



Charles A. L. Swanson, Captain, USN (Ret.)
"Cal"

Date of Designation: 27 July 1949 NA # V-324

Dates of Active Duty: 1 October 1945 - 31 May 1979

Total Flight Hours: 5,277

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 795

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 3,600 Prop: 1,550 Helo: 25 VF/VA: 3,500
VR/VP: 40 HS/HC/HU: 25 VU/VFP: 300

Combat Tours:

Vietnam: MACV (Saigon) Westmoreland' Staff; Insertion & Logistics, Aug; 1964-Mar. 1965 - 21 missions.
Vietnam: XO, VF-162 USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34), Jun. 1966-Oct. 1966 - 80 missions.
Vietnam: CO, VF-162, USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34), Jul. 1967-Jan. 1968 - 101 missions.

Aviation Commands:

CO, VF-162, December 1966 - February 1968
COMCVW-17, January 1969 - March 1970
CO, NAS Norfolk, July 1972 - June 1974

Combat Awards:

1 Legion of Merit
2 Distinguished Flying Crosses
1 Bronze Star with combat "V"
2 Individual Air Medals
13 Strike/Flight Air Medals

Duty Assignment Chronology

7/45-8/47 V-5 Program, Swarthmore College, PA and Colorado A & M, Fort Collins, CO.
9/47-7/49 Flight Training , Pensacola/ Corpus Christi (Cabaniss Field) (SNJ and F6F).
8/49-8/50 VF-11, NAS Cecil Field/*Philippine Sea*, Personnel Office (F8F, TV-1 and F2H).



8/50-3/52 VF-171 NAS Cecil/NAS Jax/*Coral Sea*/F. D. Roosevelt; Material Officer (F2H).
3/52-7/53 VC-4 NAS Atlantic City/*Coral Sea*/Midway, Nuclear Weapons, Maintenance Officer, Instrument Instructor (F2H-2B/2N/3/4, TV-2 and SNB).
8/53-1/56 NATC Patuxent River, TPS/Armament Test, Project Coordinator & Air to Air Project Officer (F8F, F4U. AD, SNB, T-33, HTL, SNJ, F9F, UF, F2H-2/3/4, F3D, FJ-2/3, P2V, JD, T-28, TBM, F-94, F-86A/D/K, F7U, A3D, F3H, OE-2).
1/56-11/56 Monterey Line School, Student (SNJ, SNB, JRB).
12/56-8/58 USS *Midway* Pre-commissioning at Bremerton - Cat & Arresting Gear Officer (TF/S2F, T-33, SNB).
9/58-8/60 VF-121 (RAG) NAS Miramar, CA., F3H Maintenance Officer (F3H, F3D, F9F-8T).
9/60-9/62 Univ. of Washington 5 Term - Science air project. BA Chemistry (SNB, T-28, A-3).
10/62-6/63 USNPG School Monterey. BS Radiological/ Nuclear Chemistry (TC-45).
7/63-11/63 VF-124 (RAG) Aero, Instructor, NAS Miramar (F-8, TF9J).
12/63-7/64 VU-5 Ops Officer, NAS Atsugi, Japan (F-8, UB26, C-45, US2C).
7/64-3/65 MACV Saigon, Vietnam. "Out of country" Strike Air Ops Coord. (C-45, OV-1).
4/65-7/65 XO, VU-5, NAS Atsugi, Japan (F-8).
8/65-12/65 VF-124 (RAG) FRP/Aero Instructor, NAS Miramar (F-8, TF9J).
12/65-2/68 XO/CO, VF-162, NAS Miramar/USS *Oriskany* (F-8).
2/68-9/68 NATC Service Test, Chief Projects Officer/ Assistant Director (F-4, F-8, A-4).
10/68-1/69 VF-101/VA-44, East Coast RAG Workup for CAG (F-4, A-4).
2/69-3/70 COMCVW-17 (CAG) - NAS Oceana/USS *Forrestal* (F-4, A-4, SH-3).

