



ON GLIDE PATH

An Association of Dues Paying Members
The U.S. Navy GCA/ATC Association

Summer 2011

Vol. 17 no1



Hi and Howdy from the Prez.

This will be a combination of Spring/Summer news.

Right now, the committee to organize the next reunion in Branson, MO is in full swing. And when the next letter comes out there will be a definite time and place (hotel) for our next get together. Suffice it to say at this time that one of the last 2 weeks of September, 2012 will be the date.

I also send my heartfelt sympathy and condolence's to the family's who have lost a loved one within the last few months.

And to those who are ailing, Nina and I pray for healing and return to activity. Our Chaplain, Tom McMahon is doing a great and wonderful job.

As you that attend these functions know, the attendance is gradually dwindling, mostly through attrition, but also through apathy. The Esprit de Corps enjoyed by us older AC's does not seem to be guiding the younger retired and active duty people. So, I call on all of you to actively recruit!! We all know folks who have come to past reunions who have not attended recently. Maybe all they need is a pep talk, to get the old fire going, to get back into the swing of things. Also, a lot of us live close to a NAS, and see these young folks, and maybe if we talk the organization up, they'll be interested. I know I do, and have, and will...

Woo Hoo!!! How time does fly!! You've all heard the analogy; life is like a roll of toilet paper, the closer to the end, the faster it

goes. I can attest to that fact. And, so far, as far as I know, those who have "gone over the hill", so to speak, don't get a second chance. It's not too early to put the next reunion on your schedule to meet new GCA/ATCers, and stay in touch with old friends.

Sooooo, till later in the year, keep your eye on the ball and make plans for September, 2012.

Kent



SEND DUES TO:

Ed Brown
3911 Bonita View Dr.
Bonita, CA 91902

TREASURERS REPORT THRU 31 OCT 2010
GCA-ATC ASSN
ASSETS AND NET WORTH AS OF 5/1/2011

Make checks payable to USN GCA/ATC Assn

Checking Account Balance	1,459.43
OGP Petty Cash	1,000.00
Reserve Savings Fund	9,904.90

1 year	\$15
3 uears	\$40
5 years	\$60
Life	\$130

Net Worth	12,364.33
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**DEPARTED THE PATTERN
To Re-enter Elsewhere**

ACCS JERRY ESTELL

It is with great sorrow that the Estell family announces the passing of Jerry Jerome Estell, age 75, on May 1st, 2011, after a valiantly fought battle with Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS).

Jerry was born on September 28, 1936 to Clifford and Stella Estell in Lonoke, Arkansas. He graduated from Linwood High School in 1954 and enlisted in the United States Navy. He very proudly served his country for twenty-two years as an air-traffic controller and retired a Senior Chief (ACCS). After retirement from the Navy, Jerry became a very successful local small business owner. He graduated from Corpus Christi State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and felt strongly about helping others achieve their dreams of owning a business. Jerry worked tirelessly as the Micro Loan Program Manager at the Corpus Christi Chamber of Commerce and Del Mar College Small Business Development Center. Jerry will be remembered for his contagious laugh, great sense of integrity, dignity, honor, and utmost devotion to his wife of forty years, Manuela, his children and grandchildren. His commitment, affection and love for his family was unmatched. He was a sterling example of what a father is and should be. His parents, his brother James Estell and his in-laws José and María Gallegos, preceded him in death.

He is survived by his faithful and loving wife Manuela, his daughter Melissa and son Jerry Jr., his son-in-law Rob Poppert and daughter-in-law Christine Estell, his grandsons Reilly Poppert, Collin Poppert, Matthew Estell, and his favorite granddaughter Alyssa Estell.

A Funeral Service was held at Seaside Funeral Home on Tuesday, May 3, 2011 at 11:00 A.M. Entombment followed at Seaside Memorial Park, Corpus Christi, Texas.

WANTED

Alive and Ready to
Work
Newsletter
Editor
Must be computer savvy

There once was a sailor
named MacGruder
Who canoed with a girl
in Bermuda
She thought it crude
to be wooed in the nude
So Macgru took an oar
and subdued her.

Originally published in:
WINGS OF GOLD

A Perspective on Air Traffic Control



Preparing for Carrier Control Approach Duty

By CAPT Thomas W. McMahon, USN (Ret.)

It happened one evening in 1957 as fog started its nightly JLinvasion of NAS Miramar, shortly after I took control of an F3H Screaming Demon (the underpowered older to-other of the F-4H Phantom). Sifting in a Ground Controlled Approach (GCA) trailer next to Runway 24R, I had radar-identified the flight during a jet penetration turn off from a low frequency radio beacon four miles east of the field. Just another GCA, so I thought. On final, about four miles from touchdown, suddenly two targets on my Precision Approach Radar (PAR) scope, one showing glide slope, the other the extended centerline of Runway 24R, dropped downward quickly.

