

The term “sea story” in Navy vernacular refers to the product of a long-standing tradition of spinning yarns and telling tales that more often than not grow more elaborate and richer in detail with each retelling. This sometimes makes it difficult to discern the blurred line between fact and fancy. The more enduring a sea story the more likely it will gradually, imperceptibly metamorphose into the stuff of legends. The following sea story is about someone we once knew on Pakachoag Hill, and like most sea stories it begins with the caveat that, unlike most other sea stories, this one is all true.

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## A Sea Story

*I would define true courage to be a perfect sensibility of the measure of danger, and a mental willingness to incur it.*

William Tecumseh Sherman: *Personal Memoirs*

John C. Enschede, known as Jack to his friends, had originally planned to be a high school teacher after doing a hitch in the Navy, maybe even do a little coaching on the side. At Illinois State University he'd been a wrestler and the idea of developing the wrestling skills of promising high school athletes had seemed a good way of staying involved in the sport he most enjoyed long after his own time in the circular ring had passed. But the Navy's siren call had been seductive indeed, and now naval aviation was his life's career choice. Commissioned as an officer in the Naval Reserve, he had since applied and been accepted for augmentation into the regular Navy. No doubt about it, he was in it for the duration, however long that might be.

Now in the gathering dusk of a late summer sky in 1972, August 25 as a matter of fact, Jack Enschede was floating quietly beneath his damaged but billowing canopy over nondescript rice paddies in the workers' paradise of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. It was extraordinarily quiet except for the annoying sound of unseen insects buzzing by his ears until, of course, he realized they were not insects at all, but bullets being fired at him from various groups of armed peasants and North Vietnamese militia waiting below patiently, albeit excitedly, as the unrepealable law of gravity made his rendezvous with them both inevitable and imminent. His instincts and the extensive training he had received, courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer, forced his attention from the pain of the wounds he had just suffered incidental to an explosive encounter with a Soviet surface to air missile—wounds further aggravated by the uncontrolled violence of a combat ejection at the extreme limits of the performance envelope just moments earlier. Now he had a more immediate and fundamental task at hand: survival. In the face of his uncertain future the thought occurred to him that perhaps he should have gone straight into teaching and coaching right out of college. However, all he could hope for now was to survive and have the luxury of pondering that prospect later. What lay ahead for him he had no idea, but if he were lucky—very lucky—young Lieutenant Enschede would soon be going to jail . . . and if he were not very lucky, he would, in the next few minutes, be very dead.

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“Stand on the line; look at the camera; don't blink . . . ” FLASH “Turn to the right . . . ”  
FLASH “Turn all the way back to the left . . . ” FLASH

On this day in July of 1972 the mug shots developed for the latest replacement aviator checking into Fighter Squadron 161, a unit of Air Wing FIVE embarked on the aircraft carrier USS MIDWAY, revealed a dark haired recently promoted Lieutenant Commander in his eighth year of

naval service and 29<sup>th</sup> year of life. His close-cropped sideburns framed a five o'clock shadow so pronounced it was clearly evident by noon, giving him a persistent unshaven look. This had, no doubt, been responsible for one of his several "call signs," or nicknames that aviators pick up in the course of their flying careers. Recalling the perpetually unshaven character portrayed by Dustin Hoffman in *Midnight Cowboy*, "Ratso" seemed a perfect moniker to his former squadron mates, and so it was that he had been baptized by them.

For Ratso, getting his "mug shots" taken was just one of the mandatory items on the lengthy "Welcome Aboard" check-in list for every newly reporting combat aircrew. In fact, the requirement for the mug shots was standard administrative procedure aboard all U.S. Navy aircraft carriers operating in Southeast Asia, a result of North Vietnam's refusal to provide a list of captured downed American aviators who came under their control during the course of the hostilities that had, by then, been going on for just about as long as Ratso had been commissioned. This failure to acknowledge or account for the captured airmen constituted a violation of one of the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August, 1949 (specifically the Convention relating to the Treatment of Prisoners of War) which entered into force on October 21, 1950, and to which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (then known as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam) became a signatory on June 28, 1957. But the North Vietnamese had been quick to recognize the enormous political value accruing to the calculated exploitation for propaganda purposes of their American prisoners—a practice which in itself was yet another violation of those same Conventions which had been specifically crafted to protect prisoners of war from just such manipulation and mistreatment. As a consequence Navy photo-intelligence personnel, in anticipation of the eventual repatriation of the incarcerated POWs, would pore over every newsreel and still photograph in which these hapless souls were depicted, no matter how poor the quality of the image, in an effort to ascertain who was, or at least who had been at one time, a live prisoner of war. The black art of DNA analysis not having yet been developed, the not-so-often articulated, but nevertheless well understood reality was the distinct possibility these check-in mug shots might one day also prove useful to the forensic technicians in graves registry charged with identifying the mortal remains of these same young men.

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To better understand that time in 1972, one must first recall the events and circumstances that preceded. During our own sojourn in Worcester from 1960 to 1964 the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia had been both modest in numbers and limited in scope, reflecting policy decisions made early in the Kennedy administration. "Counterinsurgency" was the new theory being promoted and embraced for effectively dealing with what seemed an endless series of communist-sponsored wars of liberation erupting with increasing frequency throughout the so-called "Third World." Shaped around the notion that we would limit our military activities to support functions such as training and advisory roles to indigenous forces, it placed on the host nation the onus for providing the military combat forces employed in conducting operations in the field against any insurgents aiming to destabilize the existing government, as was then the case in both the Republic of South Vietnam and neighboring Laos. The cumulative total of U.S. military fatalities in that region from all causes during the four-year period we were being steeped in our Jesuit education was 225. But, as a consequence of events soon after our graduation, and the subsequent passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution by the U.S. Congress in August 1964, the level of U.S. involvement would substantially change. The landing of two U.S. Marine battalions in early March of 1965 near Da Nang, South Vietnam, marked the initial introduction of American combat forces there, signaling both a growing

U.S. commitment to sustaining—to the point of propping up—several successive governments of South Vietnam, and an expanded military mission for U.S. forces. For the next several years the number of troops and the scope of their mission would inexorably grow . . . and so would the casualties, both inflicted and incurred by American forces.

Overseeing this major deployment and employment of military might was Robert Strange MacNamara, the Secretary of Defense and one of the few Cabinet Secretaries carried over from the tragically abbreviated Kennedy administration to the follow-on national security team of President Lyndon B. Johnson. During World War II MacNamara had served on the staff of the 21<sup>st</sup> Bomber Command under fabled General Curtis E. LeMay as chief analyst and statistician. As a very young colonel in the U.S. Army Air Corps MacNamara's job was to conduct analysis of the effects of the strategic bombing campaign then being waged against the Japanese home islands with a view towards shaping that campaign to achieve maximum efficiency. After the war he would enter the private sector, rising quickly through the corporate ranks while honing his management style and techniques and achieving great success, most notably with the Ford Motor Company, where he elevated the process he had championed (dubbed "systems analysis") to near religious stature. He seemed a natural choice to the new Kennedy administration to take charge of the unwieldy Department of Defense and instill in that institution the business disciplines one would expect in any major corporation.

