A.M. this morning by whistles and sirens of an alert, sounded throughout the entire Hawaiian chain. The officers were gathered from every part of the island, including Wailuku, and the slope of Mt. Haleakala. When everyone had raced madly over the blacked-out roads and assembled at the ready room, word came through that a possible enemy surface force had been contacted 200 miles north of Oahu. The pilots who believed the report were elated over the possibility of a crack at the Jap fleet. The other pilots remained sullenly skeptical. All planes were loaded in the dark and turned up by the pilots, who waited in the cockpits for word to take off. That word never came. Pilots and combat crews later returned to the ready room, where they were relieved in shifts for breakfast. Secure was sounded at 1000, six hours after the alert had been called. Later reports seemed to indicate that the presence of President Roosevelt in Pearl Harbor had prompted an exceptionally vigilant policy.
- 26- The squadron received orders today to report aboard the U.S.S. FANSHAW BAY (CVE-70), which is now undergoing repairs in the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard after suffering a bomb hit in the Mariana Islands.
- 27- Jack Dwight crashed into the water during night bounce drill. He, luckily, got out uninjured and swam 2 miles to shore. His only wound was a sting from a Portuguese Man-O-War.
- 28- Sam Ludlum, Bill Piper, Jack Morley, and nearly all the crew, reported to the U.S.S. FANSHAW BAY at Pearl Harbor, via the U.S. COMET.
- Bud Clark received word that he is the father of a ten-pound boy born July 18th.
- 29 to 31- Minus the crew, squadron pilots spent three days waxing the planes in preparation for sea. The CASU-32 enlisted personnel were astounded at the sight of officers doing a full stint of manual labor.

AUG:

- 3- During a return trip from Oahu, Charlie Edwards' engine cut out and he landed in the drink offshore from the Maui Country Club. Still in the plane, when it sank to the bottom of the sea, was a bag full of six weeks' back mail which Charlie was bringing to the squadron from Pearl.
- 4- Despatch orders arrived today detaching Lt Comdr Bragg for return to the United States, and placing Lieut G.O. Trapp in command of the squadron. The shift in command was a momentous climax to the tour of duty at Kahului. To many of the officers and crew, the Maui stay was the best Hawaiian duty the squadron had experienced; at least equal to Barking Sands. The frequent trips to the Von Tempsky's, Robinson's, and Mama Bal's kept the big dealers happy, and the Officer's Beach Club was a haven for swimming and drinking during the free hours. The U.S.O.s at Wailuku and Paia were patronized by many of the crew's high grade wolver. Service given the squadron by CASU-32 was outstanding during the entire stay, despite the fact that they were also servicing Air Group 44 and Air Group 3 at the same time. And the red Maui dust will be remembered forever by VC-66.

- 5- The planes flew out from Kahului and landed aboard the FANSHAW BAY.
- 8- The FANSHAW BAY returned to Pearl after four days of concentrated practice.
- 9- Chief Summers was promoted to Warrant Electrician, USN, to rank from June 15th.
- 10- YAGODZINSKI, T.F., AMM2c, was detached to report to Asbury Park, N.J., for midshipman training under the Navy V-12 program. The entire squadron is sorry to see Ski leave, but we're glad he received this opportunity.
- SPOONER, J.H., AMM3c, reported to replane Yagodzinski, as gunner for Joe Klaus.
- 11- Lt Larry Carr was detached to report to ComAirPac. We will miss the joke telling, guitar playing, fighter pilot.
- 12- The FANSHAW BAY stood out to sea, as part of a six carrier escort to a 40 ship convoy. Our immediate destination is Guadalcanal.
- 15- The following men were advanced to the rate shown:
NAYLOR, R.J., ACRT; BANKS, D.A., AM1c.
- 18- Lost a day. (crossed the 180th Meridian).
- 22- Crossed the Equator. The "Shellbacks" in the squadron, including Al Mayer, Marty Stack, and Chief Mitchell saw to it that the slimy pollywogs in the squadron got everything coming to them. The Activities, which started three days ago with hair cutting, developed yesterday into a fierce water fight on the forecastle, where the pilots barricaded themselves against the Shellbacks. The final ceremonies today - black paint, electric shocks, dunking, and shillelah beatings - have left the pilots and crew in a painful condition for sitting on parachutes and hard homo.
- 24- At 1600, the FANSHAW BAY dropped anchor in Tulagi Harbor, British Solomons, where oldtimers Mayer, Stack, Kelly, and Muse revived memories of their earlier duty in the Solomons Area.
- 25- At 1800, the ship stood out to sea. A lack of space in the liberty boats returning from the Iron Bottom Bay Officer's Club at Port Purvis almost caused Ens Adams and Elec Summers to get left behind, but in a speed-boat sprint, they caught the ship as she was steaming out of the harbor.
- 28- Ship arrived at 1800 in Seeadler Harbor, Manus Island, after a three day voyage through the Coral Sea, Dampier Straits, between New Britain and New Guinea, and up through the Bismark Sea to the Admiralty Islands. Planes were launched to fly onto the strip on Ponam Island. During the launching, Ens Bill Johnson was killed when his plane hit the water on a fly-away take off. His plane sank immediately, taking him down with it.
- 29 to Sept. 4- The twelve days on Ponam Island turned out to be a mixture of flying, shell hunting, beer drinking, and trading lap-lap with the natives. Among the souvenirs gathered by the squadron are cat's-eyes, native carvings, fancy shells, and several Japanese pamphlets found on the island by E.M. Mardarello, AOM2c. Because the Admiralty Islands are owned by Australia, all driving is on the left-hand side of the road. The "head" is built on stilts over the water and showers are restricted to a few hours during the day.

