

*Conversation*  
*with*  
*Phillip Dane Voss*

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Recorded and Transcribed  
by  
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TAPE 1 SIDE A

LYN-Today is August 4, 2017 and I am on the Ortega River off Ortega Farms Circle and we are talking to Phil Voss who did serve at Cecil Field and has served this city since his time at Cecil. I know he has a very interesting story. We are going to begin saying when were you born and where you born? Tell us about your family.

PHIL-I was born right after World War II in 1947 and I was born in Natchez, Mississippi of a Danish father who was a Danish Merchant Marine and that's how he made it to the United States. He was working on the Mississippi River on river boats and tug boats and ended up landing in Natchez, Mississippi. A lot of emigrants did settle there and he met this little girl who was at a gas station he was working at. That ended up being my mother.

LYN-Tell us her name.

PHIL-Her name was Delphine, on the German side of things. Lots of Germans in Natchez, Mississippi. You'll get a kick out of this because there are so many emigrants there, there were three Catholic churches, one being the cathedral for the state of Mississippi, two Jewish synagogues, lots of Methodists, lots of Presbyterians, and only one Southern Baptist Church. [Phil and I had talked beforehand about my husband being a Southern Baptist pastor]

LYN-Well that is interesting in Mississippi. (Laugh)

PHIL-It really is in Mississippi but it's mainly emigrants. The thing is that my dad was there and he started working for an uncle of his which grew into a, he ended up buying it and it became an automobile dealership. It became the first Studebaker dealership and the first Mercedes Benz because they are the only ones, Studebaker Corporation was the only one that had permits to sell Mercedes in the United States.

He was very big into being a patriot in the United States. His younger brother who he ended up bringing over from Denmark because Denmark, he knew it was going to be invaded. He came over and ended up in the Army and was an Army veteran during the second world war. One of the things my dad wanted for his seven children with my mother, five boys and two girls, all five of us in my case was picked up from high school football practice when I was a senior. I said, "Dad, we gonna go have a beer, it's my birthday?" He said, "No, remember this is the day that you join the navy." All five of us, he felt it was very important that we all served our country, which we did. All five of us joined the Navy. Two of us became, we were all enlisted to start with, two of us became officers, two of us became as a matter of fact aviators.

So that's sort of my beginning way back then. I ended up going to the University of Southern Mississippi and I was in the naval reserve at the time. I had applied for officer candidate school and they said, "Well, we really don't need any" because it was the height of Vietnam years. The draft was on but see I was already in the navy so I couldn't be drafted. But the thing is that they told me when, I ran into a recruiter when I was at college in the student union and went over and talked to him. He said, "The reason they are saying they don't need any officer candidates is because all those are the surface warfare guys that went aboard ships and submarines but we

don't really need many of them because the guys from Harvard and Yale and Princeton were filling up those billets but we do need aviators." I said, "Well, what can I do?" He said, "You can apply to go to aviation officer candidate school in Pensacola and then go through flight training if you make it. We could see where it would go." I was very interested and I did ask him, "Why do they need more naval aviators?" He said, "Well truthfully they are shooting down two Naval aviators a day in Vietnam right now so we need more aviators."

Well, I passed the test, I got accepted and went to officer candidate school where I'm sure the other people you've talked to so far went to officer's candidate school in Pensacola.

LYN-Yes, and my husband was in Pensacola in VT-6.

PHIL-I remember VT-6 is still in existence now as a matter of fact. So, I went to officer candidate school there and I got selected back then during the Vietnam years they, you either selected jets, props, or helicopters. Everybody applies for jets of course. Back then out of my class of sixty-two that were commissioned on the same day, four of them got orders for jets. The bulk of the guys got helicopters because we needed a lot of helicopter pilots at that time.

LYN-That was to support ground troops.

PHIL-Helicopters were primarily, the ones going to Vietnam were, it was called HAL-3 which was helicopter attack squadron flight. They would follow the river marine patrol when they were going up in the river boats and they would fly overhead of them and provided air combat assist for that. So, I knew a lot of guys that were helicopter pilots and I'll tell you later what happened to them.

LYN-What was considered the most dangerous of those three do you think?

PHIL-Jets. Jets were going to go straight to Vietnam and in combat. After that you know aviation is dangerous no matter what you do and so it's really dangerous for all of them.

LYN-When you entered the field you knew you were entering a dangerous field.

PHIL-I didn't do jets at that time. I was one of the ones who entered props so I ended up going through the prop pipe line down in Corpus Christi, Texas, got my wings there and then had orders to Quonset Point, Rhode Island to be in my first squadron which was VS-31 Topcats.

What that squadron did is that it was anti-submarine warfare so we would go off and while the guys going to Vietnam went one direction west and we went east on the carriers out of Newport, Rhode, Island because of the Cold War. So, we would most of the time I was in the North Atlantic. Most of the time we were above the Arctic Circle and we were flying eight-hour missions at that time off the USS Intrepid which is now a museum.



USS INTREPID  
CVS-11

I need to add, every ship that I served on during my thirty-one years in the Navy and every station that I served at during the time in the Navy and every airplane that I flew is now, they are all in museums or disestablished or gone.

The thing is that in my class there were twelve of us aviators that stuck together. Several of them, we all went to Quonset Point, Rhode Island which is where the propeller squadrons were. I made three extended deployments to the Mediterranean and to Europe.

LYN-All on the Intrepid.

PHIL-All on the Intrepid. I came back and I remember coming back on that last cruise in the spring of 1973 when I had one of the other commanding officers, not of the squadron that I was in but another, he was just being promoted to being a squadron CO to be their training squadron CO which we call the RAG which is a reserve or replacement air group. He says, "I want you to come to that squadron." I said, "Sir, the only way that I would ever come to that squadron, I'm not going to stay in Rhode Island, I'm a bachelor. If you pick up your squadron and they end up moving it to Florida I'll come to your squadron." That's exactly what happened.



VS-31 TOPCATS  
relocated from Quonset Point,  
Rhode Island  
to  
Cecil Field, Florida

They closed the base. We got word of that on the way back from that cruise, the third cruise, and he called me back over and said, “I would like for you to come to us.” He said, “Right now we’re transitioning because they are closing the base. Your squadron needs you and you are a bachelor to help fly the airplanes down and back and down and then back to Cecil Field.” That’s where they were going to move them.