Barely out of GCA School a few months before, I knew this meant the flight was rapidly descending in a hard left turn (that I had not given). Worse yet, it was seconds from crashing into the nearby foothills below. Following emergency procedures I urgently issued wave off instructions as both targets disappeared into the radar ground clutter meaning that some of the terrain and California shrubs on the hills were above the aircraft - or it had crashed!

For a few desperate seconds I sat helplessly waiting, when, incredibly, moments later, I saw the flight emerge from the clutter and heard the obviously very shaken pilot say, "Must have gotten a little vertigo there." My first save.

In one form or another many pilots have a story or two of an alert controller helping them live to fly another day. Even though that was over 50 years ago, that save epitomizes Navy Air Traffic Control (ATC) tradition. You can see it in a controller's eyes, the same look I observed in the first Navy Air Controller (AC) I ever saw, an instructor at the Naval Aviation Prep School in Norman, Oklahoma as he taught an orientation course on the AC rating that hooked me; the same look I saw in the mirror everyday after I joined that elite club. Just a few months before graduating from high school in Colorado (not well known for its ships, beaches, and ocean front property), like many high school se-

niors, I was uncertain what I was going to do with my life until I saw the movie, *The Bridges of Toko Ri* starring William Holden, Grace Kelly, and Mickey Rooney, among others. A true epiphany occurred as I locked on to Naval Aviation like an FA-18 on a Precision Approach Landing System (PALS) Mode 1 "Easy Rider" approach. Four months later I was marching at Boot Camp in Company 188 at Naval Training Center San Diego, watching jets flying overhead just like those in the movie. I was on the right track

After graduating from AC A School at Naval Air Technical Training Unit (NATTU) Olathe, Kansas I received orders to Master Jet Naval Air Station Miramar when Top Gun was an annual gunnery exercise at El Centre, California, not what it was to become today. Miramar Tower was the ideal place to learn air traffic control. Like the aviators we were serving, I was fearless, bullet-proof, "bring it on, baby, I am ready" confident.

During the week flight operations ran in intense cycles that periodically filled the air with jets from about 0700 in the morning until 2300 in the evening: F9F, Cougars, F2H Banshees, FJ Furies and the like; even F7U Cutlasses, A2J Super Savages and F3D Skynights. At times, there were so many aircraft swarming around the field and on the runway, it was like mosquitoes at a summer picnic.

They were unbelievably beautiful, but this was also a dangerous environment. By the end of my two year tour over 20 crashes or serious accidents had happened at or near the field. (The accident rate in those days was nearly 10 times higher than when I retired from the Navy 35-years later.) And it became even more challenging as the next generation of high performance jets made their appearance: F3H Demons, F8U Crusaders, and F4D Skyrays. Then it was "Game on!" Anything could happen and often did.

It was only when the fog rolled in, "on little cat feet," as Carl Sandburg wrote, that the orderly chaos of VFR flight operations succumbed to the boring drip of GCA landings, *continued on next page*

each aircraft spaced three miles apart. We tower controllers were relegated to taxi control as we watched aircraft mysteriously emerge from the fog to land (or take off and disappear into it). The idea of being a GCA controller was furthest from my mind. I preferred and loved duty in the tower and had no desire to do anything else. But one day LT Joseph Rezzardy, the ATC Division Officer, asked if I would like to go TAD to GCA "C" School at NATTU Olathe and return to be on the ground floor of a new ATC operation called a Radar Air Traffic Control Center (RATCC). Getting more training was "a no-brainer" as they say, so it was off to GCA School for a couple of months followed by a return to Miramar.

GCA gave me a new perspective in more ways than going from that of an eagle to a ground hog, revealing to me how important radar was to Naval Aviation and why GCA and its progeny were such a good way to go. Aviators in those days did not get a lot of help from navigational aids or aircraft systems. Automation was non-existent and navigational aids were rudimentary. TACAN and VOR were being installed, but it took the Grand Canyon mid-air collision between two airliners and the loss of 128-lives to accelerate implementation of both navigational aid (NavAid) systems. This accident was also the catalyst for passage of the Federal Aviation Act in 1958 that established the National Airspace System, including a requirement that all military controllers be licensed and certified by the Federal Aviation Agency.

