



**John A. Gagen, Col, USMC (Ret.)**  
 “Snapper”

Date of Designation: 23 May 1956 NA # V-9314

Dates of Active Duty: 24 August 1954 - 31 March 1980

Total Flight Hours: 5,848 Accident Free

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 169

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 5,000 Prop: 878 VF/VA: 4,171  
 VR/VP: 986 Other: 671

Combat Tours:

Vietnam: Tactical Fighter Sqd.-559, Dec. 1965-July 1966  
 Cam Rhan Bay ( F4C)  
 Vietnam: VMFA-542 Aug. 1969-June 1970, Danang AB  
 (F4B, TA4F)  
 Total Combat Missions: 364

Aviation Commands:

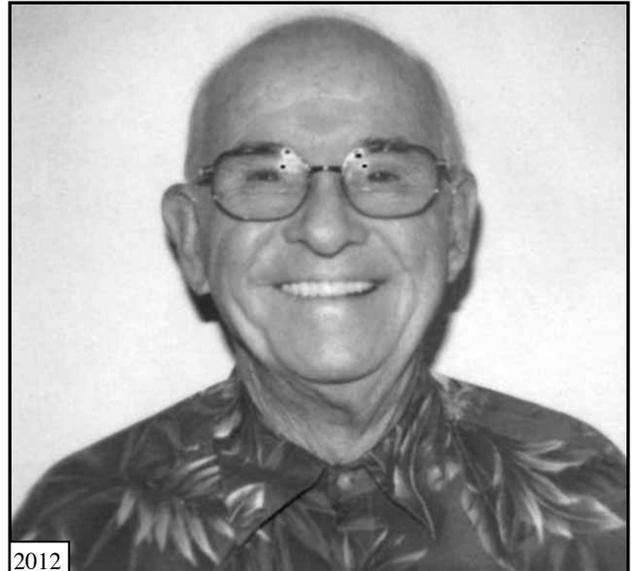
CO, VMFA-531 Aug. 1974-June 1975  
 CO, VMFA-531 Sept. 1975-June 1976  
 CO, VMFAT-101 July 1976-May 1977  
 CO, MCCRTG-10 Oct. 1977-July 1979

Combat Awards:

Distinguished Flying Cross  
 Bronze Star with Combat “V”  
 Purple Heart  
 Air Medals (26)  
 USAF Outstanding Unit Award with Combat “V”

**Duty Assignment Chronology**

8/54-5/56 Naval air Training Command, Pensacola,  
 Corry, Saufley, Barin, Beeville. NAVCAD/2nd  
 Lt. (SNJ, T-28,TV-2, F9F-2).



6/56-12/58 VMF-114, VMF(AW)-114, MCAS Cherry  
 Point, NC (F9F-8, F4D, TV-2, F3D, SNB).  
 1/59-8/59 VMF(AW)-114 USS *F. D. Roosevelt* (F4D).  
 9/59-3/60 VMF (AW)-114, MAG-24, Cherry Point, NC  
 (F4D,F9F-8T, TV-2, A4D).  
 4/60 Special Indoctrination Course, Quantico, VA.  
 5/60-3/62 Officer Selection Officer, N.Y.C. (FJ-4B, SNB,  
 T2V).  
 4/62-10-63 VMFA-314 MCAS El Toro, CA (F4D, F4H,  
 F4B).  
 11/63-11/64 NAS Atsugi, Japan (F4B).  
 12/64-5/65 USAF Exchange, Tactical Fighter Sqd. 559,  
 Flight Commander/Weapons Officer MacDill  
 AFB, Florida (F4C).  
 6/65-11/65 TFS-559, Flight Commander, Naha AB,  
 Okinawa (F4C).  
 12/65-7/66 TFS-559, Flight Commander, Cam Rhan Bay,  
 Vietnam (F4C).  
 8/66-4/68 VMFA-513, Operations Officer, MCAS Cherry  
 Point, NC. (F4B, TF9J, C-117).  
 5/68-1/69 Assistant Division Air Officer, Camp Lejeune,  
 NC. (F4B/J, US2A/B).  
 2/69-4/69 VMFA-312/451, Squadron Pilot, MCAS  
 Beaufort, SC. (F4B/J,TA4F).  
 5/69-7/69 Great Lakes Naval Hospital, IL. Medical  
 Treatment, Cancer.  
 8/69-12/69 VMFA-542, Maintenance Officer/”Playboy”  
 Missions, Danang, Vietnam (F4B, TA4F).  
 1/70-6/70 G-3, 1st MAW, Danang, Vietnam. Assistant  
 Operations (F4B, TA4F, US2B).  
 7/70-5/71 Student, Command and Staff College,  
 Quantico, VA (T-28).  
 6/71-6/74 Assistant Executive Officer/Senior Aide-  
 de-Camp to the Deputy Commander-in-Chief  
 European Command, Stuttgart, Germany (T39).  
 7/74-6/75 VMFA-531 Commanding Officer, MCAS El  
 Toro, CA. (F4B/N).  
 7/75-8/75 TAD HQMC,, Washington D. C. , Promotion  
 Board

### Duty Assignment Chronology continued

- 9/75-6/76 VMFA-531, Commanding Officer, MCAS El Toro, CA (F4N).
- 7/76-5/77 VMFAT- 101, Commanding Officer, MCAS Yuma, AZ, (F4N/J).
- 6/77-10/77 Executive Officer, Marine Corps Combat Crew Readiness Training Group-10 (MCCRTG-10), MCAS Yuma, AZ (F4N/J).
- 11/77-7/79 Commanding Officer, MCCRTG-10 MCAS Yuma, AZ (F4N/J, A4M).
- 8/79-11/79 Chief of Staff, 7th Marine Amphibious Brigade, Camp Pendleton, CA.
- 12/79-3/80 Medical Evaluation, Pending Retirement

### **Summary of Significant Career Events**

1. Selected to be in the first Marine F4D squadron and made a Mediterranean cruise on the USS *F. D. Roosevelt*.
2. I was in the first F-4 Phantom squadron on the West Coast. Participated in F-4 cruise control evaluation of various aircraft configurations. Participated in development of F-4 bomb, rocket and napalm delivery tactics.
3. Participated in first F-4 Transpac from MCAS El Toro, CA to NAS Atsugi, Japan and return, utilizing C-130's for refueling.
4. Commanded the Marine Corps largest F-4 squadron (37 aircraft).
5. As a USAF Exchange Pilot, I assisted in the initial training of their pilots as the USAF introduced the Phantom into their inventory.
6. Shot down over Laos and hung in 100-150 foot tree for over two hours prior to being rescued by a Jolly Green Giant.
7. As C.O. of VMFA-531, we received the FMFPAC Safety Award.
8. While operations officer in VMFA-513, I was put in charge of a team of pilots and RIO's who developed the first Marine F-4 Training syllabus. This became the model for the future two Marine F-4 training squadrons. (VMFAT-101 and 102)
9. Flew the Fast-Fac Mover "Playboy" missions in Vietnam while assigned to VMFA 542.
10. Assistant Executive Officer and Senior Aide-de-Camp to DCINCEUR a USAF four- star in Stuttgart, Germany.