LYN-Had you heard of Cecil Field before?

PHIL-Never. The thing is that I knew about NAS Jacksonville and I knew about Cecil because I flew over a military base way back in flight training. One of the things you have to do is to go on a cross-country, a long cross-country with an instructor. It’s an instrument check flight. So, as we would come into Jacksonville I remember looking down and seeing this base out in the middle of nowhere and then as we approached NAS Jacksonville and we stayed there overnight, I said, “Man, I love this place with all the water and everything because I grew up on the Mississippi River.”

So, here I am now back in Rhode Island and I’m flying the airplanes down here and every time I came down I looked out and I said, “With all that water there’s gotta be a place for me somewhere.” That’s why I’m on the Ortega River.

LYN-You are very close to NAS.

PHIL-We bought it that long ago. So, my first remembrances of being at Cecil, when we came to Cecil...

LYN-How did you get to be a “we”.

PHIL-We were in the airplane.

LYN-You are still unmarried?

PHIL-No, I’m single. I’m in the airplane with another lieutenant junior grade, I’m the aircraft commander. We’re transferring the squadron down. The married guys wanted to, they were driving their families. So, the bachelors shuttled the planes back. We would come down with four pilots, we came down with two airplanes and two pilots in each, dropped off one airplane, put those pilots in the back and flew back. We did that all summer long in 1973. It was great.

LYN-So your time at Cecil was just getting out of the plane and getting ready to go back.

PHIL-But no, we as bachelors we got to explore a lot of places.

LYN-Tell us what you explored.

PHIL-We would go out to the beaches a lot and go out to Mayport because we saw a lot of activity out there. We would, you know Orange Park was, well going out to Cecil was almost deserted. It was very close to being a gravel road. It was paved but it was two-lane.

But anyway, the guy that we stayed with was a really good friend, his name was Wayne Putnam. He's not with us anymore, he has passed away but he was my operation's officer. He had just come back from a combat deployment to Vietnam and he was the anti-submarine warfare officer, but really, they didn't have a big anti-submarine warfare problem in Vietnam, but his room-mate was the CAG, was the air wing, commander carrier air wing, the operations officer in that air wing. That guy was shot down in Vietnam and killed.

LYN-Who was that?

PHIL-His name was Fred Wright.

LYN-We know Fred Wright's wife, Primm Wright. [Conversation with Primm Wright is included in this project]

PHIL-Primm Wright was here and we went over because this friend of mine, Wayne Putnam said, "I want you to meet these friends of mine." We went with Wayne's wife as well as me and another naval officer. We went over to visit them and they were living down in Orange Park at Club Continental, the big complex down there. We went to visit them and I met the little kids back then.

LYN- Primm was living over at Club Continental.

PHIL-Cindy, one of her daughters, we ended up realizing who she was years later. But so, I got to know Primm real well because just as a friend. Anything that would go on out at the base, for years following that you will find out, I had nine tours of duty at Cecil Field. I think I've got the record.

LYN-I would think you would.

PHIL-I went from that first squadron and I was still in that first squadron until the spring of the following year, 1974, and I then went over to that training squadron. That was VS-30. It was the VS-30 Diamond Cutters. Once again, propeller driven airplanes. We were training other people including foreign students. As a matter of fact, J.B. Renninger was one of my students. I was his instructor. [Conversation with J.B. Renninger is included in this project] I really spent most of my time doing the international training.

LYN-What nations?

PHIL-We'll start out with Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Turkey, Greece, South Korea, China-Taiwan really. I think that's about it.



LYN-No Iranian?

PHIL-No Iranians.

LYN-My husband had Iranians in his training, a lot of them. Turkey and Iran.

PHIL-We just had those guys. The thing is, that is a part of my story by the way because at the end of that tour as I'm being a flight instructor, it turned out where I was doing the international guys and I had a really good friend of mine who was in the initial class with me when we got our wings in Corpus Christi and we all went to Quonset Point. There were twelve of us that did that. The twelve of us sort of stayed together in our careers. This one guy named Michael McKinney decided that he would get out of the Navy as one of those instructors.

He kept trying to ask me to get out. I asked why and he said, "Because nobody is available to do the training for those countries once the S-2 goes out of commission and we become a S-3 squadron which was the twin-engine jet squadron." He got out and he started a company called Logistic Services International. You'll find out later that I ended up being one of the senior executives in that company. It is out at Cecil Field right now.

So, Michael, we actually bought the company from Michael years later which was about ten years, eleven years, twelve years ago I guess in 2006. But anyway, with Cecil Field and I decided to stay in the Navy and Michael decided to get out. That's when I met my wife. I met her, she was from Pensacola. She came over to visit a friend who was married to a helicopter pilot here in Jacksonville who I had known from the USS Intrepid days and they introduced us and the rest is history. That was forty-four years ago and five children and six grandchildren ago.

LYN-Congratulations.

PHIL-Thank you. So, I stayed as an instructor there for those prop days and then that squadron was decommissioned as a training squadron and it became a fleet-going squadron, VS-30 Diamond Cutters. I went there as one of my first jet duty assignments. It was out at Cecil.

I need to go back a little bit because when we were first coming down during the summer, we were at the end of the base where all of the attack guys were on one side of the base and they were all going from A-4's to A-7 Corsairs. The other side of the base they had moved out of and those are the two oldest hangers at Cecil Field, in fact the oldest hanger is Hangar 13. "Hangar 13" is the title of my book.





Runways and Hangars of NAS Cecil Field

LYN-I didn't know about your book.

PHIL-I'm in the process of writing it. I started this years ago and it's all about different events that happened that started in Hangar 13. That's what I think really grabbed Mike when he asked me to do this interview. J.B. does not have this and neither does Sam Houston or any of those guys. [Conversation with Sam Houston is included in the project] Anyway, we all know each other very well by the way.

So, I was with that prop training squadron which later became jets and we went aboard the USS Forrestal and I deployed from that hangar and that's where we were operating out of. So, that was my second hangar. The reason that it is so interesting when we came down that summer bringing the airplanes in, I'm not kidding you Lyn, there were tumbleweeds that were over there that nobody had cleaned it up or anything else. It reminds me of the final scene in the movie with Gregory Peck in it and it reminded me of that because tumbleweeds were just there.