Secretary MacNamara brought to his office and government service a phalanx of proteges from his days in the automotive industry—widely known as "The Whiz Kids"—and a supreme self-confidence based upon an unwavering belief in his own superior intellect and an unswerving faith in his own moral rectitude (the foundation of which he credited to the education imparted to him at the University of California, Berkeley). Fresh from having narrowly averted the precipitation of thermonuclear war in the series of calculations and miscalculations that were The Cuban Missile Crisis, MacNamara approached the troubling situation in southeast Asia with the same self-assured assertiveness and business practice formulae that had served him so well in the past. What transpired thereafter remains grist for the mill of what seems will be the eternal national debate on Vietnam.

The often heard complaint that the military was forced to fight in Vietnam "with one arm tied behind their backs" seems today overly simplistic. Probably a fairer assessment would be (to borrow a signature line from a controversial voice of the airwaves) that we fought in Vietnam with half our brains tied behind our backs . . . and the results showed. Most objective analyses of what went wrong for the U.S. in Vietnam point to the fundamental lack of a clear and coherent strategy that effectively tied the tactical employment of military forces in the field to national strategic military objectives that would, in turn, support national strategic political objectives. With slide rules drawn (remember, this was before electronic calculators) Secretary MacNamara and his cohort of systems analysts sought the data that would validate their preconceived notions and conclusions relative to the conduct of what had originally started out as a counterinsurgency operation, but now seemed more and more to resemble a full-blown war.

The first task the "whiz kids" faced was establishing the metrics by which successes could be assessed (failure, understandably, was simply not considered or even permitted to be entertained as a possibility). Their analysis concluded the defining measure of effectiveness should be body count (mostly the enemy's, but ours as well, in order to keep track of the exchange ratio). This having been determined, Secretary MacNamara, flushed with—and validated by—the success he had enjoyed in the resolution of the aforementioned Cuban Missile Crisis, saw a unique opportunity to advance diplomacy through the precise, controlled application of U.S. military power in the Southeast Asia theater of operations.

Diplomacy is not conducted in a vacuum; effectively communicating with other parties is fundamental to the diplomatic process. But when Secretary MacNamara sought to communicate with the North Vietnamese he chose to do so in a sophisticated way, through such subtle means as the targets which were selected for attack and, more importantly in his mind, those which were left untouched. For example, when Air Force planners were tasked with providing a prioritized target list for North Vietnam, the list they crafted contained more than 200 different targets, beginning, naturally, with the most important. Their expectation was to never have to attack all the target sets listed since, rightly or wrongly, they anticipated an enemy collapse following destruction of the higher priority targets proposed. After massaging and review at the Washington level both in the Pentagon and the White House, the prioritized target list was eventually approved and permission was given to start systematically attacking those 200 plus targets sequentially—starting first with those at the bottom of the list (which, unfortunately, meant those that were least important and whose destruction would produce the least harmful—and least persuasive—impact on the enemy).

Meanwhile, U.S. aircraft were also prohibited from attacking the airfields in North Vietnam from which MiG fighters operated, despite the fact it is considerably easier—and less risky—to destroy fighter aircraft on the ground through aerial attack than it is in the skies through aerial combat, especially over the enemy's home turf. Apparently the point of this self-imposed restraint was to avoid possible casualties to Soviet and Chinese military advisors then known to be supporting and training North Vietnamese pilots at those bases. Similarly, restrictions were placed on attacking targets within a rather wide buffer zone along the North Vietnam–China border, again to avoid the possible embarrassment of causing casualties to one of the two communist “superpowers” supporting their clients in the north. And then there were the bombing pauses.

Whenever they occurred, even if of only short duration, the North Vietnamese put forth a maximum effort to push enormous amounts of logistics support into the South to resupply and reinforce their comrades in arms there. Their successes in these endeavors and the results they achieved during each bombing pause were, for them, most gratifying.

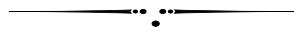
For his part, Secretary MacNamara employed all of the instruments of national power in his practice of the art of statecraft, orchestrating overtures to the North Vietnamese like a maestro conducting his musicians. To his ear he produced exquisite melodies that conveyed sophisticated messages nuanced through delicate harmonies and interesting changes in tempo. MacNamara's band played on through 1965, 1966 and 1967, building to a crescendo in early 1968 and the Tet Offensive. And as the music swelled so, too, did the body counts. That year Americans were killed at a rate of 1,375 a month, or about 45 per day, bringing the running total of U.S. fatalities to 35,486 by year's end. The problem, as it turned out, was the North was governed by communist ideologues who had failed to sign up for music appreciation in their formative years. It didn't help that they were, in effect, stone tone deaf to MacNamara's melodies. By this time, too, on the domestic front the American people had grown weary of Vietnam's tiresome tune.

In the final year of his administration President Lyndon B. Johnson clearly recognized that MacNamara had become a political liability, both to himself and his party. Doing what he did best, LBJ deftly arranged for his Secretary of Defense to submit his resignation and, on March 1, 1968, Clark Clifford replaced Robert MacNamara in the Pentagon's top post. (Nearly 30 years later MacNamara would muse, “I do not know to this day whether I quit or was fired. Maybe it was both.”) Facing growing political unrest at home, President Johnson also came to realize that by now he himself had also become a liability to his party and so, on the last day of that same month he announced he would not seek reelection. Seven months to the day later, fearing his party would suffer

a crushing defeat in the national presidential and congressional elections scheduled for the following week—unless he made some grand gesture calculated to elicit receptiveness on the part of the North to stalled peace negotiations—he announced what became the mother of all bombing pauses, the immediate and total cessation to the bombing of North Vietnam.

In the preceding three and a half years of Operation Rolling Thunder—essentially the reverse order political execution of the military's prioritized target list mentioned earlier, U.S. warplanes dropped on average about 800 tons of bombs per day at a cost of 922 aircraft shot down with not all aircrew surviving, and not all of those who did survive being rescued. As a result, accommodations in the Hanoi Hilton were becoming a bit cramped. And on election day, November 5, 1968, Richard M. Nixon, who campaigned on a promise of “peace with honor” defeated Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey to become the new Commander-in-Chief.

In Washington much of the next three and a half years were spent determining the market price for honor as the Nixon administration reduced the numbers of U.S. forces committed to South Vietnam's defense as the prerequisite first step in extricating ourselves—and our captured airmen—from what had become our national tar baby. Meanwhile in Hanoi the communists opened the floodgates for resupplying and reinforcing the Viet Cong insurgents and, more important, the North Vietnamese army which was by then openly operating in the South. They also invested their energies in expanding, upgrading and reinforcing what had already been a highly effective air defense system to an even more formidable integrated and interlocking anti-aircraft array in anticipation of the day when the Americans would surely return to their skies in response to what would be the North's final offensive in the South. The unfriendly skies of North Vietnam had always been dangerous for American aviators—now they would become downright deadly.



Just how deadly was indicated in a typed letter Ratso had received just two months prior while he was completing his refresher training before rejoining the fleet in his new assignment aboard MIDWAY. It was dated May 1 and sent by an old squadron mate, Ben “Benjo” Guthrie. It read, in part:

Dear Ratso,

I'm sure you've heard by now that we lost CAG [Carrier Airwing Group Commander] Dunlop a few weeks ago. About two days later we lost one of the Marine's A-6s. The pilot, Maj. Smith, spent about 5 days on the ground, but we got him back in one piece. No word on his B/N [bombardier/navigator]. A few days later, Cdr. Moss (one of the A-7 C.O.s [Commanding Officers]) was bagged on the Haiphong strike but he made it to the destroyers (about 1 mile off Do San!!) and we got him back.

