

John E. "Clancy" Jenista
Pensacola Pre-Flight Class 4-48

"This is my favorite."



AvMidn Clancy Jenista

"At the old Fort Redoubt
Fort Barrancas, NAS Pensacola."

July 4, 1948

Resume
January 25, 1996

1-25-96

John E "Clancy" Jenista
 First name Initial Nickname Last name

Patricia Jenista
 Spouse/Lady guest name Nickname

7701 Westwind Dr. Fort Worth Texas 76199
 Address (street) city state zip

(817) 236-1059
 Phone (home) (work)

CLASS 4-48 WINGS ON 1 JUNE 1949 NAVY # V-128 506598
 Pre-flight class no. - Date rec. wings - Naval Aviator no. - Mid'n file no.

AEROSPACE ENGINEER, NOW RETIRED
 Present occupation

Still flying? Yes / no (circle)

Highlights of Midshipman career "INHALED" A 450 HP BT-13 AIRCRAFT FROM MY BROTHER. SPENT MOST WEEKENDS WORKING ON IT. ALICE SUNDBERGM HAD ONE ACIO AND WE FLEW FORMATION. DURING ^{FIELD} CLASSES I GOT A "FAST" ON FIVE SUCCESSIVE APPROACHES DETERMINED NOT TO BE FAST ON THE NEXT ONE, I SPUN IN FROM 10 FEET AND BEAT A WINGTIP. DELAYED A LITTLE BY THE DISPOSITION BOARD, I WAS MADE TO FLY SETPLANES - A STIGMA WHICH TOOK YEARS TO OVERCOME.

Highlights of professional career (service and/or civilian) LIED ABOUT MY QUALIFICATIONS TO FLY JETS. FIRST JET FLIGHT WAS SOLO IN A T-33 - NO CHECKOUT OR PRACTICE. DID FLY A F4U AND AN A-7 - TWO 'E'S FOR WHEN YOU'RE '4'S CLUB GIVES ME NO CREDIT.

AT BEECH AIRCRAFT, I INVENTED THE T-34C TURBO-MOTOR AND THE T-41A MULTI-ENGINE TRAINER - INCLUDING THE "GOD BOX" - A BANK OF SWITCHES IN THE INSTRUCTOR'S RIGHT ARMREST THAT COULD CAUSE TWELVE FAILURES TO OCCUR ON THE STUDENT'S SIDE OF THE COCKPIT. ALSO PROPOSED TOTAL CONTRACTOR MAINTENANCE FOR T-37, T-4 (AND C-12) WHICH RESCUED TRAVEL AIR TRAINING FROM A SEVERE FINANCIAL HOLE.

LATER, AT GENERAL DYNAMICS, I PLAYED A PART IN THE SECRET STAGGERY AND WAS PROMPTLY FIRED WHEN THE CONTRACT WAS CANCELLED.

JT



“Old pro John E. Jenista showing and telling young whippersnappers what ‘SPAD’ (AD-6) pilots did back in 1959.”

February 10, 1995

3 NOV 88

DO YOU REMEMBER?

I have quite a few memories of the Midshipman days. It was the most exciting time of my life so the memories are "burned in" so to speak.

- Remember the poem written by one Blackie Shugrue? It began:

Sound ye Buzzers
Ring ye Bells
Heed ye not the awful smells
for this is Pre-Flight School, young man
and what ye smell hath hit the fan.

There was a lot more to the poem about a typical Pre-Flight day. Another line was:

We return to our barracks
and there we do sit
To shave, to shower,
to shine, and shampoo.

I have forgotten all but these parts.

- Remember our battalion officer Marine LT Larry Stein (STEEN)? He had a huge picture of a Corsair behind his desk and everybody feared and respected him. Later we learned that he flew Stinson L-5s in the war and had never flown a Corsair.

• Remember the athletic instructor "Mighty Mouse" Mano? [Ed. Certainly – Ottumwa '46] He had it in for college boys and used to say, "Awright – you guys been to College, you should be smart enough to remember how to do this." – whatever it was. He also used to shout, "Get off the trampolineens!" at us a lot. At the graduation party for Class 4-48, we were delighted when his wife told us that LT Mano had tried to take off in a TBM with the wings folded, and bored a TBM-shaped hole a considerable distance into the boondocks off the runway in Jacksonville. That must have been at Cecil Field since I don't remember anything off the runway at the main base except river.

• Remember "Honest John" Worthington, the guy who taught Naval Justice? He was the world's most upright and honest citizen. After the same party with Class 4-48, Mr. Worthington gave two Midshipmen a ride into town – to the San Carlos Hotel, in fact. As they started to get out of the car, he said, "Don't bother to get out." and then tried to drive his car up the steps of the hotel.