So, anyway, we cleaned it all up and made it a better place and I have pictures from a lot of that stuff. So, now we transition to jets and we are assigned to go back to Hangar 13. So, we deploy there on Forrestal.

LYN-Now what year is Forrestal?

PHIL-Now we're talking 1976 and this is now 1978 when I'm deployed on Forrestal and I get word that I had been accepted to go to U.S. Navy War College which was interesting for a lieutenant. So, I left then and flew home. We had one daughter by that time. We left to go to Newport, Rhode Island to where Navy War College is. That's for a year.

LYN-So your family did go with you.

PHIL-We only had the one daughter, Nancy, that's my wife, and I. We drove there and we were there for a year and after that I had orders to come, I thought I was coming back to Cecil Field but I wasn't. They sent me to Patuxent River, Maryland which is an air test and evaluation squadron which is where I ran into a guy named Sam Houston. Sam was our family's host, he and his wife Patty.

LYN-And I know Patty for many years.

PHIL-OK, well, we knew them before, as a matter of fact we went to a party at Sam's house one time when he was dating Patty and they didn't know the whole squadron was coming. So, we go way back.

LYN-I've known well twenty-something year as a teacher.

PHIL-You probably knew her before she was a blond.

LYN-I only remember the blond actually. (LAUGH) I knew her at Spring Park Elementary. She may have not been a blonde then but I don't remember.

PHIL-She was not. That is back when she was teaching I think at little Episcopal School, Grace Episcopal School. I think she taught there for a while. But anyway, so we are back...

LYN-You're at Pax River.

PHIL-I'm at Pax River flying S-3 aircraft so we are flying back and forth because all of the training devices are down here at Cecil so we go back and forth so I stayed in touch with everybody I knew. After that I got orders to go to my department head tour. That's where you, now I'm a Lieutenant Commander, and I come down and I came back to Cecil to VS-22 which was another anti-submarine warfare squadron. We were operating off the USS John F. Kennedy at that time. Once again, they moved us instead of the S-3 hangar, VS-22 ended up back in Hanger 13.



LYN-The Kennedy was in Norfolk?

PHIL-The Kennedy is out of Norfolk at that time and so we would fly up to meet the Kennedy off the coast and then we went on our first cruise was supposed to be a six-month cruise and it turned into an eleven-month cruise.

LYN-The Kennedy was famous for those long cruises.

PHIL-Yeah. So, we go through the Suez Canal, we are in the Mediterranean and go through the Suez Canal because of the whole Iranian crisis was very much, the tension was still there. '79 was when the Iranian hostage event happened. But so, we were there in the early '80's but we came back through the Suez Canal on our way home just in time for the Israelis to attack several hot spots in Lebanon so everything heated up again. So, we were at anchorage getting ready to go in on a social visit into Israel and they told us to pull off because we were extended another two months I think it was beyond that.

LYN-That's a long time away from family.

PHIL-It is, it really is so much so that you know by this time now we had three children and the cruise was so long that you were on flights in the Indian Ocean, didn't matter your altitude or anything else, but ironic the battle group commander was a guy named Rear Admiral Byron

Fuller who is, he was a POW for five years, shot down. He lives out at Jacksonville Beach and he is the honored guest at this event that Navy League is putting on.

LYN-Did he ever serve at Cecil?

PHIL-He did not. That's one of those things that is a little bit of a twist here. I thought that he did but all of his stuff was out at Lemoore. Now, his son-in-law, Matt Tuohy who you may have on the list, he is a navy captain who was the CO of the USS Kitty Hawk. He was my executive officer when I was the commanding officer in another squadron which I will tell you about at Cecil Field.

Anyway, now we're back from VS-22. When we were there in the Indian Ocean we had a radio called HALFOX which is HF and it can get very long-range reception. So, we were in touch with an air force base in the Philippines and I'm in the middle of the Indian Ocean bringing Admiral Fuller on his departure from what we call Gonzo Station which was up north right near the Persian Gulf which is where the Kennedy was operating. The only airplane that can fly all the way to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean were the S-3's, the S-3 Viking. That's what we were flying at this time, twin-engine jets. So, I was ordered to bring him down to drop him off there and he was going to fly home. He was retiring from the Navy.



S-3 Viking

After, I get a call, one that I had been trying to place earlier to my wife and we had code words back and forth. You have to answer...

LYN- "Over".

PHIL-You know that. You have to say "Over" and you have to say, "Roger, out". I said, "What's going on?" She said, "I'm coming to X-ray Tango, Honey". I said, because we had codes for any possible ports we could possibly go to. X-ray Tango was Perth, Australia.

If you take that globe right there and you take a hair pen and you stick it into Jacksonville, Florida and go right through the center of the earth it pops out within ten miles of Perth, Australia. You're on the other side of the world literally. I said, "Well, that sounds great, over."



And she says, “But I’ve got other news. I’m bringing the children too.” That airplane of mine went (making buzzing sound). I said, “Where are you getting the money from? Over” (Laugh) She said, “Do you remember your twenty-four-foot cabin cruiser? I just sold it and I’m on my way to X-ray Tango.” She brought our three kids, all under three and all in diapers, from Jacksonville, Florida to Perth, Australia for six days because she wanted to make sure that our marriage was going to stay in-tack. It was a God-type of thing, it really was.

LYN-Well, the good thing is that you did end up in Perth. I’ve heard of wives going to Australia and the ship not going there.

PHIL-That happened. We had a bunch, I told you about when we were going to Israel, twelve wives were in Haifa, Israel waiting on the ship and they said, “Sorry, you’ve got to leave.”

So, that was the big event then and I ended up screening, before I screened for command I was accepted to make commander and so I was promoted to commander aboard, I’m a history buff big time. Lord Nelson’s flag ship was, everything that Lord Nelson did for the British, he fought you know and won he defeated the Spanish Armada. He was big time hero in the British navy. I was invited to go aboard HMS Victory, His Majesty’s Ship, Her Majesty’s Ship Victory which is a wooden ship in Portsmouth, England to be frocked to commander.