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Duty Assignment Chronology continued

4/70-6/72 OPNAV (OP-501G) Aviation Plans and (OP-001K) Priorities Analysis Group (F-4, A-4, A-7, F-104, X26A (Glider)).

7/72-7/74 CO, NAS Norfolk, (U-11, C I, VC-117, T-28, T-39).

8/74-10/76 OPTEVFOR, Norfolk - Director, Air Warfare/Chief of Staff (F-4, A-4, C-1, UH-1, F-86).

11/76-5/79 CRUDESGRU 12 Chief of Staff, NAS Mayport/USS *F. D. Roosevelt*/USS *Forrestal* USS *Nimitz* (F-14 (back seat), C-1, TA-4).

6/1/79 Retired from active duty.

Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) My first night carrier landing was in an F8F-1 on a straight deck and "paddles", without ever having had a night FCLP, and no bingo field available. Total hours were just over 400; total carrier landings consisted of 6 in the SNJ, 7 in the F6F and 6 in the F8F. Factors included a tailhook jam, "hayrake" and a hurricane.
- (2) In 1952, I was a member of the first "light-jet tactical nuclear weapons delivery team". Five of us were hurriedly drawn together from squadrons and put under the team leader, Merle Gorder in VC-4, to deploy a month later in brand new F2H-2Bs coming directly off the production line. In that month, we learned what we needed to know about "nukes" and practiced how to deliver them in 70 degree dives with a reasonable chance of surviving the blast. Tactics, flight profiles and delivery ranges developed in that deployment evolved as fleet doctrine. On max range missions, the ship always had a ready deck on arrival.
- (3) Tours at Pax River were more than interesting - they were exciting! Arriving for Test Pilot School, on the first tour, I met and fell in love with the Officer Personnel Officer, LTJG Nell Grieve. We were married on the 4th of July, 1954 at the NAS chapel there. Marrying Nell was the smartest decision I ever made.
- (4) In 1965, I learned of a new concept called "energy maneuverability" developed by Major John Boyd, USAF. The concept used calculations of total kinetic & potential energy, and their change rates, to measure relative advantages and disadvantages of airplanes as they maneuver in air-to-air combat. John had parameters and curves for USAF and Soviet fighters, but none for Navy airplanes. Alerting LTV to what I needed, I flew to Dallas for raw aerodynamic data, then to Eglin AFB to meet with John and pick his brain. Returning to VF-124, I manually calculated the parameters and drew the curves for the F-8. John had provided a set of his curves for Soviet fighters up through the MIG-21, and I used the dynamic curve overlays to visually depict and display tactical advantages and deficits in combat flight regimes. A bit later, I turned

all these data and curves over to VF-121 as it began to develop air-to-air tactics for the F4 and the evolution of TOP GUN. It (the concept) is still a major component of TOP GUN'S training syllabus.

- (5) Not by choice, I was much involved in the drama of the *Oriskany* fire October 26, 1996 in the Tonkin Gulf. Caught on the second deck forward of number I (centerline) elevator, along with twelve other souls, we were unable to escape the fire, heat and acrid (magnesium oxide) smoke. Knowing of a vertical trunk extending down to the keel, I took everyone down into that shaft and sealed us in. In the dark with no PA sounds and only one malfunctioning OBA, two attempts to get someone out had to be aborted. After more than two hours, a repair 8 search team came by and the two of them (with OBAs) and I (with only a handkerchief filter) got a mortally-burned victim out to the hangar bay. I then got a functional OBA, and made two more trips back to the vertical trunk to bring the remaining officers and men out to safety.
- (6) Member of 4-C club - Pilots who have flown the Corsair I, Corsair II, Cutlass and Crusader.
- (7) In 1976, I was selected and honored as one of twelve National 4-H alumni. I was invited to and spoke at the National 4-H convention in Chicago.
- (8) 1977, presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Tailhook Association.