My memory of him is sometimes confused with "ENIAC" Miller who used to tell us about this new and wonderful thing called a computer – and its name was ENIAC. I don't remember now what the letters stood for.

- Does anyone else remember the trouble and confusion in trying to taxi the SNJ at Corry Field? All the SNJs at Whiting had steerable tailwheels, which were easy to taxi. Upon going to Corry for aerobatics and instruments, lo and behold, all the SNJs there had locking swivel tailwheels. Taxiing those things was a real art form and it took quite a while to get the airplane headed in the direction you wanted to travel.

- Does anyone remember a really wild water fight as Class 4-48 completed Pre-Flight? My memory is dim but I do remember throwing one of our instructors into the bay – over near the Gym. Also I remember hiding on top of the lockers while a battle raged in the hallway with swabs and scrub buckets. That was in our barracks – building 684 I think.

There are more memories, but I'm out of time.

/s/ John Jenista

13 Nov 1988

Dear Aviation Midshipmen:

Boy, have I got news for you! In the directory, the list of missing Midshipmen included my old roommate from class 4-48 William E. Greeley. Well, I found him – in the last place you would ever think to look – still on active duty in the Navy! Captain William E. Greeley D. C., USN is the Head of the Dental Department at NAS Miramar in San Diego. This is over 40 years since he started Pre-Flight on the eighth of February 1948. This has to be the record and Gus Kinnear will have to move over as the last of our group to be on active duty.

Bill served his first sea duty tour flying the Grumman AF “Guardian” at NAS Quonset Point. He then did a tour as an instructor at NAS Kingsville in Texas. Next was the obligatory “Ships Company” tour in the *Randolph* (CV-15) I think. Anyway the ship was in drydock at the time. This is double disappointment for an aviator, no flying and not even any airplanes around in a shipyard. Bill then got out and went back to school. After learning to be a dentist, he rejoined the Navy and is just now finishing his career in the field. My son is an F-14 RIO with VF-2H at Miramar. When his wife had a dental checkup, Capt Greeley remarked about her name and recalled his old roommate Clancy Jenista. Amazing stuff. Bill is about to retire or may have already.

Surely we should send him a certificate or something. Bill also, by the way, may be the shortest Aviation Midshipman. He had to get a medical waiver because he was only 5'6" tall. I remember his first flight in the SNJ. It took 3 seat cushions and 2 back cushions to put him up high enough in the cockpit. The instructor told him to pull the landing gear up after takeoff. When he bent over to reach the lever the instructor yelled “keep your head out of the cockpit and watch for other traffic.” Bill couldn’t reach the lever without bending way over so things were at an impasse for a while. He said it took quite a while before he finally got a hand on the wheel lever.

The last newsletter listed Midshipmen who had tours with the Blues. A guy from my gunnery flight named (Roland?) Aslund also served with the Blues. He is now deceased. Incidentally, that flight (we called ourselves the “Blue 100”) consisted of Aslund, Brandenburg, Crawl, Gooding, Pollard and Jenista. We were the hottest group in the sky at the time. Bought ourselves blue scarfs to wear. We actually joined up as a flight of six before crossing the boundary fence at Saufley when taking off for one gunnery flight!

Other fond memories:

Jack Fairchild groundlooped on landing after a Saufley Field night flight. I remember the crash crew roaring down the runway, then crossing and coming back. Soon they were cruising back and forth aimlessly, unable to find the “wreck.” It seems that Jack had gone off the runway into the triangle formed by runways 27, 32, and 36. This area was about fifteen feet lower than the runways, so the airplane was hidden from sight. He finally had to run up to the runway surface to direct the crash crew to the scene. I didn’t see Fairchild’s name on the list of members. He was a Professor of Aerodynamics at the University of Texas at Arlington, and retired a year or two ago.

Carquals on the *Cabot* (CVL-28) – by the way the ship is tied up in New Orleans after a tour in the Spanish Navy as the *Delgado*. This had to be January 1949. The first Midshipman to come aboard (I can’t remember his name) got low and slow and sunk below flight deck level. We (Dave Cherry and I) were in the catwalk and he disappeared completely. The next thing we saw was the SNJ going straight up (90!!) right off the fantail. He rolled left and hit the flight deck just behind the LSO platform. The jack point on his starboard visor gear caught the rail of the catwalk and his hook miraculously caught the #1 wire. These suspended the airplane inverted under the overhang of the flight deck. The Midshipman was retrieved from the cockpit with a rope lowered from the flight deck. They couldn’t fire the airplane, so the rest of us made all our landings looking at the underside of the starboard wing of the SNJ sticking out behind the LSO. Back in port, they dropped the SNJ inverted on to the pier from flight deck level.