HMS Victory-Portsmouth, England

I got there and the CO of the ship said, “You Yanks are all alike. You think you can come aboard this ship and be promoted.” I said, “Well, this friend of mine who is British said that he would take care of it”. He said, “I’m sorry.” My wife was there, the whole squadron was there and he said, “Come with me.” He brings me down to Lord Nelson’s great cabin and he was part of the promotion ceremony.

LYN-Did not Lord Nelson die aboard the ship?

PHIL-He died in the battle, I have the book in my study. He did.

LYN-Wow, what an experience.

PHIL-It was a great experience. I loved that squadron, VS-23. They were called the Check Mates. They are still are, well they are decommissioned now. But anyway, so from there I was getting ready, I had orders to go to the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, D.C. and as I'm getting ready to go my wife told me that her mom who lived at Club Continental was diagnosed as having acute lung cancer and she was only going to live for a month or two. So, I let the detailers know that and they changed around my orders.

They called the admiral over at NAS Jacksonville who was a former Cecil person, as a matter of fact he died at Cecil Field right after one of the change-of-commands. He had a massive heart attack. His name was Jerry Paulson, Rear Admiral Jerry Paulson. He was, I'll give you his title. His title was the Commander Sea-Base ASW, Anti- Submarine Warfare Wings Atlantic which means he's the same job and has the same authority that the current admiral over there has which means they are in charge of all the territory all the way down to Key West, Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, all the way up the east coast to Charleston, and all the way over to Pensacola. He had that under him. The admiral's staff was over there and so I was brought over there to be the assistant operation's.

LYN-What year is this?

PHIL-This is 1983.

LYN-What was going on in the world in '83?

PHIL-The Vulcans crisis, the space shot that went awry, the first one that flew up. That was all around that time-frame. As a matter of fact, I was at sea on the Kennedy during both of those. We had just come back and I had just been transferred over to the wing staff. So, over at the wing staff they didn't know how long but it was year and after I had been there for six months I was notified that I had screened for command.

So, I get a phone call saying that I had been slated to go to be the Executive Officer, the executive officer of the squadron floats up to the CO of the squadron. So, I go over to that squadron, remember I told you the story about the other guy, and so I go to the squadron and it was VS-30 Diamond Cutters, the same squadron I had been in. I have a record for being in that squadron more than anybody else. Nobody can beat me because the squadron is gone. (Laugh)

But the thing is at that time I get a phone call from this guy named Sam Houston because he was the guy who was going to be the commanding officer. So, I go over as his executive officer. For ninety-nine percent of those two years we got along great. A couple of times he had to sort of pull me aside and talk to me, but he was a great skipper and I was delighted when I found out that he was being put in charge of this program out at Cecil for the POW/MIA Memorial.

As a matter of fact, we ran into he and Patty at the golf tournament and they are all excited about it. I watched what the City Council was doing voting on it.

LYN-It was very moving. I wasn't there for the last one but even the first one, I will put on tape, Dizzy read a letter, I don't know if you have read it, it is as if it was from Scott Speicher his friend.

PHIL-I have heard it and I'm going to tell you more about Dizzy in just a minute. He's a good guy.

LYN-Good. I enjoyed so much talking to him.

PHIL-So, here we are, we're now I'm leaving the wing staff and I go over to check in as Sam's executive officer and we're in the new squadron now but eventually they moved us back over to...

LYN-Hangar 13.

PHIL-We ended up getting some time in there too. But then it ended up being our, in the main S-3 hanger they had six squadrons in there. So, I'm Sam's XO and we deploy and go to the Mediterranean and it was a terrific cruise. We all had a good time but in the middle of all of this they said, "Oh, guess what? You guys, you need, ramping back up again in the Indian Ocean. You get to go see the Suez Canal again." So, we go through the Suez Canal. I remember we spent...

LYN-Tell me your ship.

PHIL-USS Saratoga in Air Wing 17.

LYN-Which was based out of Mayport its entire career I understand.

PHIL-That's correct. Saratoga was there along with the Franklin D. Roosevelt, not the Teddy Roosevelt, two different ships. They were the two carriers that were there. I had landings on both of those.



USS SARATOGA



USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT



But anyway, I have landings on ten air craft carriers.

LYN-Beginning with the Lexington I would assume.

PHIL-Beginning with the Lexington in Pensacola. That's where my first landings were, my first single engine and twin engine.

So, we are now in the Indian Ocean. We go pier side at Perth, Australia when we get word on Saratoga that we had been recalled because of this guy Ghadaffy who has declared a line of death in the Mediterranean. So, the Saratoga takes off and goes back north again, back through the Suez Canal, and we were involved with that whole event.

We actually, we were in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia when the ship was called out. Now, Dizzy Gillespie was the operations officer on the ship at that time. So, we are called out and I'm the executive officer, Sam is the commanding officer. Sam went in with a couple of airplanes into Sigonella, Sicily at that time the night that all of that was going on. So, we found out, they pull us out of port in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia to go chase down this thing and our airplanes are the ones that flew out into flying to find where the Achille Lauro was and J.B. Renninger wasn't involved in all of this. Dizzy was and Sam was and I was. I don't know who else you have but...

LYN-Those three people. You are the third.

PHIL-There are a lot of guys here in Jacksonville that were associated with all of that. So, we were called the "Terrorist Busters" and it was underneath that they had "You can run but you can't hide".

LYN-So are we talking Scott Speicher time?

PHIL-No, no, no. We're not there yet. Scott was probably in flight school not in the Navy then. This is 1984-85. We're in the Mediterranean. We do that the whole line of death thing. We come back. Ronald Reagan is on the news every night. It's a big deal. It's Americana back again. I'll never forget it. Everything that was happening was so patriotic. We are now a fully volunteer Navy, not like the Vietnam days. Nobody wanted to be there during the Vietnam days other than me. I guess I'm the only one who raised my hand. I'm known for having helium in my arm.

We go back to Cecil Field and I relieve Sam for the command. Sam goes to Washington to be in charge of the S-3 program in Washington and I take over as commander of the squadron. We go back out and we cruise in the Mediterranean the whole time. We left in about May so it's now approaching September.

