

NOTAM 02 - 2020 (Feightner) 4/01/2020



*The Golden Eagles®*



## Rear Admiral Edward L. Feightner, USN (Ret)

### Golden Eagle Emeritus

Gentlemen,

It is my sad duty to report that Golden Eagle Emeritus Rear Admiral Edward L. “Whitey” Feightner, USN (Ret) made his Last Take Off on 1 April 2020 at the age of 100 years old. Whitey was born in October 1919 and was raised on a farm near Elida, Ohio, now a village just outside of Lima, Ohio. He attended Elida High School and graduated as Class Valedictorian. He then attended Findlay College, now the University of Findlay, located in Findlay, Ohio, on a full scholarship and graduated in 1942.

Immediately following graduation, Whitey enlisted in the Navy V-5 Aviation Cadet Program and graduated from Navy flight training in April 1942. He received orders to VF-5 aboard USS *Yorktown* (CV-5) flying F4F Wildcats. USS *Yorktown* (CV-5) was sunk at the Battle of Midway in June 1942 right before Whitey arrived in theater. He was assigned instead to VF-3 also flying the F4F Wildcat stationed at NAS Puunene, (Maui) HI. It was during his short stay with VF-3 that his skipper, Butch O’Hare, started calling him Whitey because he never suntanned, he just burned, and 77 years later he was still Whitey Feightner!

Whitey then transferred to VF-10 in USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) and later Guadalcanal, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division (less than a week before returning to *Enterprise*). His skipper at this time was LCDR Jimmie Flatley. After making his first night landing when the search and attack group that he was covering got lost and it was dark when he returned to *Enterprise*, he shot down his first enemy aircraft on 26 October 1942. This shoot down was followed by 3 more on 30 January 1943. After just 8 months in the squadron, Whitey joined VF-8, as a plank owner at NAAS Pungo (not far south of current NAS Oceana). VF-8 eventually started flying F6F Hellcats and after a short stint embarked in USS *Intrepid* (CV-11) on a Caribbean shakedown deployment where Whitey did the initial carquals for the F6F, the squadron joined USS *Bunker Hill* (CV-17) part of CVBG-8 in the Pacific, and it was here that Whitey became a WWII fighter ace on 30 March 1942 when he shot down a Japanese Zero. He eventually recorded 9 Kills (5 Zekes, 3 Bettys and a Val) and 4 probables before returning to CONUS with VF-8. With the war winding down, Whitey was assigned to VF-98 at NAS Los Alamitos and then

---

served as the gunnery officer in VF-21 at NAS San Diego.

Whitey served as Aide & Flag LT for COMCARDIV Three and COMCARDIV Two from 1946 to 1948 prior to being assigned to the U.S. Navy Test Pilot School, NAS Patuxent River, MD. He graduated in Class Two and was assigned to the Flight Test Division where he flew numerous Navy aircraft. He was the only pilot to qualify aboard ship in the F7U-1 before the project was canceled in favor of the F7U-3. As the F7F Tigercat project pilot, Whitey checked out Charles Lindberg before Lindberg's evaluation flight in the aircraft.

Joining the Blue Angels in 1952, Whitey flew Lead Solo in the F7U-1 Cutlass. The Cutlass was not a part of the diamond formation which was still flying the F9F as the F7U-1 was not yet ready for formation flight with the first hydraulic flight control system in a Navy operational aircraft. Whitey had several "wild rides" as a Blue Angel solo before leaving the team when it was decided that the Cutlass was not ready for duty as a demonstration jet! He joined VX-3 at NAS Atlantic City, NJ, before joining the VF-11 Red Rippers as Commanding Officer.

Following a deployment in USS *Coral Sea* (CV-43) flying the F9F-8 Cougar, Whitey relinquished command of VF-11 and served as the O-in-C of the Jet Transition Training Unit, NAS Olathe, KS, prior to starting his PCAG-10 training pipeline. He assumed command of CAG-10 in March 1959 aboard USS *Forrestal* (CV-59) and made a second deployment in USS *Essex* (CV-9). Whitey attended U. S. Naval War College (after a short tour on the staff of Air Group Four (CVG-4) writing some of the first NATOPS manuals) before joining BuWeps as the F4H-1 Project Officer and then Head of Fighter Design where he participated in the development of the F-8 Crusader, FJ-4 Fury and the E-2 Hawkeye. In 1963 Whitey served as Operations Officer on the staff of COMCARDIV Two embarked in USS *Enterprise* (CVAN-65) and participated in "Sea Orbit," an around the world deployment of the Navy's first nuclear powered Task Force (USS *Enterprise*, USS *Long Beach* and USS *Bainbridge*).

CAPT Whitey Feightner's deep draft command was USS *Chikaskia* (AO-54) serving as Commanding Officer from 1964 to early 1966. He then went on to command USS *Okinawa* (LPH-3), deploying to the Caribbean and eventually moving the ship to San Diego where it became part of the Pacific Fleet. Whitey followed his command-at-sea tours with several tours in the

---

Pentagon, serving in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations-Air (OP-506), and he also served as director of Naval Aviation Weapons Systems Analysis Group. In June 1970, CAPT Feightner was promoted to Rear Admiral. His final assignment was at Naval Air Systems Command where he participated in several fighter studies that resulted in the development of the Grumman F-14 Tomcat and McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet. He also served as assistant commander for Logistics/Fleet Support before retiring after 33 years of service on 30 June 1974.

Whitey flew over 8600 hours and made 836 arrested landings. His awards include the Legion of Merit with one gold star, Distinguished Flying Cross with 3 gold stars, Air Medal with 2 silver stars and one gold star, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Navy Presidential Unit Citation with 3 service stars and numerous service and campaign medals. He was also presented the Congressional Gold Medal for U. S. Aces, Issued in May 2015 in recognition of their heroic service to the United States.

After retiring, Whitey and several other flag officers formed Federal Management Systems (FMS) consulting for the U.S. Navy. He also worked as a consultant for United Technologies. He remained active in all things aviation and was often asked to speak at aviation-related symposiums. Whitey never missed an opportunity to fly and attracted a crowd wherever he went. Even as recently as the 2014 Cleveland Air Show and the 8 May 2015 VE Day observances in Washington, D.C., he flew [as a passenger] in a former Soviet jet trainer and a vintage SNJ trainer over the D.C. monuments at the age of 95.

Whitey married Violet Volz and was happily married for 67 years. She preceded him in death in 2015. In 2016 he moved to Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, with his nephew Jim McBride and his family.

Whitey was a very skilled fighter pilot. He also earned a reputation as a strong team player who always focused on the task. This ability, along with his affable nature, made him a superb leader.

Rear Admiral Edward L. Feightner was truly a member of the Greatest Generation

He will be missed!

---

In sadness,  
John Mazach

When memorial services/interment plans are made available, they will be published in a Special Notice.

---