The F-4s were hardest hit, though, when Al Molinare and J.B. Souder were bagged by a MiG-21 about ten miles N.W. of Thanh Hoa. Two good 'chutes but it looks like they're guests of the Hilton.

You've also by now heard that Joe Greenleaf was shot down near the DMZ - the flak apparently hit right in the cockpit.

Well you can honestly tell the new troops that it's no longer a “Rose Garden”....Get together as quickly as

possible a lecture on SAM [Surface to Air Missile] evasion tactics. The bastards are getting to be really good.

It's really shitty over here....Don't try to get here in July - it's not worth it. Stall until the ship gets back before checking in. You've all the medals you can get now, so don't worry about being a "part of History" or any other bullshit.

Naturally Ratso would not delay his arrival, no more than any of his fellow aviators, including Benjo. They were, after all, professionals and this was their profession, dangerous though it might be. Each was bolstered by the deeply held conviction his aircraft, training and—most of all—personal airmanship skills made him the most formidable weapon system in the sky. Yet Ratso knew these guys. They, too, were the best. And now some of them were dead or captured. Jaybee Souder had been his roommate a few tours back when they shared a "snake ranch" (Navy lingo for bachelor pad) in Mission Beach, a party community in San Diego renowned for bikinis and beer. Now Jaybee was in the "Hilton," or at least he hoped he was; otherwise, he more likely was dead.

Disregarding Benjo's advice, Ratso joined "the boat" in Hong Kong in late July (naval aviators like to refer to their aircraft carrier as "the boat," much to the annoyance of their surface bound brethren who insist on the term "ship"). He would be flying the most advanced fighter jet in the world, the F-4B Phantom II, in VF-161, a squadron known as "The Chargers." Making his way through the maze of passageways and ladders that were the interior of the aircraft carrier, he found his assigned stateroom (shared with several others) and began settling in to his new "home" on a ship nearly as old as himself. He began unpacking his uniforms, his few personal belongings and his flight gear. As he stowed his flight helmet he could not help but notice it was still adorned with reflective tape showing one of his former squadron's insignia, VF-143. Many memories returned whenever he thought of his old squadron, most of them good but a few sobering as well. His old Executive Officer, CDR William "Bill" Lawrence had "fleeted up" to command the squadron after Ratso had moved on, but on June 28, 1967, flying from the deck of USS CONSTELLATION, Bill Lawrence and his "backseater" had been shot down while leading a strike against targets in the vicinity of Nam Dinh, North Vietnam. Lawrence had now been a POW for more than five years and Ratso could only imagine what he must be enduring in prison at the hands of his communist captors. As he remembered Bill Lawrence he wondered if Bill Lawrence would remember him as a hard charging junior officer in VF-143, the squadron with one of the more unique nicknames in the Navy, the ingredients for a sea story in its own right, but worth summarizing here.

It seems that in designing its insignia the aviators of VF-143 had selected a French knight from the Middle Ages as their archetype role model. Renowned for his prowess in arms and unwavering courage on the field of battle, Chevalier Bayard's motto was *Sans Peur et Sans Reproache*, "Without Fear and Without Reproach." His reputation was such that opposing knights, it was said, would purposely seek to avoid him in battle, a perfect self-image for fighter pilots. For their squadron insignia, the very same crest that adorned this stalwart's shield was selected: a mythical griffin rearing up in a combative stance, its eagle's head on a lion's body depicted in a menacing screech with its tongue prominently visible. Unfortunately much of the finer detail of this daunting image was lost in the graphical translation to the VF-143 squadron flight jacket patch. So, when the insignia made its debut at the base Officers' Club bar not a few people asked what in the world the patch represented. After listening to the explanations provided, one fellow aviator, obviously neither a man of letters nor discriminating taste, is reported to have indelicately observed, "Man, that looks

more like a pukin' dog!" Instantly it was recognized by all present as one of those defining moments in the history of naval aviation. VF-143 would never be able to shake the Pukin' Dog nickname. What to do? Who could possibly want to be referred to as a Pukin' Dog? The riposte was deft and elegantly simple, appealing to the essence of what constitutes the universal spirit of Navy fighter pilots. Immediately it was declared that henceforth, the aviators of VF-143 would not tolerate simply being called Pukin' Dogs; they instead would insist on officially being referred to by the more dignified—and more heroic—title of "The World Famous Pukin' Dogs."

Now no longer a World Famous Pukin' Dog, Ratsö added the task of redecorating his flight helmet to reflect his new squadron insignia, "The Chargers" of VF-161, to his "to do" list. First, however, he would have to focus on "strapping in" with his new squadron mates. He would be replacing Lieutenant Commander Ron "Mugs" McKeown, which meant his new "backseater," or Radar Intercept Officer (RIO) would be Lieutenant Jack "Inchworm" Ensö. These would be large shoes to fill since the aircrew team of McKeown and Ensö had distinguished themselves in aerial combat over North Vietnam only two months before. As a consequence, Mugs was now on his way to a promotion and a really choice assignment as the Commanding Officer of the Navy Fighter Weapons School at Miramar Naval Air Station in San Diego, better known as Top Gun.

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The day of their excellent adventure had been Tuesday, May 23. Mugs and Jack had attended their mission briefing as they had so many times before. This was combat cruise number four of the Vietnam War for Ensö and he already had more than 200 missions in his log book. This day they were to lead a two plane mission on combat air patrol, or CAP. Their job would be to protect a large scale air attack known as an "Alfa" strike. The day's strike was planned against targets in the vicinity of North Vietnam's major port city of Haiphong. The job of Jack and Mugs, as well as their wingmen, would be to intercept and engage any North Vietnamese MIG fighters that might attempt to attack the main strike force. For this particular mission the F-4B Phantom II they had drawn was Bureau Number 153020, the aircraft with side number 100, officially designated Rock River 100, but affectionately—and irreverently—referred to as "double nuts" in the VF-161 ready room.

As the RIO, Jack strapped himself into his seat behind "Mugs" and ran through the pre-flight ritual, his thoughts focused on the mission at hand. He was responsible for operating the aircraft's radar and electronics warfare suite as well as orchestrating intercepts of hostile aircraft while sharing responsibility for firing the F-4's various weapons systems with his "frontseater" pilot. This freed the pilot up to concentrate on flying and maneuvering the high performance aircraft to place them in the best position to effectively engage an enemy. For this division of labor to work efficiently, the pilot and his RIO obviously had to be closely attuned to each other, to function as one if they were to be successful—if they were to survive.

After launching the aircrew joined with their wingmen and topped off their tanks with an ariel refueling before proceeding to their assigned blocking station in support of the strike package. As they flew low through rugged terrain to better mask their approach from enemy radar controlled air defense systems they received a radio transmission indicating MiGs were airborne and headed their way. They initially made contact with two MiG-19s but soon discovered an additional four MiG-17s following behind in an apparent attempt to ambush both F-4s. What followed was a gut wrenching, adrenalin pumping five minute fur ball against the more nimble MiGs, made all the more exciting by being conducted at low altitude where a granite cloud can be just as deadly as an enemy missile. At the end of the aerial combat two of the six MiGs had been destroyed and both F-4s returned safely.

