

Robert D. Kaiser

Pensacola Pre-Flight Class 14-48 (Batt 3)

After reading the oral histories of Rick Cotton and Dale Davis, I decided to write an "oral" history myself. Doubt if I could remember all those names without reference to the FMA roster, though:.

Bob Kaiser, Inactive Enlisted Reserve #780-13-81 (1946-1948, Pre-Flight Class 14-48-3. C507098)

My name is Robert D. Kaiser, also known as "Sweet Old Bob" (my friends usually abbreviate this). I enlisted at ONOP, Detroit, on May 29, 1946 (Gad, what a memory!), and graduated from high school in Toledo, Ohio, the following month. Spent two years at University of Toledo, then called to active duty in June 1948. Made the train trip via L&N to Pensacola, with the obligatory change in Flomaton. Almost lost my bag at the bus station. God, it was hot!

Appointed Midshipman on June 30 and assigned to 14-48-3, along with Ray Ashworth, Don Contant, Jesse McKnight, Ray Bradberry, Dick Nihoul, Glen Stinnett, Len Czernicki, Billy Ingram (my roommate) Joe Preston, Pete Weiland, and a bunch of other great guys. About the fourth week or so into Pre-Flight our Engineering instructor gave us a test that everyone flunked but one. With a failing average, we were given academic restriction; it took over two months to bring our average up to passing. We saw a lot of the base, but not much of the town.

Graduated from P/F at the end of October and went into a pool, waiting to go to Whiting. At the end of November, Class 13 (which had been in the same pool for an additional two weeks) and Class 14 were mustered: "Class 13 goes to Whiting tomorrow; Class 14 goes on leave until after New Year's – dismissed!" We serenaded Class 13 with "Merry Christmas to you ..."

Went through North Whiting for A through C stages in SNJs, then on to Saufley for formation and gunnery. More damn fun! Corry for instruments and FCLP, and qual'd on the *Cabot* in September. On to Corpus and barely managed to avoid boats, but got assigned to PB4Y2s. Boy did they steer hard! Wings in January, 1950, and on to Norfolk.

Assigned to VR-1, Norfolk Detachment (later designated VR-22), flying R4Ds up and down the East Coast. This was not considered to be the glamorous cutting edge of Naval Aviation. Also checked out in the SNB, but let's face it – transport flying is inordinately dull. I was commissioned in June, right after the Korean War broke out, and was temporarily assigned to VR-31, a ferry (that's two "r's", damn it!) squadron.

Ferried Beech's to Wichita, an SNJ to Litchfield Park (talk about heat!), and a JRF (11) to Quonset. Then back to R4Ds. Lots of ex-Midshipmen there, including

Ron West (deceased), Ron Tinlin, Paul Shea, Jack Redmond (also deceased), Jack Baker, Joe McClain, Ralph Peters, Dick Scukas (my best man), and Roger Ruch. Managed to get married during this tour; still married to the same woman. 'Course, after 42 years I'm not the same man.

In '52 I was sent to the training command at ... Hutchinson, Kansas?? Yep, a real hayseed. But I'd just completed the Naval Justice School UCMJ course, so they stuck me in the Legal Office for two years. Beech's and SNJs. Kansas scenery is about as boring as scenery can get. Things perked up for awhile when we got two F6Fs for the proficiency pilots. Managed to get three flights in before some idiot who shall be nameless (not me ... I remember his name all too well, but there are libel laws) pranged both of them within one month. Many other ex-Mid's at Hutch, also; Joe Barron, Jack Riley (deceased), Hank Otten, Gene Prange, Dave Wallace, Lee Hage (deceased) Jack Bradford, Bruce Campbell, and Dick Pickering.

In '54 I went to the Air Intelligence School at the Naval Observatory in DC. Graduating in May'55, I headed west to COMNAVFE in Yokosuka. Spent two years on the staff, with occasional hops in an R4D-8 out of Atsugi. Dick Ebelacker and Denny Rowe were two other ex-mids there. Our son was born in Yokosuka shortly before we left in '57.