LYN-You're back on the Saratoga?

PHIL-On the Saratoga. Dizzy was still ops officer then. It was the best squadron that I've ever been in. Once again, it's a different tour. This was tour number seven now at Cecil Field. I've got two more to go.

LYN-And you're still married.

PHIL-Nancy's dad was in the Navy and he had a long talk with her way before, matter of fact, he asked me when I asked him for her hand in Pensacola, he says, "Does she know what it entails? You explained it to her?" I said, "Every single bit of it." He said, "If she still wants to do it." We worked that out. Nancy loved to travel. She was with me, once again she was over in Europe.

LYN-She was following the ship?

PHIL-Oh, yeah, she does. By then we had baby sitters that are watching them. So, we are in the Mediterranean and when I say it was the best squadron ever, I got really good tickets from my bosses. It was phenomenal. We won the "Battle E", we won the safety award, we won the maintenance award, we won the "Golden Hook Award", not the gold hook but it was a hook for fishing for catching submarines, Soviet submarines in the Mediterranean. It was just incredible. So, I did really well.

LYN-Explain the "Battle E" for us.

PHIL-The "Battle E" is for the best squadron of your type in the entire Atlantic Coast.

LYN-You get to put that on your plane.

PHIL-You bet you. It has the "Battle E" and if you had the safety award you had a "S".

LYN-You were a bigger target.

PHIL-You've got that right. So, anyway it was a great, fantastic group of people. Some of those people, especially two of those chiefs, master chiefs, one was my command master chief and one was my maintenance master chief, you may want to interview because they had many, many tours at Cecil Field. One's name is Dennis Woodward, AT Master Chief. He lives in Orange Park. I'll give you his address and phone number. The other one's name is Charlie Benda, Hospital Corpsman Master Chief, the first time ever in an aviation squadron. He ended up having three tours at Cecil Field and I was the commander of all three of them because I brought both of these guys with me. [we were unable to include interviews with these men but obviously their service to our Navy was highly respected by their commanding officer]

LYN-There's no hospital at Cecil Field.

PHIL-He was a hospital corpsman in Vietnam. He had ribbons from here to here. He loved Cecil Field. He ended up working for the city and running Cecil Field's deal out there. A great guy, lots of fun. He is going to shoot me for telling it. Anyway, he would love to interview. Dennis may not be able to do it. His wife has MS and she is having a tough time. Big, big Baptist. You would love just to talk to them.

LYN-Absolutely.

PHIL-So, I'm now commander of the squadron. Right at the end of my tour, Dizzy probably told you what was getting ready to happen. My wife is over there for my change-of-command. We're in Palma and I, before the wives got there, no we were in Naples, Italy and I was with a bunch of chief petty officers drinking at a bar called Mike's Bar late at night. We go back, I say

late at night, it's eleven o'clock or midnight, and my duty officer aboard the ship Saratoga called me and said, "CAG has been wanting to talk to you." CAG is the carrier wing commander who Dizzy worked for. "You need to be in his office at five o'clock in the morning."

I thought it was a joke. So, I go down there. Well the CAG is there and he said, "I need to know some details and I've got about twenty minutes to get them and you are gonna go with me. The details are how far has the S-3 ever flown in history?" The whole deal was they were asking questions wanting to know because they had, they were pretty sure that they were going to be able to capture this terrorist and they wanted to, there was no way because of what happened the year before on the Saratoga when we chased down the Achille Lauro and they ended up, the Saratoga forced those guys down in Sigonella, Sicily. The Italians let them all go. They were never tried.

LYN-I did not know that.

PHIL-They were all let go. Abu Abbas was the one who created that whole thing and he got away, just left. So, the United States had changed their laws, Title Ten of the U.S. code to where now the FBI could go with the CIA into foreign countries that had no recognized leader like Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, or in international waters.

LYN-Did it have to involve a U.S. registered vehicle?

PHIL-No, if it was, they could go over there and get, if there was a reason to go in and get a terrorist out of one of those countries and bring him out they could do that only in those types of countries. So, I have a presentation that I give to a lot of civic groups and military groups on this whole event. It's called "Operation Goldenrod". That was the FBI name for it. As a matter of fact, you can google it. The most secretive missions of the FBI were always sensitive.



Anyway, so, I think Dizzy was briefed on all of this too at the time. The deal was that, I'm sitting there and I'm, my boss CAG said, "Find out who you want to fly. Pick your best aviators

and everything else.” I did, I picked two young lieutenants who were the absolute best and I said, “These guys are the ones who will driving the airplane.”

LYN-How far could the plane go?

PHIL-It went as far as I needed it. We went over four thousand two hundred miles. But that was refueled in the air by Air Force tankers. But anyway, the thing is that about two days later I get called back into the CAG, well first of all that day my wife is ashore and the admiral, my boss said, “Come with me. We’ve got to go in the Admiral’s cabin.” So, we go in the admiral’s cabin and he says, he tells me what we’re gonna do, “But by the way, those lieutenants are not going to be flying.” I said, “Why?” He says, “Because if something happens, anything happens at all” like for example we landed, we forced those guys down in Sigonella, Sicily and the Italians had total control over them. We didn’t have any control over them. “So, you can’t land anywhere.” I said, “What if I lose an engine.” He says, “Then fly that thing as far as it will go with one engine on it.” I said, “What if the guy who is flying it would lose both engines?” He said, “Well we’ll talk about that later.”

So, the deal is I ended up finding out that the way, the airplane actually flew in tests for about twenty-five hours straight and they finally had to throw brick bats, big blocks through it to see if they hit a duck or something if it would shut down the engine. It was a great General Electric engine.

So, I’m getting ready to have my change-of-command in Palma. My wife is there waiting for me. Right before that the admiral comes into my Ready Room and cleared the Ready Room and he and CAG wanted to talk. He says, “Because we don’t want any screw-ups and press or if anything happens, if we actually capture the guy and then if they actually get him to the Saratoga and actually get him in an airplane, the reason why you’re gonna fly is because the guy who is running this mission wants to know who is the most experienced pilot in this airplane in the entire Mediterranean Sea area.” It was me. He says, “For that reason you are going and not anybody else. In other words, you’re gonna take the bullet if anything happens.”