The action is best summarized in the following citation:

For extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy as a naval flight officer of jet aircraft while serving with Fighter Squadron ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE embarked in USS MIDWAY (CVA-41). On 23 May 1972, in support of an air strike against the Haiphong petroleum products storage in North Vietnam, the Combat Air Patrol element, in which Lieutenant Ensched participated as a Radar Intercept Officer, was taken under attack by six enemy fighter aircraft. Lieutenant Ensched was instrumental in providing critical tactical information to his pilot and in covering the stern of the patrol element. In the ensuing low-altitude aerial combat, he materially contributed to the success of the mission in which he and his pilot were credited with the confirmed downing of two enemy fighter aircraft. Lieutenant Ensched's superb airmanship and courage reflected great credit upon himself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

The Navy Cross is superseded in precedence only by the Medal of Honor. Both Mugs and Jack were each decorated with the Navy Cross for their actions that day.

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But while Ron McKeown and Jack Ensched were performing their heroic feats in the hostile skies above North Vietnam, not everyone looking skyward in that country wished them ill or meant to shoot them down.

James Burton Souder, known as Jaybee to his friends, was born in Carter County, Tennessee, where he spent his boyhood before moving to the Fort Lauderdale area some thirteen years later as a consequence of his parents' divorce. In high school he distinguished himself on the swim team, having been selected as a High School All-American, which subsequently led to a swimming scholarship at the University of Florida. He eventually transferred and graduated from Florida State before joining the Navy in January 1963 and entered flight training four months later. Slightly less than perfect eyesight prevented him from becoming a pilot, but he won his Naval Flight Officer wings of gold and served as an F-4 Radar Intercept Officer. In the Spring of 1972 Jaybee found himself as a guest at what arguably was the most famous Hilton in the world, but any thoughts he might have had about going down to the hotel pool and spa and swimming a few laps for old times sake would only be cruel delusions. As you have no doubt already surmised, the return address for any postcards from Jaybee these days—if he could have mailed them, which he could not—would be the prison on Hoa Lo Street, in downtown Hanoi, in a cell block designated "Camp Unity" by his fellow prisoners.

Here Jaybee could recall better days when he had performed his own skillful feats in the skies above. Like on October 26, 1967, some four and a half years ago, when he was a World Famous Pukin' Dog on patrol with another squadron-mate as wingman. The wingman pilot was a Crusader in a Phantom, our classmate, then Lieutenant (junior grade) Robert P. Hickey, Jr., and his backseater, Ltjg. Jeremy "Jerry" G. Morris. Jaybee had detected an inbound bogey on his radar at long range, some 17 miles, a bogey that turned out to be a MiG-21. But Jerry was unable to pick up the threat aircraft on his instruments, so Jaybee had directed both aircraft in a "wild, full-burner, clawing-climbing intercept to up around 30,000 feet, finally putting [them] at the MiG's 6 o'clock." When Jerry finally got his radar lock-on, problems in Jaybee's aircraft prevented a missile launch, so Jaybee told "Burner Bob" Hickey to shoot the MiG. He did, and his air-to-air radar guided missile destroyed the enemy aircraft, the pilot successfully ejecting to fight another day. (And fight he did, surviving the war but going on to compile a record of eight U.S. aircraft shot down, tying him with two others

as the second leading North Vietnamese “aces” of the conflict.) Bob Hickey and Jerry Morris each received Silver Stars for their actions. Jaybee was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Yes, those were the days, the days when he thought he was invincible. He would be disabused of that view in the spring of 1972 following the three and a half year bombing halt.

It was on Thursday, April 27, just three weeks after the U.S. had resumed full scale air attacks against the North, following the Easter Offensive in the South by the communists, that Jaybee and his pilot Al Molinare (as mentioned in Benjo’s letter to Ratso) were shot down and eventually delivered to what U.S. aviators had long ago nicknamed the Hanoi Hilton. A miserable place built by the French in 1904 with all of the creature comforts of the Bastille, though constructed on a more modest scale, it had been inherited by the victorious Viet Minh communists in 1954, many of whose leadership had also been unwilling guests in these very same cells when resisting the French. It had been Jaybee’s 335<sup>th</sup> combat mission when he and Al were shot out of the sky and now he was facing an unknown future, beyond the near certain knowledge of the pain and suffering he knew he could expect on a daily basis at the sadistic hands of his captors. But as one of the early arrivals of this new wave of “bagged” aviators (after the dearth of new “guests” for the three and a half year bombing halt), Jaybee and his comrades knew their fates could not compare with those who had been held since before President Johnson had stopped the air offensive against the North in November 1968—some having been prisoners even for several years before that. So in acknowledgment of their neophyte status, they came to be known by the acronym of FNGs, or “fuckin’ new guys,” as opposed to the highly revered FOGs—the “fuckin’ old guys.” Born of an admixture of resoluteness and defiance, these designations reflected the pee-in-the-mouth-of-the-dragon attitude at the core of the captured airmen’s efforts to resist the calculated punishment aimed at breaking them physically, mentally and spiritually. Years later following his release and safe return, Jaybee would write in somewhat sanitized and more delicate language:

The happiest day of my life was when we got on that big beautiful Air Force C-141 Medevac [Medical Evacuation aircraft] and took off from Hanoi. Although the forty of us released that day were all “new guys” to the Hanoi Hilton, we were still almost overcome with having attained our freedom. I think we all had one particular feeling and I think for the first time, experiencing the emotions which we felt that day, we could finally realize that the “old guys” were free. The “old guys”—those are the gallant men who have served their country as none other before them have served.

The greatest inspiration I experienced in Hanoi came to me my first day there. I was extremely tired, hungry, thirsty and aching all over from that long truck trip north. The interrogators had begun their work. I looked to myself for strength but found I had little to offer. I wondered how I would sustain myself during the long months and possibly years ahead. Then the thought came to me, “You are in the presence of the greatest men in the world.” I thought of Captain Bill Lawrence, under whom I’d served in 1967, and Captain Jim Stockdale and Jerry Denton and Colonel Robbie Reisner and the many others who had endured the pain and hardships of POW life for so long. Then my job became a very easy one compared to theirs. I never lost sight of that fact and it sustained me throughout.

But in April 1972 Jaybee Souder had no notion of when he might expect liberation. Indeed, about the best he could hope for was that he would never lose his FNG label and be elevated to the status of an FOG. During moments of reflection he would also fear for all of his friends in arms who were—or would be—flying missions over the North, and ponder how much greater the danger to

them had become as a result of the buildup of the air defense systems protecting the likeliest targets to be attacked. And each night, as he laid himself down to sleep and prayed the Lord his soul to keep, Jaybee also prayed his friends would not have to fly in harm's way. Prominent in those prayers was his old roommate from his days in San Diego when he and Ratso had shared their San Diego Mission Beach bachelor pad. In his heart of hearts he had a premonition that if Ratso were to deploy he would become yet another victim of the incredibly deadly Soviet designed and built integrated air defenses of North Vietnam. But the last he had heard Ratso wasn't due to ship out for a couple of more months and, with any luck, he might not even make it to the theater of operations before his new "boat," USS MIDWAY, returned from deployment to her San Francisco bay area homeport.