On the JTTU, Olathe! My first crack at jets was in the F9F-8T. WOW! Having become accustomed to flying low and slow, this was heavy stuff, fellows! Classmates at JTTU were Buck Bustard and Dick Ebelacker. Dick was later killed in a night flight out of North Island. Went from Olathe to Whidbey to VAH-8, newly formed and flying A3Ds. You gotta remember that this thing was not exactly a kiddie car; 35 tons fully loaded doesn't have a lot of zip. A3D ... stands for All 3 Dead. Oh well, it was better than R4Ds. One long cruise on the *Midway*; no one even scratched and only one bird damaged. Other ex-Mids at Whidbey included Bob Beiter and Ike Hosemann.

Detached in '59 just before the squadron deployed again and sent to the Naval Science School at Monterey, along with Bob Better, Ed Klapka, Walt Thomas, Rudy Kraus, Jack Riley, Burt Henderson, Harry Sparks, Joe Barron, Dick Foucht, Clancy Jenista and his brother Jim, Roy Mantz, Joel Biles, Jack Cogdell, Larry Day, Dane Kams, Herb Kiker, Art Zimmerly, Bob Michaud, Bill Warwick, and a number of other ex-Midshipmen. Our daughter was born at Fort Ord in '60. Monterey was a lovely place to be stationed but I was beginning to build up too much Beech time. Graduated in '61, but stayed on for two more years in the operations Research program.

Graduating in '63, I first had orders to the Pentagon. Clancy Jenista, who had orders to Hawaii, said to me, "Bob, you and I are both interested in home-built aircraft; I won't have room for this Lycoming O-290G ground power unit in public quarters; how about buying it from me for \$250?" With a sickly grin on my face I

said, sure, glad to do it. Within a week I had new orders to ... Hawaii. I had the damn thing in my garage until 1993.

Ended up at ASWFORPAC {AntiSubmarine Force, Pacific] staff, reconstructing and analyzing ASW exercises. It was very interesting and challenging, but I never worked harder in my life. And, of course, I flew ... Beech's. However, later managed to get checked out in the Stooft. Actually, I enjoyed that Hawaiian tour very much; my family loved it!"

In '66 I got orders to the Pentagon in the Navy War Gaming Office. Hal Nemer was already there in the same office. By this time I was reconciled to the likelihood of not being command selected. The job was moderately interesting and of course I flew ... Beech's. Later managed to check out in the U-11 (Piper Aztec). Not really better, just different.

Decided to pack it all in, so I retired as a CDR [O-5] in '69 and went to work for a computer software outfit in D.C., but it went belly-up in less than two years. In '71 I joined Logistics Management Institute in Bethesda, MD, and completed 19 years with the company in 1991. Really enjoyed this work; we were heavily into personal computers. Did a lot of traveling all over the U.S., West Germany, Korea, Japan, Hawaii, and the Philippines. In '83 the company had to send me to San Diego for over a year and a half (all expenses paid, including a Toyota Celica rental car, of course) – a dirty job, but someone had to do it. They almost had to send a bounty hunter to get me back. We were working with the AIMD at Miramar and it was like being back in the Navy again, without all the C/S.

I November '69 a bunch of us, including Pete Sharp, Norm St. Louis, and me, formed FMA {Flying Midshipman Association]. I volunteered to be treasurer. I didn't know anything about finance, but thought it would be easier than being secretary (it was!). Nineteen years later [1988] I'm still treasurer and haven't been arrested for embezzlement yet.

Both our kids are married; our son Charles lives near San Francisco and our daughter Leslie in Anaconda, Montana, with her husband and two daughters. My wife, Tish, was in real estate for years and played tennis – she won a doubles trophy at the JAX reunion in April 1987 (?). Second place, though; Dale Davis' wife Joan was just too good. We've both been to two Pensacola reunions and to the two JAX reunions. Managed to get to a [Flying Midshipman] cocktail party in San Diego in '84. We lived in the heart of beautiful downtown McLean, VA (pronounced "McClain") for twenty-five years and remodeled the house three times. Next time we remodel, maybe we'll get it right. We moved to Orange Park, FL, in 1991, retiring from all profit-making activities.

My pre-Flight roommates were Billy Ingram (Class 14), Bud Knop (Class 15) and Russ Marcellus (Class 16). Bud was the only one that didn't stay on for at least twenty; haven't seen or heard of him since Pre-Flight. Class 14's rallying cry

shall always be: "Git off the trampoline!" [How many of you remember "Mighty Mouse" Mano?]

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