I said, “What about my change-of-command?” He said, “We’re gonna bring you back aboard the ship in secrecy for the change-of-command.” So, I told my squadron “Good-bye” and they had a big party for us then pulled my wife aside, the admiral did, and said, “We’re gonna keep your husband for another twenty days or so or whatever it takes.” Anyway, we go back to the ship. They hid me in quarters on the ship. Finally, about two days later once we were underway they went to DEPCOM and shut down all electronic transmissions so nobody could can email, well we didn’t have email back then. Anyway, I walk in the back of the Ready Room and everybody went, “What in the hell are you doing here?” (Laugh) So, they started getting an idea but still only about seven people in the entire ship knew about it.

The bottom line is that the FBI got this guy, he had blown up a Jordanian airliner. It was in US News and World Report. If you give it back to me I can loan you a copy or maybe I can send you a copy. The reason it ended up in US News and World Report is because when everything happened I was not allowed to tell anybody. When I flew this guy home, thirteen and a half hours and about four thousand two hundred miles.

LYN-Can you go into how he was captured?

PHIL-One thing, the reason he picked me, they went back and they said, "The guy that is running this mission in Washington said the senior guy was gonna do this. I said, "Would that be, CAG?" They said, "The Vice President of the United States, George Bush." The first George Bush." Oh, by the way, back when he was in the war he flew Avengers which were the predecessors to that prop airplane.

So, now it's the seventeenth of September 1987 and the Navy, we can't take any special type of pills to keep us awake. The Air Force does. But, what they do is they give us knock-out pills to make us sleep longer and we can stay awake. So, they get me up at about four o'clock the next morning and we had like three jets on the flight deck turning and ready to go if one of them didn't make it. Mine was fine.

What happened is that they had been tracking the guy who was the head of this thing that blew up this Jordanian airliner that beat up a bunch of Americans years ago. They wanted to make a point, not that this guy was that really bad guy, which is why he eventually got to go home, twenty-five years later. But, the thing is, this guy was just a thud. He was nothing. He was just a hoodlum like you see on the street. He was a young kid but he was trying to show himself and everything else. What they were doing was world terrorism so the FBI and the CIA had been trying to get somebody like this because they wanted to prove that they could use this U.S. code for the FBI and CIA to work together along with international agencies.

So, they lured him out from Lebanon out to the island of Crete and set him up in a hotel overnight and told him, because he was running drugs, and they said, "We've got this boat off the coast with a bunch of hot chicks on it. Come out and have fun and have a few drinks and get the drugs that you need and you'll be gone on your way." He says, "Absolutely, I'm ready to go."

He goes out there with this other guy from Lebanon who he thought was his friend, in fact that guy was the informant. They go aboard the ship. The girls were dressed I will say very scantily especially from the waist up to lure him on the boat. What he didn't know was that they were FBI agents. They took him down and ended up breaking his wrist when they took him down. The ship, that was aboard a sailing boat called the "Skunk Kilo." That was the name of the boat. It was a U.S. person's boat that they had rented for the day.

They lured him on the boat. Soon over the horizon comes a U.S. Navy ammunition ship which was the USS Butte and they had the entire FBI team on board there who interrogated him the whole time. They brought him over to the Intrepid [Saratoga], to the Saratoga where I knew beforehand that I was not gonna be able to have a co-pilot. I said, "Why, I've got to have a guy that, who is going to turn on the computer for me?" He said, "You're gonna have to figure that out." I said, "Why?" He said, "We don't know what condition this guy is in and we want a doctor onboard." So, they put a flight surgeon in my right seat. He had never been in the airplane before. (Laugh) I said, "Who's in the back seat?" They said, "There will be three." I said, "No, we only have two seats." They said, "No, one is gonna be a linguist who is an FBI

agent and the other one is going to be this senior guy. Every step will be this senior guy in case the newspaper report, “Why didn’t you use someone who was more experienced?”

So, anyway we had this guy named Woody Johnson who was a former Marine. His arms were like this. We had to cut the flight suit to get it on him. (Laugh) This guy could have killed you just looking at you. Anyway, so Woody is in the airplane and I ended up bringing him up front when I was doing the refuel, the in-flight refueling. I mean, you could see the guys, what happened is the Air Force flew an airplane all the way from a base in North Carolina out to meet me and once it made two turns, flew from the United States all the way to the Mediterranean and once it made two turns over the ship they launched me off the ship. I went up and in-flight refueled with an A-6 tanker first and then this airplane and I essentially followed it across the Atlantic. We went over the Azores and then over Newfoundland and came down that way.

There are a lot of little stories that were funny that happened like we were coming back in and the air traffic controller was saying, “Well, you know, the Air Force said, came up on the air and said, ‘I’m having trouble telling them who you are because when we left twenty-something hours ago we didn’t have a wingman and now I’ve got to tell them that I have a wingman and he is going to go to Andrews Air Force Base and we’re going home. “What should I tell them?” I said because I was much senior to the two majors that were flying the Air Force and I said, “You’re the pilot in command of your airplane so you figure it out.””

So anyway, they cleared me and we landed at Andrews Air Force. This guy was brought right away for trial.

I ended my tour. I flew that airplane back down to Cecil Field, to Hangar 13. The wing commander down there and his deputy who was a good friend of mine who ended up being a three-star admiral, they met me along with my wife and the wives of those two master chiefs that I told you about because they were my ombudsmen. They were the ones who took care of all the sailor’s wives.

LYN-You were flying knowing you were making world history.

PHIL-As a matter of fact, no carrier aircraft has ever flown that far. That’s the record.

LYN-So there was no fear?

PHIL-I was a little nervous because I can’t tell you the number of times I thought to myself, “You know, this is really happening. This is really, really happening. This isn’t a dream.” I said, “Wow, this could be history you know. Wow, this could be bad.” If I had lost an engine you know. I’m going to go back to I mentioned that earlier. I asked the admiral, “What do I do.” He says, “There are four ejection seats in that airplane that have people that we know are in there.

The terrorist was put in a Stokes litter which is what you use for medical guys.