It had now been several weeks since he'd joined The Chargers and Ratso and Jack Ensich had already flown twelve combat missions together. Today, Friday, August 25, nearly three months to the day when Jack had earned his Navy Cross, they were preparing for their thirteenth mission together, their second of the day. They had drawn Rock River 100, old double nuts, which Jack now considered his lucky aircraft, and like that day in May, they were to lead a section of MiG CAP in support of an Alfa strike against targets just to the south of Haiphong at Ninh Binh. In the morning they had flown in the same general area and observed heavy SAM firings. Taking the optimistic view, they hoped the supply of SAMs in the vicinity of the target area had, at least for the remainder of the afternoon, been depleted. After a routine launch Rock River 100 proceeded north to take up their station, but just as they were about to cross the beach and go "feet dry" they received a hold order from their airborne air controller. The main strike force had been delayed so they took up a waiting station off the coast out of SAM range waiting for their air controller to release them to their blocking station inland. Meanwhile, the search radars of the North Vietnamese were able to track them as they orbited in waiting station. They were also able to sound the alarm and bring all missile batteries to full alert..

Shortly afterward the "Go" call came and Ratso increased speed for the dash across the beach. What followed resembled the first 20 minutes of *Saving Private Ryan*, only in the air. Jack Ensich's own words paint the picture:

Soon after going "feet dry" we were taken under attack by what seemed like every SAM and AAA site in North Vietnam. Our electronic detection and warning gear was lit up....and our headsets were alive with such a cacophony [of warning alarms. The MiG CAP mission]....quickly took a back seat to the immediate problem at hand: avoiding the myriad of SAMs being fired at us....

We maneuvered hard, keeping up the speed, expending chaff [metallic foil electronic countermeasures designed to confuse radars], and turning this way and that to avoid the missiles. I counted at least five that we successfully defeated when the world caved in on me: there was a dazzling light and tremendous concussion over the cockpit as a SAM we didn't see detonated. I looked down to see shards of canopy Plexiglass strewn about the cockpit and my left hand laying in my lap, covered in blood. "Oh, my God, no!" I screamed.

Embodied in those words was the thought that "this can't be happening to me." I guess that after 285 combat missions over four cruises, I thought I was immune. Others might get shot down, not me! How very wrong I was.

After the initial shock Jack's training kicked in and he screamed into the intercom for Ratso. "Are you

O.K.? Can we make it back to the water?" But there was no reply.

I looked forward to see him slumped forward over the controls as we hurtled toward the ground at three to four thousand feet and almost five hundred knots.

Realizing we were in a dire situation, I reached between my legs with my good hand and pulled the ejection handle to get us out of the plane. (The command ejection system allowed either crew member to eject both cockpits.) I felt the initial surge as the seat started up the rail and the tremendous blast of air as I hit the windstream, and then, I was hanging in my chute surrounded by a peaceful silence.

Looking around, I saw the plane crash and [Ratso's] deployed chute some distance from me; then, I began doing what we were trained to do in such a situation: I looked up to check my chute...., looked down to [assess] my landing area (rice paddies), and reached for my survival radio to get out a broadcast of my position and condition.

It was then that I realized my hands were not doing what my brain was telling them to do. I looked down to discover that the high speed ejection had caused my limbs to flail violently in the wind. In addition to a badly mangled left hand, both elbows were dislocated, the forearms pushed halfway up the inside of each upper arm. I was helpless!

Almost as soon as he landed Jack was swarmed by the waiting North Vietnamese. Overhead their wingmen aircrew, LT Bud Taylor and LTJG Jim Wise, also observed two good parachutes from the doomed Rock River 100. Immediately they began initiating standard Search and Rescue (SAR) procedures for their downed comrades. But while an emergency radio beacon was detected for a few seconds, subsequent attempts by the on station SAR package to establish communications with the two stricken aviators proved futile. With the gathering darkness the SAR effort was temporarily called off to resume the next morning. Two days later, with no further contact from either of the missing aircrew, SAR operations were terminated.

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Eight days following the shootdown, on the first Saturday evening in September, North Vietnamese guards deposited the newest new guy in the small bamboo hut in the middle of the courtyard at Camp Unity. From what Jaybee could see and hear from one of the cells that comprised the courtyard perimeter, the new guy, LT Jack Enschede, was in very bad shape. He would later learn this could be attributed in part to some unusual medical attention Enschede had received—or, perhaps more accurately, endured. After more than three days of brutal around-the-clock interrogation, Jack had been taken to an individual claiming to be a doctor to finally tend to his mangled left hand and his still dislocated elbows and forearms. Citing an apparently heretofore unknown clause in the Hippocratic oath, the “doctor” had denied Jack’s request for a pain killer as he amputated his thumb, declaring the aviator should “experience suffering for the suffering [Enschede] had caused in his country.” Following this procedure the patient had been placed in a chair and held down by several of his Vietnamese jailers while the “doctor” placed his foot on his chest and, in turn, grabbed his forearms, yanking and pulling them out of his upper arms in a crude attempt to reset them.

Following his “operation,” and like those who had gone before him, Jack was once again subjected to the daily interrogations, threats and abuse at the hands of the North Vietnamese. By the end of the month, after successfully resisting the coercive efforts of his captors and having been caught attempting to communicate with other prisoners in the perimeter cells, new guy Jack Enschede was finally thrown into one of those surrounding cells with other POWs. His isolation was finally

over, and it was then that he broke down and cried.

Like any new guy Jack Ensich represented a rich lode of information to be mined by his brother POWs: news from the “real world,” information on what was going on with the war, and the latest tally on who else had been recently shot down to compare against the current roster of POWs known to have made it to the Hilton. Almost immediately Jaybee was crushed to learn that Jack Ensich had been Ratso’s backseater; his earlier premonition had, unfortunately, been fulfilled. But what had become of Ratso? Was he also captured? Might he, too, be checking in to the Hilton? Beyond reporting Ratso’s good ‘chute, Jack could not confirm his pilot’s fate. And while he worried deeply for his friend, Jaybee knew he was not the only one with an intense interest in Ratso’s well-being.

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“THE CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL REGRETS TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR SON, LCDR MICHAEL WILLIAM DOYLE, UNITED STATES NAVY, IS MISSING IN ACTION AS A RESULT OF COMBAT DAMAGE SUSTAINED BY HIS AIRCRAFT WHILE ON AN AIR COMBAT MISSION OVER HOSTILE TERRITORY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.”

The special handling instructions on the telegram read “DO NOT DELIVER BEFORE 6 A.M.” But it was two o’clock in the morning when the Doyle family received the devastating news, and it was then their thirteen-year long nightmare would begin. What had become of their son? Was he still alive? Would they ever see him again?

Initially Lieutenant Commander Michael W. Doyle, aka Paw, aka Ratso, aka Dou Dou Doyle, was officially classified as Missing in Action (MIA). However, just four months later, right before Christmas when there was precious little to celebrate and much to pray for in the Doyle family household, Mike would be reclassified as an “unconfirmed” prisoner of war (POW). Though the basis for this action was not entirely clear, with his new upgraded status came renewed hope for his family. That hope would soar for only a few weeks. In January 1973 the North Vietnamese agreed to a formal ceasefire and the release of all American POWs in their custody. The list of POWs they provided—both those who had survived their captivity and those who had not—did not include Mike Doyle’s name.