/s/ John Jenista

DO YOU REMEMBER?

* Gunnery Flight 100 at Saufley (January 1949) consisted of six Midshipmen, Oslund, Brandenburg, Crowl, Gooding, Pollard, and Jenista. We thought we were really hot stuff, and named ourselves "The Blue 100" after the Blue Angels. We bought scarves (I still have mine) that we wore while flying. One day we decided that we would really show the instructor how fast we could get joined up. We took off on runway 9 (from the midfield position in those days meaning only 2500' to the end). We wanted to have all six planes in formation by the time we got over the fence at the end of the runway. We almost made it. I think everyone was in place about 1000' after we passed over the fence.

* In gunnery at Saufley, all the SNJs were parked facing the hangar. One day while we were there, an ordnanceman who was clearing the .30 cal gun in an SNJ fired off one round. It went through a window on the second floor of the hangar and hit a wall just a few feet over the XO's head. Within 30 minutes, all of the SNJs were turned around facing away from the hangar and they stayed that way forever after.

There are more memories, but I'm out of time.

/s/ John Jenista

I REMEMBER – MIDSHIPMAN DAYS

This occurred in the spring of 1949, with the Corsair Squadron at Cabaniss Field, as I remember. The Midshipmen involved will be referred to by initials only, since they might be embarrassed by the story. The story begins when the student Midshipmen received a lecture on the spin characteristics of the mighty F4U Corsair. One of the facts related to the eager students was that the spin recovery of anti-spin controls were slow and reluctant, often requiring five turns or so after the application of anti-spin controls before the bird would recover. Not long after this lecture, Mid'n T and Mid'n Z were scheduled for a high-altitude hop in which their flight of six would proceed in formation to 30,000 feet or higher; to acquaint them with the different conditions involved with operating in the rarified air of the near-stratosphere.

The R-2800 engine in the Corsair had three supercharger gear ratios: low, intermediate, and high. After a long climb, the formation reached the point where it was necessary to shift from intermediate to high. The flight lead gave the hand signal to shift blowers, which was accomplished by moving the supercharger lever and immediately retarding the throttle in anticipation of the surge in manifold pressure as the blower wound up to the higher speed. Normal procedure was to do this one at a time, beginning with the lead, as the airplane would drop back a little and then surge ahead as the higher manifold pressure took hold. However, Mid'n T, flying as tail end Charlie, shifted his blower as soon as he saw the signal, and didn't throttle back. As a result, he surged ahead and ran into Mid'n Z's airplane, who was just ahead of him in the formation. The collision was not much of an impact, more of a slice. T's propeller cut the fuselage of Z's airplane in two – just behind the cockpit!!

Poor old Z's attention was focused on the lead plane, while he was getting ready to do his blower shift in the proper sequence. The next thing he knew, he was falling in a spin with no knowledge of how it had happened. Perhaps he had gotten too slow, since the indicated airspeed at altitude is so much lower. Remembering the spin lecture, he dutifully whipped in opposite controls and held on. He counted more than five turns, but the airplane showed no signs of even starting to recover. Only then did he realize that the controls were oddly slack. He looked back to see jagged metal, wires and lots of blue sky where the after part of his airplane should have been! He then peeled back the canopy and unfastened the seat belt in order to bail out of the stricken bird. When the belt released, he floated up out of the seat, but his parachute hung up under the lip of the sliding canopy.

This left him sitting on the top of the canopy, buffeted by wind and turbulence while the seat pack of his parachute was firmly wedged underneath. The slipstream kept him from moving forward to free himself, no matter how hard he struggled. As he fell, he was struck by the irony of the fact that his parachute, which was supposed to save his life, was now causing him to lose it. Seeing the ripcord on his harness, he thought, "what good are you to me now?" and pulled it purely from frustration. The parachute canopy fell into the seat pan, but Z was still hung up on the outside of the airplane.

Suddenly, the pilot chute caught a gust and whipped out of the cockpit between Z's legs, pulling the main canopy after it. Z then did a double back somersault off the Corsair as the parachute pulled him free. He had some cuts from the antenna wire, but was otherwise OK as he floated down to a landing on Padre Island not far from the wreckage.

