

Dick Shrewsbury
VC-61

Richard M. "Dick" Shrewsbury
(PHOTO PILOT)
VC-61



Aboard USS *Bon Homme Richard* (CV-31)

1951

letter to Lou Ives

February 7, 1999

Dear Lou:

I've been straining my brain, trying to come up with something to contribute to the Pacemakers history. Nothing new came to mind. Then, a commercial by my favorite (and best preserved) actor tickled my memory.

1951, Korea (exact date not recorded.) Returning with my escort from a photo mission just north of the Bomb Line, we jogged right to a few miles south of the line, to avoid irritating the northern residents who reacted poorly to airplane noise. We encountered a division of Pacemakers (led by the Skipper), busily strafing and rocketing the hell out of some vehicles and troops on the ground. I informed them that they were a few miles SOUTH of the magic line.

"Are you sure?"

"Affirmative - VERY sure!"

"Ooops!" (or words to that effect.)

End of incident, not reported (at least by me) at the debriefing.

Cut to forty years later. James Garner, my actor hero, appeared on some TV talk show (it might have been Johnny Carson.) He admitted to having been a grunt during the Korean fracas. He reported that the only serious injury he received was in 1951 when his patrol unit was attacked by a flight of "wayward Navy jets", well south of the line. He leaped under his jeep to avoid rockets and cannonfire, and wrenched his back, an injury that bothers him to this day (and for which he didn't even get a Purple Heart!)

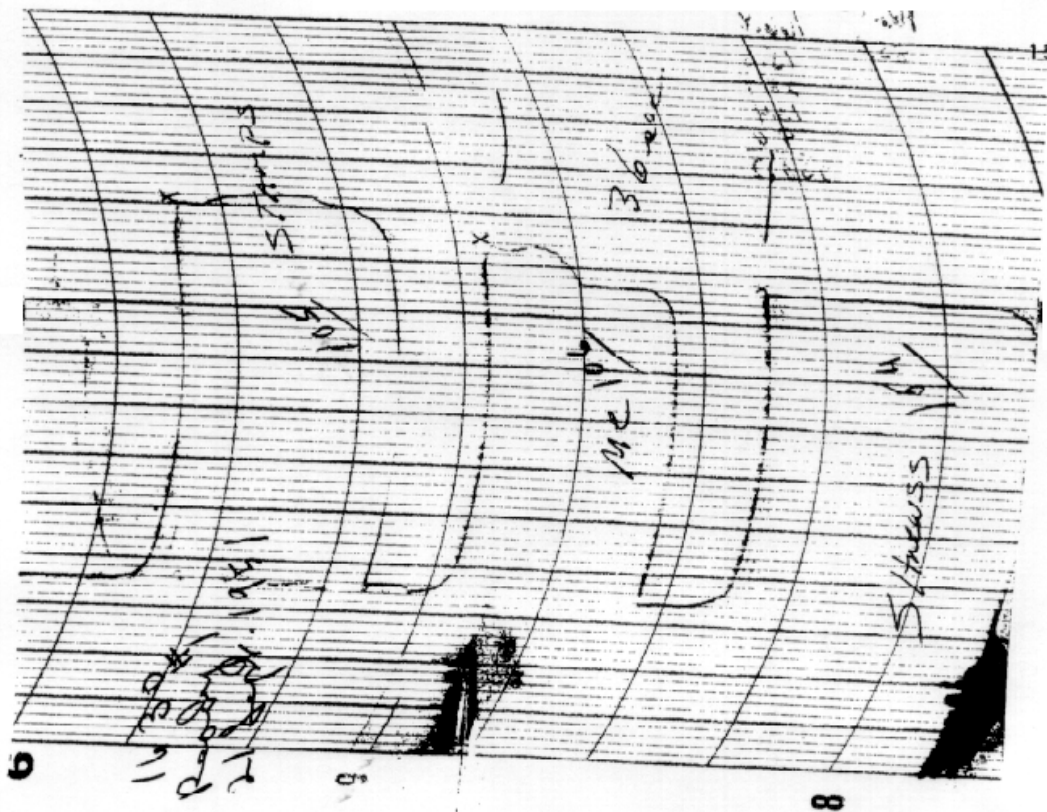
I'm sure that similar things happened lots of times, but I've wondered for some years if James Garner's bad back is a VF-781 injury.

Looking forward to that CD history!