On the 30th, the island was visited by the Bob Hope Show, which Bob Weaver and Kay Keyser capitalized on to kidnap beautiful Patty Thomas for a jeep ride around the island.

SEPT:

- 1- The following fighter pilots reported: Ens J.A. Rouse (Jar); Home: Oxford, Ohio. Ens N.D. Satterthwaite (Sat), Home: Tacoma, Wash., and Ens. William W. Reynolds (Bill), Home: Upper Montclair, N.J.

KETCHAM, L.C. was advanced to Ylc.
- 4- Pilots and planes flew aboard from Ponam and the ship put into Lorengau Harbor.

The NASSAU, which is anchored in the same harbor, invited the squadron to the Lorengau Fleet Officers' Club for a big blow-out boasting real Stateside whiskey, bought out of funds from the NASSAU's wardroom slot machine. The party was a roaring success, with Lt Comdr "Swede" Hanson tending bar and rendering his renowned jig to the squadron's accompaniment of "One Ball Riley". Everyone grew expansive in recalling old times with Doc Crafft; the Chief Engineer, now Lt Comdr Rivard; Comdr Hawkins; Jim Brickett, author of "The Nasty Maru"; and a host of others. The squadron drank a toast to the NASSAU, the "fightingest ship in the Navy", and was answered by the NASSAU's new Skipper, who said, "We wish we had our old squadron back aboard".
- 9- Ship and squadron remained in port, resting and getting briefed for the coming operation.
- 10- The FANSHAW BAY put to sea with the U.S.S. MIDWAY (CVE-63) and the four oiler-class carriers - the U.S.S. SANGAMON (CVE-26); SUWANEE (CVE-27); CHENANGO (CVE-28); and SANTEE (CVE-29). Rear Admiral C.A.F. SPRAGUE, ComCarDiv-25, is aboard our ship, but Rear Admiral T. SPRAGUE, ComCarDiv-22, aboard the SANGAMON, will direct operations of the six carriers.
- 11 to 13- Anti-sub and anti-snooper patrols. North of Hollandia, the carriers rendezvoused with the transports, AKs, landing ships, cruisers and destroyers which will participate in the occupation of Morotai Island. The convoy, which is the major part of the Seventh Fleet, now totals approximately 135 vessels, and stretches nearly ten miles from the van to the rear-guard.
- 14- Dog-minus-One Day. Rest and final briefing.
- 15- DOG-DAY. Four VT joined with a striking group from the MIDWAY to bomb a collection of huts and buildings in the path of the landing troops. Fighters flew Combat Air Patrol.
- 16- Brownie shoots down first Jap plane of the campaign. Leading a division consisting of Macdonald, Barrett, and Rodriguez, Brownie intercepted a message that a bogey was travelling westward in the area south of Morotai. Turning the division, he made a perfect interception and, in a short fight, shot down a Jap "Hamp". J-11 will soon wear a Jap flag, but the victory is dampened by the loss of Lt(jg) Reynold Rodriguez, who started a low-altitude run on the "Hamp" and crashed into the water. Rod's death is keenly felt, for he has been with the squadron ever since its early Seattle days.

In the afternoon, the squadron participated in the spectacular rescue of Ens Thompson (VF-26) from Wasile Bay, Halmahera Island Area. Eight fighters, led by Lt J.P. Fox, and seven torpedo bombers, led by Lt Klaus and Lt Mayer, strafed and bombed enemy gun positions while two PT boats raced in under the

aerial cover to pick up the downed pilot from a position not more than 100 yards off-shore. Fighters had strafed all day, since Thompson had parachuted into the water during a pre-dawn fighter sweep.