Meanwhile, T, who had a bent propeller from his part of the midair, fluttered down to a wheels-up landing on Padre Island close to where Z came to rest. T's shoulder harness was either loose or unlocked, since he lost most of his front teeth on the control stick during his "landing". Z said that it was a good thing that it had happened during the landing, as he was planning to do similar things to T's face once he got out of the airplane.

This all happened 45 years ago, and I may have been carried away a bit by my nostalgic recollection. But, as Pappy Yokum used to say as he told one of his stories, "mainly, it were so".

letter to Pat Francis

25 January, 1996

Here are the corrections you asked for. You will notice that I now have a word processor, and have learned to type. Therefore, this should be easier to read than the previous handwritten submissions. Going over those old memories of Midshipman days made me think of another one, which is interesting – I think.

Do you remember our first week of Pre-Flight? The one where we were sent to a barracks on a hill overlooking Chevalier Field and were put through an endless series of test involving balance, coordination, and other factors presumably involving piloting an airplane. I remember pinball games, where you had to tilt a table to run a ball through a maze, and machines where you matched light patterns by manipulating a stick and rudder pedals. There were papers which had parallel curving lines, and we had to draw a pencil line between them as fast and as far as possible. Just like kindergarten! Stay in the lines! I remember one machine that had a seat and rudder pedals which tilted a six-foot board shaped like a recurved archery bow. A metal ball-bearing ran in a groove on top of this board, and the machine recorded how long you could keep the ball balanced on the center “hill” of the board. I think it was Joe Reyes who got the ball in an increasing dynamic oscillation and threw it clear across the room. He had to jump down and retrieve the ball to continue the test.

I spoke to a Training Command Psychologist many years later about those tests. He said the testing program ran for forty years. It was an attempt to find a way to weed out potential failures in Naval Aviator Training before they spent a lot of money on flight hours. The Psychologist said that in all of that testing, they never found any test that had any statistical significance in predicting success in Naval Flight Training. They did, however, identify one factor which had a very significant correlation with successful completion of Naval Aviation Training. This wasn't a test at all, but a simple question – “Did you build and fly model airplanes before coming to Pensacola?” Apparently, the model builders had very little trouble in flight training.

What an interesting conclusion. If any of you have kids (Grandchildren by now, I guess) that are interested in being a Naval Aviator, get them started in model airplanes as soon as you can!!

Another incident comes to mind – recalling the infamous Defense Secretary, Louis Johnson and the class of 1949. Of all the Midshipmen wanting regular Navy Commissions out of the class of 1949, only half of them made it. Johnson's severe cuts in the military budget resulted in what looked to me like an alphabetical list of the 1949 Midshipmen, with every other name crossed out, as the list of regular Navy Commissions for that year. There were many hard

feelings over this. Some Midshipmen even asked if the Commissions if the three Midshipmen who flew their Corsairs into the side of a mountain in formation couldn't be reassigned to others. No dice! One guy who lived in the Junior BOQ at NAS North Island (Building 864), got a regular Commissions, but decided that he didn't want it and resigned. I have forgotten his name. Other Midshipmen were quite angry that he had wasted one slot that could have gone to someone who wanted it. I remember the day when the bad guy had taken a shower and fell asleep on his bed, face down and totally naked. Several 1949 Midshipmen got a firecracker which they intended to light and throw into his room, just to harass him. The fuse on the firecracker flared up, startling the harasser so that he threw the firecracker farther than he intended. It landed on the bare buttocks where it exploded, causing a satisfying yelp of pain. The bad guy had to go to the dispensary to be treated for flashburn, but nobody was really sorry.

I have some other fragmentary memories which might be of interest only to members of our class:

Carl Ohls telling about his engine failure just off the end of the runway at Wolf Field in an SNJ. He said his main concern was getting the shoulder straps really tight. He went into the pine trees, but the airplane absorbed all the shocks, and Ohls was unhurt.

Bob Gutnecht getting his elbow bent the wrong way while wrestling in Gym Class. It is hard to imagine how that felt, as it is painful for me just to remember the sight.

Russel McJunkin's awesome reputation for being able to fly low! Though I was on the west coast, an east coast aviator told me, "you have never seen anybody fly an airplane really low until you have seen Russ McJunkin!! I wish I had seen that.

There is more, but I'll save it for the bar and happy hour.

Sincerely,

/s/ Clancy Jenista

letter to Pat Francis

31 March 1996

Here are the photographs I promised you. The old one is me during flight training. I was stationed at Mainside Pensacola at the time and flying Aerobatics and Instruments at Corry Field. You can tell that I wasn't in Pre-Flight school any more because my tie is out. Pre-Flight Midshipmen wore their ties tucked into their shirts. The picture was taken by my girlfriend of the moment. Shirley Ann Bowne. Her father was a representative of the Link Trainer Company, and the auto is the family car. Shirley lives in Pensacola, and is married to a Navy man who was a past Skipper of the *Lexington* (CV-2). I don't know her married name, but I am hoping to run across her in Pensacola.