For controllers things were just as basic on the ground. There had been some improvements to GCA since its inception in 1943, but in 1956 its air surveillance search radar (ASR) was still strictly raw radar echo (RF energy bouncing off the aircraft's skin) with no IFF (Identify Friend or Foe), and the automation that we take for granted today hadn't even been a dream. Worse yet, the horizontal range was 30 nautical miles and vertical coverage was limited to 8,000 feet, only higher if the aircraft was in a turn that provided more skin for the RF energy to echo back to the radar. If you were lucky you could see a jet in penetration turn at about 12,000 feet, sometimes as high as 14,000 feet. Once the aircraft was on final within 10 miles of the field and close to the extended centerline of the runway, the GCA controller changed to dual function precision approach radar (PAR) scope, glide slope information on top (elevation) and centerline on the bottom

(azimuth). After the aircraft intercepted the glide slope at about five miles, the controller provided glide slope and centerline guidance at a three-to-one ratio. GCA minimums were ceiling of 200 feet, visibility one-half mile, in some cases down to 100 and one-quarter mile. There was scuttlebutt of an occasional "zero, zero" landing here and there.

Back to the pilot with vertigo and the premise of GCA being so ideal for the Navy. Consider if a Demon pilot had been on an ILS approach, would he have recognized that he had vertigo and survived? The answer in that case is, probably not. To understand this, we need to keep in mind the main reason the Navy has naval airfields is to prepare aviators and flight crews for deployment at sea. Certainly, GCA provided all weather airfield operations but at the same time supported the fleet by training and keeping controllers and pilots proficient ashore for later deployments.

Less tangible, but no less important was (and still is) the accompanying trust factor between pilots and controllers. If a pilot could trust a controller for a GCA landing at an airfield in bad weather, could he not do likewise at sea?

Besides safety, the Navy's decision to go with GCA was right for several other reasons. First, it was a good idea because the skills gained as a controller ashore were transferrable to doing the same thing at sea. This was enhanced when the Navy added the shore version of the AN/SPN-42 and AN/SPN-41 to Master Jet Air Stations like NASs Lemoore, Oceana, and Cecil Field. This meant that ashore, between cruises, controllers and pilots were using actual shipboard ATC equipment to simulate carrier recoveries. (We know that all of you "studly" Naval Aviators out there loved having those SPN-41 "needles" (TRN-28, ashore) as a reference when on GCA final approach). It was great for pilots but especially so for controllers because they didn't have as much sea duty as pilots and most other aviation ratings.

Simply put, with so few carriers and amphibious assault ships in the Fleet, controllers had fewer opportunities to go to sea. A back of the envelope estimate is 4:1 respectively (four shore or overseas tours to one shipboard tour). Shipboard duty was limited to aircraft carriers and some amphibious assault ships. With 3,000 ACs in the Navy in my day, a 20-year career only afforded an AC with the opportunity to serve on one or two carriers or aviation ships during a career. To be fair, those who missed shipboard tours completed their sea duty at overseas assignments. In the late 1950s and early 1960s,

continued on next page

I say that from personal experience. I never got a shot at the promised RATCC at NAS Miramar because, before it became operational, I received orders to GCA Unit #50 on Midway Island. Talk about "bait and switch" and going from the speed of heat to watching paint drying, I fumed. Nevertheless, the Cold War radar barrier missions flown by the WV-2 Super Constellations were important and provided me with valuable experience for future applications.

After a short tour on Midway Island and my third trip back to AC B School at NATTU Olathe, my next assignment was shore duty in GCA Unit #4 at NAS North Island, San Diego. Traffic was crazy there. They were still doing mat operations with mostly Skyraiders taking off on Mat 18 and landing under preventive control on Mat 26; takeoffs on runway 18; GCA and tower landings and touch and gos on runway 29; and P5M seaplane operations in South Bay and north in the sea lane between North Island and Lindberg Field. The GCA crew also staffed the ASR unit at the Naval Amphibious Base that provided 1FR approaches for P5Ms to South Bay. When it was VFR, North Island traffic was dense, training for earner duty, my next assignment and my last as an enlisted AC.

Commensurate with making chief petty officer in May 1962 I received orders to the *USS Kitty Hawk* via CCA School. Between the time I started class and graduated, the Cuban Missile Crisis had begun unfolding that ultimately prolonged my getting to the ship until November at Subic Bay, Philippines. When I finally reported aboard to be the CCA Chief, I found that myself and my new crew were relieving plankowners, none of us quite sure whether we were going to war or not. At long last I was living my dream that started in the Aggie Theater in Fort Collins, Colorado years earlier, not only on an aircraft carrier, but a super carrier, the Navy's newest and largest in the Pacific Fleet!