The next several years were spent in a desperate attempt to determine Mike Doyle’s status and fate, both by the government and his family. There were bits and scraps of information to sift through, some tantalizing, others not so. For example, on the thirteenth of September 1972, just three weeks after the shootdown, the following article filed by Tam Ke, a reporter for the Hanoi newspaper *Nhan Dan*, appeared under the title “U.S. Pilot Captured in Hai Hung Province.”

The F-4 was hit by ground fire and its entire fuselage burst into flames and plummeted to the ground causing the ground to shake and generating a large black cloud of smoke that could be seen clearly from far away. In the sky, a red parachute floated down. His friends had fled. Some men were ordered to risk their lives in rescuing him and searched madly and loudly but the bright, thick fire from the ground covered their flight path and they fled in panic. The pilot with the parachute floated slowly down to a field near the village. He could not know that in Township T.K. there was a “determined-to-win” militia platoon that had for many years drilled in fighting and capturing the enemy. Therefore, while his parachute was still high in the air, the fate of this pilot had been decided..The pilot landed in a rice field about 300 meters from the village. He was still fumbling with the parachute lines when he was grabbed

by five people. Someone cut the parachute lines and took his gun, ammunition, and knife while another took his hat, flying suit, and radio. The pilot was blue with fear as he begged forgiveness for his murderous crimes in a whisper...[he] had been wounded in the leg and the right [sic] hand, where he had lost his thumb and an index finger....The time was 1725 hours on the afternoon of 25 August 1972.

Obviously the captured aviator was Jack Enschede, and just as obvious, the North Vietnamese on the scene seemed curiously unaware there was a second crewman who had been ejected from the downed F-4. How they could have missed the second parachute, particularly since the ejection had occurred at such low altitude, seems unusual.

Then there were sketchy reports suggesting Mike had made it to the Hilton, with claims his name had been scratched on a pre-interrogation cell wall in the prison. But on March 29, 1973, when the last flight of surviving POWs to be repatriated departed Vietnamese airspace, the Doyle family's hopes suffered a severe setback. Amidst the joys of other families being reunited, and being given widespread coverage in our national media, there was no relief or peace for them. As his younger brother John, himself a naval flight officer, would later put it,

For thirteen years the North Vietnamese professed no knowledge of Mike's fate (as well as the fates of numerous other downed Americans). In February 1980, the Department of the Navy changed Mike's status to 'Presumed Killed in Action.' Five years later, in July 1985, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam gratuitously announced that they were returning the remains of 26 American servicemen, all of whom had been MIA. Commander Michael William Doyle appeared on the list. [It was Department of Defense policy to promote all those listed as MIA along with their peers, and prior to being reclassified as presumed killed in action, Mike had been promoted to Commander.]

Mike's remains were returned and subsequently positively identified. They were complete and showed no appreciable evidence of weathering; his Geneva Convention identification card was included in a sealed bag. The evidence indicates that the North Vietnamese could have confirmed Mike's fate at any time from the day he was shot down. They simply chose not to.

In retrospect it was always Jack Enschede's belief that Mike had been mortally wounded by the SAM's fragmentation warhead explosion. As the backseater Jack had been somewhat shielded when the missile detonated in close proximity, just forward and above Rock River 100's nose. Mike, on the other hand, seated in the forward cockpit, was more exposed to the full force of the blast. This also accounted for the severe injuries to Jack's left hand, for he had been grasping what resembles a roll bar separating the two cockpits with that hand to better brace himself during the violent evasive maneuvers they had been making. Of course, only the North Vietnamese really know when Mike Doyle died, but as Mike's brother Jack has already observed, they have shown no inclination to be forthcoming in this regard. With the confirmed identification of Mike's remains, his official date of death was listed as 25 August, 1972, the day of the shootdown.

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Michael William Doyle, was born into this world on February 13, 1943 in the city of New Orleans, famous for its fine food, Bourbon street, Mardi Gras and a custom and practice unique to the Big Easy: jazz funerals that juxtapose solemnity with celebration. One thousand eighty miles away, in Arlington National Cemetery, funerals are conducted with far less panache, proceeding in

accordance with well-prescribed procedures that are contained in various written directives issued by the Department of Defense and the individual Armed Services. On November 7, 1985, written directives and procedures notwithstanding, that would all change.

It was a Thursday, and it was a good day for the bad guys in the City of Brotherly Love. Dozens of special agents and other employees in the Philadelphia FBI field office were taking a sick day. It was neither an epidemic nor a work action that had prompted this unusual situation. Rather, it was a sign of respect for two of their colleagues. Mike Doyle's father had been an FBI special agent for many years in Philadelphia, as was Mike's youngest brother, Jere, junior. All told, fully forty-eight current and former FBI employees had chartered a bus for the 150-mile three hour trip to Arlington National Cemetery to bear witnesses to the interment with full military honors of Commander Michael W. Doyle, United States Navy.

So, too, had a host of family, friends and colleagues gathered that day after so many years of anguish, hope, despair and now, acceptance and relief Mike Doyle had finally come home from the Vietnam War. Included in the gathering were several priests, all of them Irish, who had known the Doyle family since anyone could remember. There were many more naval officers, both those still on active duty and those since retired. Some were flag officers, including Vice Admiral William "Bill" Lawrence the former POW, one of the FOGs, who had been The World Famous Pukin' Dogs XO when Mike was a junior officer there, and who, it seems, still remembered Ratso Doyle. Rear Admiral William "Wild Bill" Harris was there as well, the Commanding Officer of USS MIDWAY for that combat cruise in 1972. So were Commander Jack Ensich, still on active duty, and Jaybee Souder, who himself had just retired from the Navy the previous month as a Commander. CDR Jerry Morris, Bob Hickey's former backseater, flew all the way from Japan just to attend the ceremony.

Jack Doyle had taken charge of coordinating the family arrangements for the somber occasion. The ceremony was scheduled for one o'clock in the afternoon, but, as it turned out, things were running a little late that day. As Jack recalls, one of the funerals ahead of them that was probably causing the backup was rather large, commemorating the passing of one of the Army's last retired Generals who had served in the horse cavalry in his youth. He remembers there were lots of extra horses involved, beyond those regularly assigned to haul the funeral caisson and casket. While a half hour delay would seem of little consequence, particularly in view of the occasion, in this instance there was indeed a problem. Jack had arranged, through no small effort, a flyover and missing man formation to coincide with the grave-side ceremony to honor his brother.

Finding a Navy fighter squadron willing to perform the flyover was no problem at all. Mike Doyle had been well respected in the Navy fighter community with many of his contemporaries now in command of fighter squadrons themselves. So, too, Jack Doyle was equally well connected, having followed in his older brother's footsteps, both at Holy Cross and then into the Navy (although he had originally started out in submarines before "surfacing" and transferring into the naval flight program). And, just as his older brother Mike had started out as a RIO before qualifying for the front seat pilot's position, Jack Doyle had become a "backseater" too, though by career's end most of his flight hours had been logged in the F-4B Phantom II's replacement model, the F-14A Tomcat, of *Top Gun* fame.