The pictures are me as I am now: less hair – all grey, and heavier. How I wish I could go back to the time of the first photo (knowing what I know now) and do it all over again. Navy flight training was the most exciting time of my life. I also weathered the worst disappointment of my life a few months after the picture was taken. I spun in (from about ten feet up) during Field Carrier Landing Practice (FCLP). Didn't hurt much but my pride, but it resulted in orders to fly PBM seaplanes for my first squadron tour. I hated every minute of that assignment and finally got into an AD squadron VA-195 six years later.

I kept all my Navy flying gear when I retired – forged the signature on the check-out sheet. I can still get into everything except for the "G" suit. I am too fat to fit into that anymore. I still fly every chance I get, and own an airplane (1959 Beachcraft Bonanza).

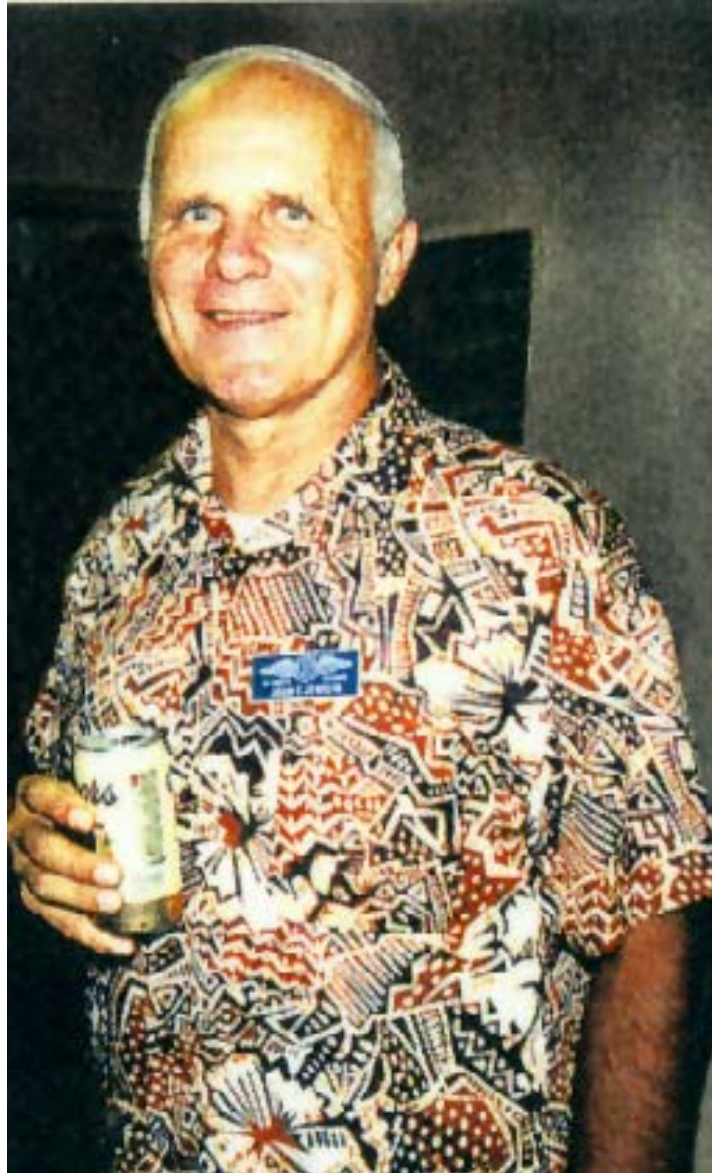
There is an interesting anecdote about the yellow Navy life jacket I am wearing in one photo. Stenciled across the yellow strap on the back is the name of the Navy Bureau responsible for the design of the life jacket. It was the Bureau of Aeronautics, or BUAER in the Navy jargon. I was in Hong Kong, wearing my flying gear when a British pilot approached me and asked, "I say old chap, how come all you Navy fliers are named Bauer??" The Hong Kong visit was a few days before the Korean War started. It was amazing how quickly the Navy ships disappeared from Hong Kong Harbor once the war began.

That's all for now. See you in Pensacola.

Sincerely,

/s/ John E. Jenista

“At a gathering of pilots.”



“The San Miguel beer has become Coors, but the flying stories are still the same!”

January 12, 1996

