



Vol. 5 No. 5

ANA Squadron 40

May 2001

Pres: [Scott Hornung](#)

VP: [Roger Lerseth](#)

Treas: [George Fisher](#)

Upcoming Events

May 8, 2001 -- Monthly luncheon (1130–1300) CAPT John Payne, Olympic Squadron

May 14-16, 2001 – EW Symposium, hosted by the *Old Crows Association*

May 24-26, 2001 – ANA National Convention, San Diego CA; RADM Smith, ANA Pres.

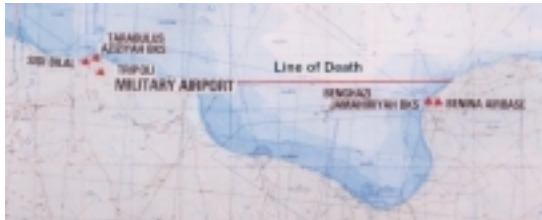
June 12, 2001 -- Monthly luncheon (1130–1300) [VAL-4 Black Ponies](#), CAPT Gil Winans

May 8 Luncheon: *Olympic Squadron, Capt John Payne USN (Ret.)*



[Captain John Payne, USN \(Ret.\)](#), former CO of *USS Carl Vinson (CVN-70)*, current CO of ANA Olympic Squadron will be here to speak and reflect on thirty years of naval aviation history, as he saw it. He is an exceptional naval aviator, leader and vocal supporter of naval aviation. We expect a large contingent of the Olympic Squadron will ferry from the peninsula to our island for this luncheon. We welcome CAPT Payne and his squadron mates. CPRW-10 and the Fighting Marlins of VP-40 will host the Olympic Squadron and provide an educational tour of a P-3 immediately following the luncheon. We thank the CPRW commands for their involvement in this event.

April 10 Luncheon: *El Dorado Canyon: CDR Scott Hornung USN (Ret.)*



Scott Hornung presented a history lesson on the 1980s as a decade of terrorism and the *Black Ravens'* role in punishing Moammar Gadhafi's terrorist state. He was joined by others in remembering VAQ-135's no-notice, 1986, New Years Day deployment of EA-6Bs to the jammer-lacking *Coral Sea* in the

Mediterranean. Larry Bezold and Bill Burnett described the effort to round up New Years Day flight crews to ferry seven aircraft across country with five aircraft continuing on to Rota Spain. Curt Bland described his neighborly need to shut off 135's, bachelor XO's hot tub, apparently a New Years Eve party asset not on the emergency departure shut down list. CDR Brian Hinkley (nugget VAQ-135 flight crew member in 1986, now current XO of the *Black Ravens*) provided the JO's perspective of events of that time. We thank all present for their contribution to this 15th anniversary event.

Association of Naval Aviation 2001 Annual Convention (ANA 2001)

will be held May 24 - 26, 2001 at the Sheraton Hotel Harbor Island, San Diego, California.

E-Mail Check: Unless an ANA Whidbey member is willing to assume the writing, printing and postal duties, we may have to limit hardcopy distribution of the newsletter to luncheon pick-up only. The newsletter will still be available online with e-mail notification.

FLYING BLACK PONIES-THE NAVY'S CLOSE AIR SUPPORT SQUADRON IN VIETNAM by Kit Lavell; Naval Institute Press, 2000



Kit Lavell's personal memoir of combat action actually encompasses the entire history, from conception to decommissioning, of Light Attack Squadron Four (VAL-4) the Navy's only shore-based tactical aviation squadron in the Vietnamese War. In the three short years of its' existence, from April 1969 to March 1972, flying OV-10 Bronco aircraft borrowed from the Marine Corps VAL-4 achieved a remarkable record of 42,862 flight hours and 21,802 sorties while building a reputation as one of the best close air support units in the war. In the course of their existence, they had twenty-six aircraft assigned of which seven became combat losses. They also sustained seven KIA and nine WIA.

The commissioning of VAL-4 resulted from the need for effective rapid-reaction close air support for the Mobile Riverine Force, our "brown-water" forces in the Mekong Delta. The initial formation, outfitting, training, deployment and combat introduction was accomplished under the direction of the first Commanding Officer, then Cdr. Gil Winans, a highly respected A-1 Skyraider pilot with extensive experience in the venerable Spad and its' many variants. Initially the other officers came from various backgrounds and volunteered for many different reasons. They are an eclectic and colorful bunch and many of their names will be familiar to those who served during the first three decades of the last half of the Twentieth Century. In the course of its' existence, there would be 123 Black Pony pilots and approximately 650 enlisted men assigned to VAL-4. Lavell has high praise for the enlisted personnel who performed magnificently under extremely adverse conditions.

A interesting subplot revolves around the logistical survival of the squadron; one, of cumshaw, barter, manipulation 'can-do" and outright thievery, familiar to any Navy/Marine Corps personnel who have found themselves out of mainstream Dept of Navy channels. Consequently as one assignment officer put it to a prospective pilot assignee "VAL-4 is ... a sort of cross between 'McHale's Navy' and 'Black Sheep Squadron."

With an inspirational forward by Stephen Coonts, this is an outstanding well-written, enjoyable book that deserves to be read. Its message of effective close air support and how to achieve it is especially deserving of consideration by War College and Pentagon planners. Any grunt will tell you, nervously, effective CAS is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve from angels 20, no matter how smart your bombs are.

Kit Lavell flew 243 combat missions with the Black Ponies. After returning to the States he flew as a commercial pilot and is the owner of an engineering company specializing in construction of alternative energy projects. He is the recipient of the California Affordable Housing Competition Award and is a produced playwright and screenwriter.

Reviewed by Cdr. George G. Fisher, USN (ret)

Web Site Reminder:

As usual, late-breaking information and links to related material can be found on our web site at <http://www.ANAWhidbey.org>



Association of Naval Aviation
Whidbey Island Squadron
P.O. Box 1888
Oak Harbor, WA 98277

President: CDR Scott Hornung, USN (Ret.) shornung@whidbey.net 360-675-1204
Vice-President: CDR Roger Lerseth, USN (Ret.) zipper@galaxynet.com 360-679-6578
Treasurer: CDR George Fisher, USN (Ret.) george.fisher5@gte.net 360-299-9037