Was I intimidated? How about the new CCA crew? Neither. We were well-trained and for the most part experienced in radar air traffic control, and the CVW-11 pilots and squadrons on board were the same as we had known ashore. Among them was now CDR Joseph Rezzardy, my former ATC Officer at NAS Miramar, who was the OinC of VAW-11 flying E-1Bs. Interesting how the Navy works; Rezzardy, as a young division officer and Naval Aviator, saw potential in a young AC, invested training in him, and was now going to depend on him (and his CCA crew in this case) to help him fly safely on and off the carrier

at night and in inclement weather. That is real trust, typical of Naval Aviation.

Having missed the first month or so of the *Kitty Hawk's* first ever operational cruise, CCA recoveries were still a little ragged when I reported aboard, but that changed dramatically when the Soviets started paying visits to the ship with Badger aircraft. The air wing and ship's company suddenly coalesced into a team and never looked back that cruise or the next as *Kitty Hawk* became legendary for its reliability and performance. Virtually unheard of before, in its first attempt and not long after completion of her first of many WestPac deployments, she won the Battle E for the 1962-64 competitive cycle, plus, the Air and Communications departments received laurels during this period.

Small wonder that between its first two cruises, "*The Hawk*" was selected to host a Presidential Naval Review by President John F. Kennedy in June 1963. I mention it because the year before, JFK was, let's say, underwhelmed with U.S. Navy fleet maneuvers. This time, failure was not an option. All the stops were pulled out. After several rehearsals and a sea chest load of money to ensure its success, I was happy because the Pacific Navy came through with flying colors and CCA got its pattern and bolter control radar (AN-SPN-6) fixed. It had given us fits during the first cruise. We wrung it out during what evolved into a nine month deployment, much of it in the South China Sea during hostilities in Indochina leading up to the official beginning of the Vietnam War. Like all Americans we were shocked by the news from Dallas made by our skipper, CAPT Horace Epes, over the 1MC before reveille that our youthful commander in chief, whom we had hosted on board less than six months before, was dead..

During that cruise we had some amazing flight operations associated with the Vietnam Advisory Campaign. Having dodged war with Russia over Cuba, and played "cat and mouse" with Russian flight crews, some of our pilots were getting-shot down or returning to the ship with battle damage. Carrier diplomacy in action. CCA performed well and did its job.

On a more humorous (now, but not at the time note): while operating out of Yokosuka I will never forget cruising off the Kuril Islands in the North Pacific in the winter and getting the word that air show practice for some Japanese dignitaries (that we were going to fly on board later) was a "go" even though our radar was clobbered *continued on next page*

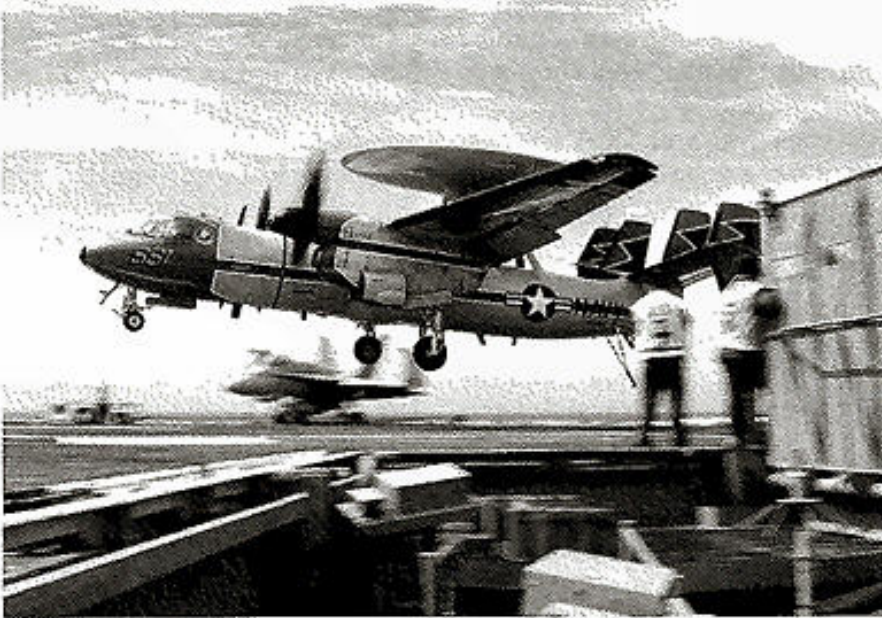
On a more humorous (now, but not at the time note): while operating out of Yokosuka I will never forget cruising off the Kuril Islands in the North Pacific in the winter and getting the word that air show practice for some Japanese dignitaries (that we were going to fly on board later) was a "go" even though our radar was clobbered with snow showers that were dutifully reported to and apparently ignored by the Air Boss. Never mind, about 12 or 14 aircraft were launched and the ensuing chaos was classic. Tops were above 24,000 feet or so and everyone was IFR right after launch. Forget joining up with your flight, it was every pilot for himself. While we were trying to help from departure control, the word came down quickly from the Air Boss that the practice was canceled, "All flights, your signal is Bingo to Misawa, over 800 miles away! There were no tankers or flights with a buddy store for fuel; it was max conserve. Pilots were incredulous, even angry! One by one, we gave each their Bingo instructions, something like [your] "pigeons two-six-zero, 800 miles, report feet dry." "Yeah, right!" Like we could hear them if they did.

