

INTRODUCTION AND CONTENTS

VF-781 Pacemakers



The VF-781 Pacemakers, training with the “Weekend Warriors” in the Naval Reserve at NAS Los Alamitos, California, volunteered for recall as a unit for the Korean War, and were recalled on July 25, 1950, just one month after the North Koreans invaded the South on June 25, 1950. This action set the pattern for Naval squadron recall and resulted in the squadron being termed “Pacemakers.”

The Pacemakers went on to establish many other firsts during their two tours in the Korean War as VF-781 and after integration into the Regular Navy as VF-121.

“*TIME*,” July 31, 1950 (page 11)

ARMED FORCES

First in War . . .

Naval Reserve Squadron VF-781

George Silk – *LIFE*

The elation was unanimous.



Stuffed in odd places around home were a full share of tarnished Navy Crosses, D.F.C.s and Air Medals from World War II. But for four years every-body in VF-781 had been too busy flying in the present to bother polishing up the past. One weekend every month 36 Naval Reserve pilots would converge on the Los Alamitos (Calif.) Naval Air Station and thunder off on maneuvers in their stubby Grumman hellcat fighters – unanimously elated to escape from the humdrum chores of selling

insurance, studying law or changing diapers. Their bashful blond skipper, Lieut. Commander Collin Oveland, 32, was a weekday Mercury salesman who had dared them into Navy’s sassiest, busiest, closet-knit Sunday fighter outfit – with first place in flight time over all other west coast squadrons. All of the pilots were combat veterans, all but eight were married.

Last week VF-781, volunteering to the man, became the first organized reserve squadron to be accepted intact for the Korean war. Every pilot in the squadron was ready for active duty on one condition, that they go as a unit. Forty of VF-781's enlisted ground crewmen felt the same way. Their prompt and unanimous application got a brisk salute from Vice Admiral John Dale Price in Washington – and a sheaf of orders to duty.

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