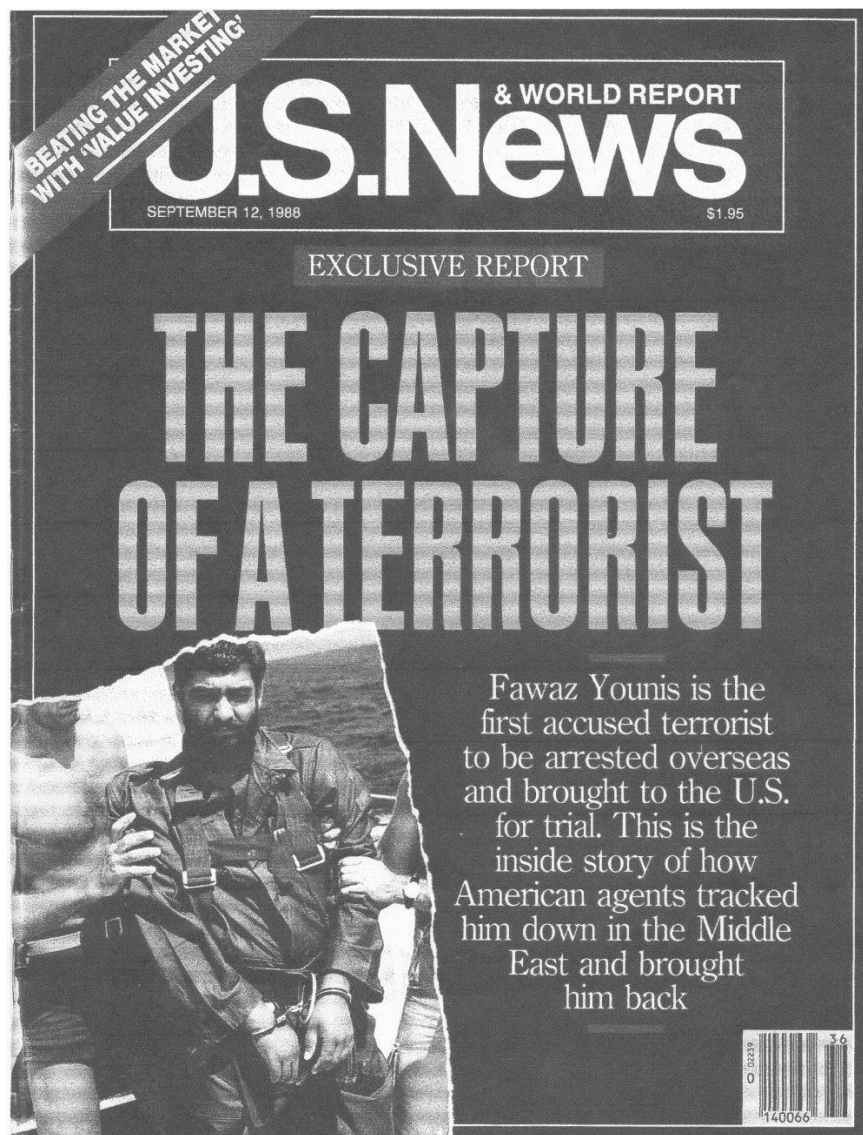
LYN-He was laying down?

PHIL-He laid down but one of the concerns, I had a great input on everything that happened. I said, “First of all, I want to get as much plastic as we can in that Stokes litter.” A Stokes litter is

like a long basket that a six-foot person can lay down in. I said, "I want it for protection I want it in what they call a clam shell, you take a second Stokes litter and put over the top of that so he's in a cage now." They said, "Why do you want the plastic in there?" I said, "Because he is gonna have to go to the bathroom sometime during this and I don't want that smell and everything else inside of the small cockpit." He's way back in this tunnel area with all the electronic stuff. I said, "Then also I want to cut a thing right in front of his face." They said, "Why?" I said, "Well because you're gonna have to give him water or something to drink. That's the only way the doctor could get to him." So, I had input on a lot of those things. As a matter of fact, the straps that held him down, I don't know what happened to one of them but one of them I'm getting ready to show you.

LYN-Oh my goodness so you designed the whole prison he was in for that period of time.

PHIL-That period of time, yeah, designed the prison. I've never really heard that before.





## TRANSATLANTIC ESCORT OF TERRORIST WAS AVIATION FEAT

The Associated Press, January 28, 1988

By Lee Byrd

A Navy flier described to a federal judge Thursday how he and some Air Force colleagues made aviation history while spiriting an alleged Lebanese terrorist from the Mediterranean Sea to the United States.

According to Navy Cmdr. Philip Voss, 40, his 4,002-mile flight last September from the deck of the USS Saratoga to Andrews Air Force Base near Washington was "a thousand miles farther than anybody had ever flown in a carrier-based airplane."

And it was accomplished with the help of an Air Force KC-10 tanker which took off from the United States, joined up with Voss over the Mediterranean, and accompanied him back across the Atlantic.

Aboard Voss' small S-3 submarine hunter, powered by twin fanjets, was a team of FBI agents and their prize captive, Amal militiaman Fawaz Younis, who was subsequently charged with the 1985 hijacking of a Royal Jordanian airliner.

Voss related his account during a pretrial hearing in U.S. District Court on various defense motions to suppress evidence in the case.

Younis' defense attorney, Francis D. Carter, has claimed that his client was mistreated and was so ill during the four-day searide and the grueling flight, during which he was sedated, that any statements he made to government agents in that period should be disallowed.

According to the government, two victims of the TWA Flight 847 hijacking that same year have identified Younis as one of the men who guarded them during their captivity in Lebanon.

Younis was captured when he was lured aboard an FBI-chartered yacht off the coast of Lebanon. He was transferred to a U.S. warship for a four-day ride to the western Mediterranean, then moved aboard the Saratoga for the flight to the United States.

From start to finish, the entire operation, including the travel of support craft, was accomplished without entering the territorial waters or airspace of another nation, thereby avoiding complications that have thwarted other U.S. attempts to bring suspected terrorists to justice.

Voss, then ending a tour as an S-3 squadron commander, said he didn't know the identity of his passenger until he was airborne. He had been ordered to prepare his eight-plane

squadron for an extraordinarily long flight, he said, but other details of the mission had also been withheld until the final moments.