Dick

Doppler Radar chart for landing speed and interval
On the USS Bon Homme Richard (CV-31)
1951



Landing intervals between BILL STAMES in D-105, HOMER DAVIS in D-106,
and DICK SHREWSBURY in PP-154 at 1630 on 21 September 1951.

letter to Lou Ives

Dear Lou:

I've scribbled my best guess on the LSO readout. I became more familiar with such things later on, in Cougars and Crusaders, but I think I'm close to correct. I reviewed a bunch of old home movies, and we seemed to do pretty well at a 30-40 second interval.

So you're doing a VF-781 thing? Great! For many years I've recalled the Great Korean Slaughter story, which you probably remember better than I do

The Bonnie Dick / CVG102 group had this totally nerd Ensign, USNR, as one of its "Intelligence Officers". He had received his commission from NROTC, along with his divinity degree, from some southern bible school, and was one of those idiots that give religion a bad name as he was so obnoxious with his "holier than-thou-or-anyone-else" attitude.

His relationship with the Air Group got off to a great start on the long voyage west. He spent many days on the bow, with field glasses pressed to his eyes, wearing some cockamamie arm band that the parachute riggers made up. He was watching for the MAIL BUOY for a number of days before he got wise. I was told by a reliable source (later to become a Chief Petty Officer of the Navy), that the Aviation Mechs hounded him for weeks to obtain a left-handed monkey wrench, and some fresh buckets of prop wash.

That experience didn't cool him off, he continued to make every possible slur regarding the godless heathens with whom he was forced to live. He was strongly suspected of blowing the whistle in a couple of incidents where "someone" squealed to the authorities and got the entire Air Group a bad reputation just because of a little boyish exuberance at a couple of parties ashore.

He was forced to quit debriefing the VA pilots, because he turned into the livid embodiment of the wrath of God when anyone admitted to dropping their Napalm on any human beings. He therefore specialized in the fighter pilots, whose F9Fs didn't carry the stuff.

One day, a few of the more waggish VF781 pilots got together and concocted a debriefing story just for the benefit of our bible-thumping friend. They reported that they had sighted a vicious commie plot to hide their troops in a building with red crosses painted on the roof. When the fighter pilots arrived overhead, many of these sneaky North Korean (or maybe even ChiComs!) attempted the sub-

terfuge of dressing in the typical oriental school children's uniforms. Their noncoms even had the audacity to disguise themselves by wearing nun's habits!

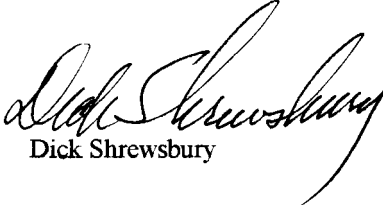
Not to be snookered by this underhanded sneakery, our dauntless pilots strafed and rocketed the asses off those disguised troops. They slaughtered everything in sight, to the point that blood was flowing in the stream alongside the fake "hospital".

Well, a number of us who had been warned of the scam watched from the sidelines. Our gullible Ensign turned deathly pale, and tears dripped down his cheeks. He kept writing up his debriefing report, then, all choked up, he had to flee the room. The senior intelligence officer, who knew a scam when he saw one, destroyed the debriefing report.

Cut to a few weeks later. An honest-to-God U.S. Congressman, along with his investigative team, appeared on the Bonnie Dick to investigate these horrible atrocities, which had been reported by our intelligence Officer to his father, who happened to be an ordained minister with significant political clout in the southern state from whence came our Ensign. It took all of ten seconds to set the record straight for the Congressional team, but poor old Captain Gill, who had to live with this sort of thing for over a year, had another reason to chew out the Air Group in general (and then probably retired to his cabin to break down in laughter.)

The above is one of my favorite memories. I don't remember exactly who the four atrocity flyers were (I think that Scully was a prime perpetrator. For all I know, young Lou Ives might have even been part of it) [he wasn't].

Sincerely,



Dick Shrewsbury

letter to Lou Ives

April 10, 1998

Dear Lou:

I had already returned you LSO Doppler radar printout, when I got the brilliant idea to dig my log books out of the attic and take a look.

Yes, I did make a landing late in the afternoon on September 21, 1951. I was by myself, returning from a couple of days at K-18, a Marston mat strip just a couple of miles south of the line. I had taken a hit that jammed my hook, so they binged me to K-18 rather than risk my "photo nose" on the barricade.

After a few adventures on the mainland, including an infantry firefight, my hook was repaired, and I flew back alone to Trustfund. Immediately on landing, I had to report to the bridge, where Captain Gill chewed me out for my departing buzz job of K-18, which caused a taxiing ROK P-51 pilot to hit his brakes so hard he flipped over, destroying the airplane. Someone painted a P-51 silhouette on PP-154, but was directed to remove same immediately.

Sincerely,



Dick

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