For Jack Doyle the real challenge had been getting approval for the flyover in the crowded airspace surrounding Washington, D.C. The rules and regulations were many and restrictive, leaving no flexibility for delaying or modifying the flyover once approved. Some of the salient admonitions are listed here:

Missing man formations are reserved for memorial or funeral services for dignitaries of the armed forces and the federal government and active duty aviation rated/designated

personnel . . .

Approval of flyovers or aerial demonstrations does not constitute authority to deviate from the applicable Federal Air Regulations (FARs) pertaining to speed and altitude . . .

Prior to any aerial demonstrations being conducted, the FAA's Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) must approve, in writing, any waivers to the applicable FARs . . .

Moreover, there was no effective way to communicate with the flight once airborne, so the entire evolution was predicated on prearranged timing. Once the mission was airborne, there would be no adjustments to their planned time on top.

So, when the four Ghostriders of VF-142 swooped out of the November sky on schedule, the funeral procession had not yet begun to roll. The F-14As came in low and slow, perhaps a little bit lower and a little bit slower than regulations prescribed. In the world of aerodynamics, aircraft can go slower by reducing power and/or creating more drag, but too much drag means too much slow and then gravity overrides aerodynamic lift and bad things can happen quickly. To keep from stalling and falling out of the sky the pilot can apply power, lots of power. It's sort of analogous to driving your car down the highway with one foot on the brake and the other on the accelerator, only your engine has no muffler. With a thunderous roar that reverberated throughout the area—what fighter pilots call “The Sound of Freedom”—Mike Doyle's comrades—in—arms paid their last respects to their fallen brother as the “missing man” aircraft pulled up and away. It was an impressive and stirring demonstration, clearly indicative of the high esteem in which Mike Doyle was held by his peers.

Then the funeral procession got underway. At the point was the horse drawn caisson bearing Mike's flag-covered casket. On either flank was the Navy Honor Guard followed by a long file of limousines carrying the many mourners. Then the funeral procession stopped. As Jack Doyle recalls there were riderless horses everywhere, dodging in and out of the neat rows of gravestones, pursued by Army personnel in their dress uniforms intent on retrieving the spooked animals—in Jack's mind spooked most likely by the Ghostriders and The Sound of Freedom. It was at this point the occupants of the first several limos, including Jaybee Souder, got out to watch the roundup in progress. When the procession was ready to resume, those standing outside in the crisp November air decided to walk the final mile with Mike. And so it was they made their way to Plat 65, Grave 4077 to observe the ritual of a burial with full military honors: the folded flag presented to the grieving family, the firing squad's three quick volleys, the mournful notes of taps hanging in the air. As he watched the coffin being lowered into the grave Jack Enschede could not help but offer his own private prayer of grief and gratitude, for this day, November 7, was also his 48<sup>th</sup> birthday, dramatically underscoring for him how truly fortunate he was to be alive to celebrate another year of life and how sad it was that Mike could never do the same. Now his and Mike's 13<sup>th</sup> and final mission together was finally complete.

Jack Doyle had reserved the Fort Meyers Officers' Club from three o'clock to five o'clock in the afternoon for the post-ceremony reception. In the finest of Irish traditions, the reception was a lively one, fueled by the honor, respect and love each of the mourners had for the Doyle family and their departed son. So at 10:00 P.M. that evening, when the club manager approached Jack Doyle to find out just how much longer the reception that was supposed to end five hours earlier was, in fact, going to last (it seems stocks of certain adult beverages were running low), Jack assured him things would be winding down soon. It was about this time, with the prospect of the club having to soon close, that Jack Doyle and Jaybee decided it was time to move the party elsewhere. So, grabbing three cases of Coors beer and several cans of macadamia nuts—both Mike's favorites—a band of hardy souls stepped out into the November night and headed for the fence surrounding Arlington

National Cemetery.

It was about a mile to the grave site, but the navigational instincts in this band of brothers (and sisters) for the most part proved true, though they failed to notice that one of their number, Jerry Morris—apparently suffering from a tumbled inertial gyro—had dropped out of formation and wandered off-course into the night. Not long afterwards the main formation gathered once again at Mike’s grave to stand Night Vigil, the Right Reverend Jaybee Souder presiding. Speaking on behalf of the gathered flock, Jaybee addressed Mike directly, telling him how much they had all missed him these past thirteen years and how glad they all were now that he was finally back home and at peace. He assured him he would be very gratified to see all who had gathered that day to stand in witness of him being laid to rest. He observed that everyone present there would be extremely honored if their own funerals were anything like his, and he concluded by assuring Mike he could be proud to have been the kind of man who lived his life in such an admirable way as to warrant that kind of respect and affection from those who were privileged to count him as a friend.

At about this time two groundskeepers arrived on the scene with Jerry Morris in tow. He had stumbled upon the night crew as they were preparing graves for the next day’s ceremonies and had asked them for assistance in finding Mike’s grave site. After checking the daily burial schedule and confirming Mike’s grave location they were kind enough to guide Jerry to where the others were gathered, not a little curious as to just what was going on in Arlington National cemetery in the middle of a November night long after the gates had been locked. Jaybee and Jack explained why the group was there and offered each of the night laborers a beer and macadamia nuts. They both remarked that in their many years of employment at Arlington they had never before observed anything quite like this night vigil. They also indicated they were impressed and moved by such devoted friendship, and accepted the proffered Coors and nuts, joining the group as various members present recalled their favorite Mike Doyle stories. Before they departed someone took flash snapshots of the group, which were no doubt visible from some distance away. The cemetery employees then guided them all to the gate to unlock it and let them out. When they got there the MPs were waiting to take them all into custody.

Thanks to the reassurances of their two new best friends, the night grounds crew, the MPs were persuaded to forego apprehensions and, instead, provide courtesy rides back to the Officers’ Club parking lot. With a final salute to their fallen friend the small group were driven away into the night.

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## Epilogue

Ten years later Robert S. MacNamara’s *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* was published. Among its more controversial passages is this startling assertion: “I believe we could and we should have withdrawn from South Vietnam either in late 1963 amid the turmoil following Diem’s assassination or in late 1964 or early 1965 . . .” The 58,000 plus Americans killed and more than 150,000 wounded in the years following this stunning insight begs the question of why, if he believed this, the Secretary of Defense hadn’t so stated at the time, or simply resigned his post as would be expected of most men of conscious.

On February 29, 2004, at the 76<sup>th</sup> annual Academy Awards sacramental rites for the humility-challenged, The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented the prize for best Documentary Feature to Director/Producer Errol Morris and Producer Michael Williams for their

project *The Fog of War*. The 95 minute film focuses, literally and almost exclusively, on octogenarian Robert S. MacNamara as he seeks to enlighten us on the tectonic forces at play in our world during his lifetime—forces which, by his calculation, have resulted in the deaths of more than 160 million souls in various conflicts around the globe.

Embracing the familiar role of analytic statistician, which apparently provides him a psychic security blanket while insulating him from any sense of responsibility—or culpability—for his actions and decisions, MacNamara recalls the words of his former boss, Curtis LeMay during the second world war. According to MacNamara, LeMay had once confided to him that the strategic bombing campaign they were prosecuting against Japanese civilian populations through the systematic fire-bombing of major cities in Japan would surely result in war-crime charges against them both if the Allies were not victorious. “What makes it immoral if you lose and moral if you win?” wonders the erstwhile leader of the Whiz Kids. While being swept up in the whirlwind of World War II in the role of a relatively minor supporting cast member might be chalked up to an instance of life’s lessons learned, MacNamara still refuses to acknowledge any sense of personal responsibility for what he may have done, or failed to do, as the principal architect of our flawed strategy in Vietnam. Instead he simply dismisses his performance in a starring role some forty years ago with “We all make mistakes.”