Lt Stack with his torpedo division consisting of Dwight, Kiplinger, and Polski, this morning ran into one of the area's heaviest anti-aircraft barrages thrown up at them by our own landing ships and destroyers at Morotai. None of our planes was hit. The boys are undecided whether to get indignant over being fired at, or criticize the gunners for their inaccuracy.

- 17- G.Q.s are nerve-wracking experiences, coming at all hours of the day and night, and announced by the gruesome "Bong-Bong-Bong" of the General Alarm. Only part of the bogeys are genuine Jap raids on Morotai. The rest are Army planes without IFF.
- 18- Four VT combed the jungle of Morotai in a fruitless search for a reported Jap radar station.
- 19- Four VT struck on Halmahera runways at Galela Airfield. Fighters strafed.
- 20- Four VT blew Hell out of a wild piece of Morotai jungle in another attempt to destroy that elusive Jap radar station at Gorango Point.

The squadron experienced its worst disaster today in a mid-air collision which took the lives of Lt(jg) F.J.M. McCABE, R.L. Keough, AMM2c; H.L. Shaffer, ARM2c; and M.V. Calderon, AOM3c. Ens. Holley and R.L. Plouffe, ARM2c, parachuted into the water and were picked up by a D.E. The accident occurred during a join-up in preparation for return to the ship. The loss of the four friends has hit their squadronmates hard. Three out of the four have been with the squadron since its earliest days. The death of "Moose" McCabe seems to have taken a big chunk out of the heart of the squadron, for he was one of its most beloved and respected members.
- 21 to 23- Anti-sub patrol and combat air patrol, with a majority of the fighter pilots flying 8 hours a day and standing by in the ready room for another 4 or 6 hours. The loss of Rodriguez, the failure to qualify the three new fighter pilots, and the temporary grounding of others, has made a stiff schedule for the remaining fighters.
- 24- The FANSHAW BAY and MIDWAY departed for Mios Woendi, near Biak, for refueling.
- 25- At anchor for fuel at Woendi, the squadron carried on a lively trading business with the natives who came alongside in their outrigger canoe "bumboats".
- 27- Arrived back at Morotai and picked up 3 VT planes from the SANGAMON and 3 VF from the SANTEE. CarDiv-22 is shoving off, leaving all further patrols to the FANSHAW BAY and MIDWAY, until the Army Engineers complete the landing strips at Morotai.
- 28- Four VT struck Galela Airfield. Four VF from CAP strafed Galela and Miti Airfields.
- 29- During a photographic and bombing and strafing mission against the airfields of Halmahera, led by the Skipper, Lt. G.O. Trapp, Lt Stack's gunner, J.A. Rathbun, AMM3c, was hit by AA fire from Galela. In an attempt to get immediate medical attention,

Stack landed on the rough unfinished strip at Morotai, accompanied by Lt(jg) Brown in a fighter. They were the first combat planes to land at Morotai.

The medical attention which Stack hoped for turned out to be futile. Rathbun was already dead, killed by a single Jap slug which came up through the bomb bay into the turret. The sorrow over the loss of Rathbun is heightened by the knowledge that his wife is expecting a baby in several months. He also had another child, a daughter three and one-half years old.

30-- Brown landed back aboard from Morotai.

OCT:

- 1-- Stack returned from Morotai.
- 2-- Two VF dropped five bombs on installations on Halmahera where land-rigged torpedo tubes were suspected of being used against our PT boats operating in Halmahera Sea, south of Morotai.
- 3-- The formation was attacked this morning by two enemy torpedoes which closely missed the carriers. This was the second time the squadron escaped unharmed from an enemy submarine attack. The first was on the ALTAMAHA in April.

The long-awaited orders to depart were received today. The FANSHAW BAY and MIDWAY will proceed toward Manus at 0001 tomorrow morning.

- 6-- The ships approached the vicinity of the Admiralty Islands where VC-66 expects to hear the great news that the squadron is relieved and ordered to the States for re-assignment and 30 days leave. The evening patrols came aboard with Lt(jg) R.A. Weaver making the last landing aboard. All squadron and personal gear is being packed for the departure tomorrow.
- 7-- Planes flew ashore to Pityilu Island. Gear came ashore after the FANSHAW BAY dropped anchor in Lorengau Harbor. After the last plane had landed at Pityilu, the total of operations aboard the FANSHAW BAY stood as follows:

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS (Aug 5 to Oct 6, 1944)