Believe it or not, all of them made it, some back to the ship when we got a break in the weather, but for the others, King Neptune collected a ransom for safe passage of a lot of empty drop tanks that had to be released to be able to make Misawa.

So how does this fit this story? Simply put, whether the flights departed or stayed, CCA controllers were up to the task.

About the time we were getting ready to head back home in July 1964, streaming a 1,000 foot-long "homeward bound" pennant, I received word that I had been selected as a Limited Duty Officer, Aviation Operations Specialist (later, Air Traffic Control Specialist) to be commissioned on 1 October 1964. My career was about to take yet another dramatic turn. Throughout the rest of my 26-years as a naval officer I never forgot the value of training to fight the way you fight and how important radar air traffic control was (and still is) to Naval Aviation.

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Day-time, good weather approaches are one thing, but when low ceilings and poor visibility prevail, air traffic controllers are absolutely essential to safety. Here, a VAW-120 E-2C lands on USS George H.W. Bush during Atlantic operations in August, in excellent weather conditions. (MCSN Kevin Steinbert)

Always look for the Silver Lining

Tour boats ferry people out to the USS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii every thirty minutes. We just missed a ferry and had to wait thirty minutes. I went into a small gift shop to kill time. In the gift shop, I purchased a small book entitled, "Reflections on Pearl Harbor " by Admiral Chester Nimitz.

Sunday, December 7th, 1941--Admiral Chester Nimitz was attending a concert in Washington D.C. He was paged and told there was a phone call for him. When he answered the phone, it was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on the phone. He told Admiral Nimitz that he (Nimitz) would now be the Commander of the Pacific Fleet.

Admiral Nimitz flew to Hawaii to assume command of the Pacific Fleet. He landed at Pearl Harbor on Christmas Eve, 1941. There was such a spirit of despair, dejection and defeat--you would have thought the Japanese had already won the war. On Christmas Day, 1941, Adm. Nimitz was given a boat tour of the destruction wrought on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. Big sunken battleships and navy vessels cluttered the waters every where you looked. As the tour boat returned to dock, the young helmsman of the boat asked, "Well Admiral, what do you think after seeing all this destruction?" Admiral Nimitz's reply shocked everyone within the sound of his voice. Admiral Nimitz said, "The Japanese made three of the biggest mistakes an attack force could ever make or God was taking care of America . Which do you think it was?" Shocked and surprised, the young helmsman asked, "What do mean by saying the Japanese made the three biggest mistakes an attack force ever made?"

Nimitz explained. Mistake number one: the Japanese attacked on Sunday morning. Nine out of every ten crewmen of those ships were ashore on leave. If those same ships had been lured to sea and been sunk--we would have lost 38,000 men instead of 3,800.

Mistake number two: when the Japanese saw all those battleships lined in a row, they got so carried away sinking those battleships, they never once bombed our dry docks opposite those ships. If they had destroyed our dry docks, we would have had to tow everyone of those ships to America to be repaired. As it is now, the ships are in shallow water and can be raised. One tug can pull them over to the dry docks, and we can have them repaired and at sea by the time we could have towed them to America . And I already have crews ashore anxious to man those ships.

Mistake number three: every drop of fuel in the Pacific theater of war is in top of the ground storage tanks five miles away over that hill. One attack plane could have strafed those tanks and destroyed our fuel supply. That's why I say the Japanese made three of the biggest mistakes an attack force could make or God was taking care of America .

I've never forgotten what I read in that little book. It is still an inspiration as I reflect upon it. In jest, I might suggest that because Admiral Nimitz was a Texan, born and raised in Fredericksburg , Texas --he was a born optimist. But anyway you look at it--Admiral Nimitz was able to see a silver lining in a situation and circumstance where everyone else saw only despair and defeatism. President Roosevelt had chosen the right man for the right job. We desperately needed a leader that could see silver linings in the midst of the clouds of dejection, despair and defeat.

There is a reason that our national motto is, IN GOD WE TRUST