The uncertainty as to the fate of her oldest son had taken a heavy toll on Ruth Doyle. The years of sorrow eventually proved too much for her and her physical and mental health deteriorated with time. When Mike was buried in 1985 his mother was not in attendance. She had been diagnosed with severe senile dementia and was, by then, institutionalized. But in an Irish mother’s mystic way she seemed to have sensed what events had transpired since she had slipped into the terrible psychic black hole of Alzheimer’s disease. On the following February 13, what would have been her son’s 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday, she stopped eating. A little more than two weeks later, on what was essentially the sixth anniversary of Mike’s status having been changed to Presumed Killed in Action, she mercifully died.



The passageways were deserted as the officer in charge of preparing USS MIDWAY for decommissioning made his way through the ship. For months he had inspected each compartment as it was signed off and accepted for inactivation, or “mothballing.” Before taking on the responsibility for the ship’s decommissioning he had been the Assistant Air Officer, or “Mini-Boss,” when the ship had been fully operational. But now, instead of assisting the “Air Boss” in overseeing the launching and recovery of aircraft on the big deck above, it was his duty to oversee the stripping and laying up of what had once been a proud and storied fighting ship of the line. As he made his rounds of the dying ship this particular day in early 1992 he found himself in the compartment that had been designated as the ship’s chapel. By habit his eyes were drawn to the bronze plaque mounted on the steel bulkhead that commemorated the names of those who had served in MIDWAY and paid the ultimate sacrifice over the ship’s nearly fifty years of service. And, as always, CDR Jack Doyle paused at the name of his older brother Mike in silent remembrance of his loss some twenty years earlier.



The final voyage of ex-USS MIDWAY occurred on Saturday morning, January 10, 2004. It was just a short trip across San Diego harbor from Naval Air Station, North Island to the Navy Pier on the north embarcadero. Following her decommissioning in 1992 the Navy had towed MIDWAY

to the Pacific Northwest, keeping her moored with other inactive ships in the mothball fleet there. But a group of private citizens, mostly retired naval aviators, had organized a campaign to acquire the ship for use as a naval aviation museum in San Diego. MIDWAY was stricken from the naval registry in 1997 and late in 2003 began the tow back to San Diego, having arrived the previous Monday at North Island to load several restored aircraft that would be put on display when the ship is scheduled to open to the public in June, 2004.

Embarked for the trip were various sponsors and donors for the museum project as well as local dignitaries and, of course, the local media. Among those making the trip were the Military Marketing Director for the San Diego Padres major league baseball club, Captain Jack Enschede, U.S. Navy, Retired, and his wife Kathy. The media who sought him out that day for interviews would learn he was wearing his old flight jacket, the same one he had worn in 1972 when not actually flying. They would also hear his reflections as a flood of memories returned, how that last combat tour on MIDWAY had represented both the high and low points of his more than 30 year Navy career, from the exhilaration of that day in May when he and Mugs had shot down two MiGs, to that last catapult shot he had taken with Mike Doyle on August 25.

When I stepped on the deck of the USS Midway that Saturday morning . . . it was the first time I had been aboard since Mike and I launched on 25 August, 1972. I was stationed on the east coast when Midway came through San Diego to be decommissioned after returning from Japan. Therefore, since I've always had one more catapult than trap on Midway, I considered that day as my last landing—so I could close out the lopsidedness in my logbook.

From that last “cat”shot in 1972, Jack’s next flight wouldn’t be for another seven months when, on March 29, 1973, he would board the final Freedom Flight for the last of America’s surviving Vietnam POWs in Operation Homecoming. He would leave Vietnam forever behind, but would return home with honor, and a new call sign bestowed on him by his brother POWs: Jack “Fingers” Enschede.



In 1973 Jaybee Souder had flown out one day earlier than Jack Enschede, ending 335 days of captivity. It’s a number easy for him to remember since he had also been shot down on his 335<sup>th</sup> combat mission. But that was not to be the last flight Jaybee would make in the airspace of Vietnam. Years later, after he had retired from the Navy as a Commander and relations between Washington and Hanoi had begun to thaw, he would fly back there, this time as a tourist. And, like any tourist, he would visit the museums, especially the one on Hoa Lo Street, the former “Hanoi Hilton” where the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people against the predations of the foreign imperialist aggressors is both commemorated and enshrined. As he viewed the many artifacts on display, which include various pieces of flight gear taken from the flyers downed in that conflict decades ago, he was looking for one in particular, one he had heard about from a fellow POW, LCDR Phillip A. Kientzler,

Al Kientzler had the distinction of being the last “Yankee Air Pirate” to be shot down by the North Vietnamese, somewhere over the DMZ just 14 hours before the ceasefire agreed to in the recently signed Paris Peace Accords was to go into effect. Days later, during his in-processing interrogation when he was delivered to the Hanoi Hilton, Al had frustrated his interrogator with stories that were, quite literally, incredible, though the fact he was a World Famous Pukin’ Dog had been established. At one point in the questioning another North Vietnamese entered the room with a flight helmet that had VF-143 markings. In an almost theatrical manner he put the helmet on the

table in the room and walked out, followed shortly thereafter by the interrogator, leaving Al alone and unattended, though probably not unobserved. Al picked up the helmet, which was undamaged, and noted that in the back at the center of its base there had once been some “dyno-tape” affixed to the helmet, as was the practice of the VF-143 parachute riggers who were responsible for the inspection and maintenance of the squadron’s flight gear. Because the tape is embossed, the raised letters stamped in the tape leave no adhesive residue as does the rest of the plastic tape. But when the tape is removed, over time the adhesive residue gathers dust and grime, serving to highlight what had once been embossed there. As he examined the helmet Al could just make out the ghost of the words that had once been: LT MIKE DOYLE

*Wars may cease, but the need for heroism shall not depart from the earth, while man remains man and evil exists to be redressed.*

Alfred Thayer Mahan: *Life of Nelson*

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This has been a story of how the life of Michael W. Doyle ended, the third of our classmates to die in the Vietnam War. You can visit the site where he is remembered on the Virtual Wall at [http://www.vvmf.org//index.cfm?SectionID=110&Wall\\_Id\\_No=13877.0](http://www.vvmf.org//index.cfm?SectionID=110&Wall_Id_No=13877.0) and give testament to how, for the few years we knew him, his life was lived.

The first of our brethren to be killed in Vietnam was Richard R. Kane. Dick was a Major in the Marine Corps whose specialty was flying photo-reconnaissance missions. His memorial page is located at [http://www.vvmf.org//index.cfm?SectionID=110&Wall\\_Id\\_No=27137.0](http://www.vvmf.org//index.cfm?SectionID=110&Wall_Id_No=27137.0) The second of our classmates to fall, Timothy John Shorten, a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant in the Marines, is commemorated at the following web site: [http://www.vvmf.org//index.cfm?SectionID=110&Wall\\_Id\\_No=47285.0](http://www.vvmf.org//index.cfm?SectionID=110&Wall_Id_No=47285.0)

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