	<u>Flights</u>		<u>Catapults</u>	<u>Carrier Landings</u>	<u>Barrier Crashes</u>
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Hours:</u>			
<u>VF</u>					
TRAINING:	162	379.0	0	139	5
COMBAT:	<u>337</u>	<u>1,252.4</u>	<u>303</u>	<u>335</u>	<u>4</u>
Total:	499	1,631.4	303	474	9
<u>VT</u>					
TRAINING:	158	443.5	128	137	2
COMBAT:	<u>242</u>	<u>857.1</u>	<u>241</u>	<u>239</u>	<u>3</u>
Total:	400	1,300.6	369	376	5
<u>SQUADRON TOTAL:</u>					
TRAINING:	320	822.5	128	276	7
COMBAT:	<u>579</u>	<u>2,109.5</u>	<u>544</u>	<u>574</u>	<u>7</u>
TOTAL:--	899	2,932.0	672	850	14

As the squadron got confirmation ashore that its combat cruises were at an end, the record of its carrier operations stood as follows:

TOTAL SQUADRON CARRIER OPERATIONS

(Excluding all land operations and excluding carrier landing qualifications aboard the U.S.S. CASABLANCA (CVE-55) , the U.S.S. MANILA BAY (CVE-61), and the U.S.S. OMMANEY BAY (CVE-79)

VF

	<u>Flights</u>		<u>Catapults:</u>	<u>Carrier:</u> <u>Landings:</u>	<u>Barrier</u> <u>Crashes</u>
	<u>No:</u>	<u>Hours:</u>			
TRIPOLI:	141	186.5	14	133	2
NASSAU:	364	904.6	140	364	4
ALTAMAHA:	148	446.4	11	148	0
FANSHAW BAY:	499	1,631.4	303	474	9
TOTAL:--	1,152	3,168.9	468	1,119	15

VT

TRIPOLI:	109	198.5	12	93	3
NASSAU:	319	1,109.6	264	319	4
ALTAMAHA:	170	474.1	159	168	9
FANSHAW BAY:	400	1,300.6	369	376	5
TOTAL:--	998	3,082.8	804	956	21
<u>SQUADRON</u>					
<u>TOTAL:--</u>	2,150	6,251.7	1,272	2,075	36

Grand Total of all squadron flight time, ashore and aboard:..... 14,891.1 hours.

OCT:

7 to 16- On Pityilu Island, the squadron spent its time sacking out, cooking off, swimming, sunning, drinking beer, eating atabrine tablets, climbing coconut trees, and awaiting orders.

Ensigns Adams, Morris, Satterthwaite, Rouse, and Reynolds, were transferred to the CASU pilot pool. They will remain at Pityilu for reassignment because they have not completed a full tour of combat duty.

D.K.Mitchell, ACRM,; V.A.Kelly, ARMLc,; and R.P.Muse, AFMLc, were detached to depart by air for flight training in the States. The whole squadron helped sweat out their appointments to aviation training, and was happy to see them finally get their chance. The trio promised to drink us a toast and then line things up for us on the Coast, if they get there before we do.

Lt S.A.Ludlum received orders to report aboard the U.S.S. KWAJALEIN (CVE-98) for duty. He will remain on Pityilu for awhile.

On the evening of the 16th, word arrived to report aboard the U.S.S. MAKASSAR STRAIT (CVE-91) for transportation to Pearl Harbor and the United States. The final muster at the dock was attended by all hands, on time. As the LCM pulled out from shore, the squadron said "Goodbye" to the Southwest Pacific, in a tenor slightly different from the lyric ravings of a South Sea Travelogue.

17- The MAKASSAR STRAIT departed from Manus for Pearl Harbor and the United States. ETA at a West Coast port: the first week in November. To which the squadron replies, - "ROGER.....OUT ! "

IN MEMORIAM

The Squadron will not forget the friendship, loyalty, and courage of their squadronmates who gave their lives for their Country:

	<u>Killed</u>
Ensign Ben E. Davis	September 21, 1943.
Ensign E.B. Degenkolb	December 23, 1943.
Lt(jg) W.A. Bennett	January 30, 1944.
E.J. Hebert, AMM2c	" " "
M.T. Lavin, ARM3c	" " "
Ensign Wm. Johnson	August 28, 1944.
Lt(jg) Reynold Rodriguez	September 16, 1944.
Lt(jg) F.J.M. McCabe	September 20, 1944.
R.L. Keough, AMM2c	" " "
H.L. Shaffer, ARM2c	" " "
M.V. Calderon, AOM3c	" " "
J.A. Rathbun, AMM3c	September 29, 1944.

NOTE:

This history, compiled from official squadron records and logs, is for the use of squadron personnel, for their own enjoyment and recollection. It must not be released for publication, in whole or in part, without approval by the cognizant Naval Authority.

G. O. Trapp
G. O. TRAPP
Lieutenant A-V(N), U.S.N.R.
Commanding Officer.

END