After his entire squadron practiced refueling from Air Force tankers for days, he nominated several of his senior aviators for the yet-secret mission, only to be ordered to make the flight himself because of his overriding experience, he said. He added that he had to fly the plane without a co-pilot or navigator, over his objections, to make room for a doctor and the government agents.

Voss, who has logged more than 3,000 hours in the S-3, said the flight took 13 hours, 10 minutes, during which he was refueled three times by a KC-10 from Seymour-Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., which led him all the way across, including a three-hour period of bad weather.

"Those guys were great," said Voss. "They told me they set a record, too." The tanker, which was airborne 23 hours, was itself refueled by a sister ship from Seymour-Johnson on the way home, he said.

FBI Special Agent Thomas P. Hansen told the court, in response to Carter's claims, that Younis "never indicated that he was in any kind of distress" during his first few days of captivity. Hansen acknowledged, however, that Younis suffered from seasickness and occasionally "winced" from wrist injuries.

The defense claims that agents broke Younis' wrists by throwing him to the deck of the yacht at the moment of his arrest.

So, we go back so it's all, nobody knows about it and a year goes by and another year. I'm now selected to go to the senior course at the Navy War College as the....

LYN-You didn't tell about your change-of-command.

PHIL-That's right. I turned over in the Mediterranean to a guy named Jim Baker and the squadron went on and that's when won all the awards.

LYN-So that's days later?

PHIL-No, I had my change-of-command and then I go aboard the ship and the reason it was the twenty-day window is that if it didn't, if something went awry with the CIA and them but it happened, everything happened on schedule.

As a matter of fact, it is funny you say that, at my change-of-command, I will show you a picture of my change-of-command party with Admiral Boorda who is the battle group commander. The guys who were there and my wife, all of them were there. I'll show you the party. Me and the admiral were the only two in that picture that knew anything was going on. That night the admiral walked up to me said, "It's a go, they got him." They had made the capture on the Skunk Kelo. So anyway, the whole time Dizzy was the ops officer. Dizzy really had a lot, he

knew what was, he knew that a lot of stuff that was going on. I love Dizzy. He really helped. He's a great American.

LYN-He tells a good story. [Conversation with Dennis "Dizzy" Gillespie included in this project]

PHIL-Scott, that was his wingman and that was his guy. [referring to the loss of Lt. Scott Speicher] So anyway, that's my story. Everybody deserves one chance in the arena in their life and that was mine.

From there I go to the Naval War College to be a research analysis.

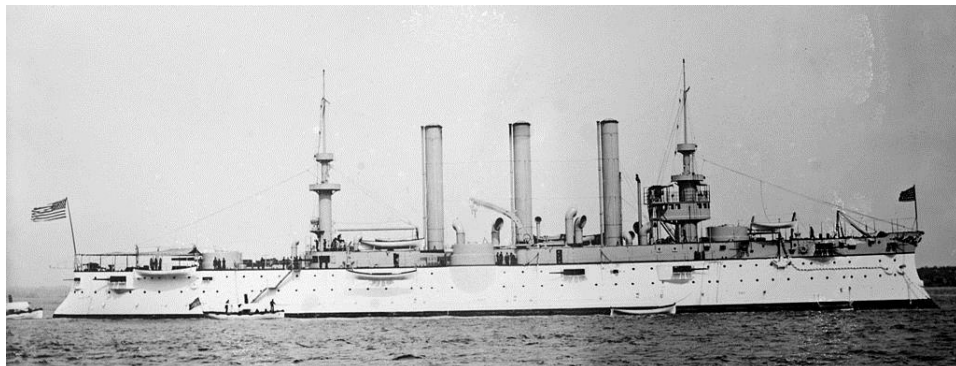
LYN-Did you love the War College?

PHIL-I loved Newport, Rhode Island. It is fantastic. It's a great school but I didn't really, was not a student the second time around. I was there to write some analytical-type studies for developing strategy in a lot of different areas and on anti-submarine warfare. I loved to do that. I was published five or six times in Naval Warfare Review and that type of stuff. A lot of people don't like to write but I get a kick out of it.

Anyway, it was there when I came up with the idea of writing a book called "Hangar 13" and let me tell you why. Nancy, my wife, when I first went to meet her family, I had met her mom already, hadn't met her dad, hadn't met their best friends who were her godparents in Pensacola, Florida. I'm at home deer hunting in Mississippi and I'm coming back to go back to Jacksonville. Nancy was living there at the time and I asked for her hand and I'm talking to this guy and his name is Delwyn Liane and he is from Nebraska and he is there. They say, "You know he was a Navy captain." I said, "Really, what did you did." He said, "My real claim-to-fame is I flew off of cruisers during World War II when I was a young ensign." You know where he went through flight training-Hangar 13 at Cecil Field.

LYN-Isn't that wonderful.

PHIL-I had all of his records, everything in his handwriting. He is deceased now. But the most important thing is when he left Cecil Field to go on the USS Brooklyn where he was flying off of the ship he was credited with sinking the first German U-boat in World War II off the coast of Jacksonville. There's a story about this right now, the ship blew up you probably read it in the paper. Do you know about the story?



USS BROOKLYN

That boat is considered, the one that he theoretically sank. We still don't have proof of it. The reason it came upon me at the Navy War College is because when he sent me his log book he said, "I know that you will be interested in this. We were both in the anti-submarine warfare." I just adored this guy. He used to tell me little stories like he said, "What's the roughest day you had in carrier landing?" I said, "We're in the North Atlantic and waves were real high." He said, "Phillip, we used to have to land these boats in the water and taxi up alongside because they didn't have a flight deck. He said, "Most of our guys drowned. We never got them back aboard the ship."

So, you can understand why the Navy has become my life. Look at this room. This room is all nautical, everything. I've got my box on the wall over there is my entire naval history. I'll let you see it in a bit. So Delwyn and I became kindred spirits and it's Nancy's godfather.

I asked him, "Did you get your Distinguished Flying Cross?" He said, "I was put in for that but I never received it because Washington never could", first of all, most people didn't ever ask where are the logs books aboard the USS Brooklyn, the captain has to enter all these things in the log book and but he said, "They never could find them so this thing really didn't happen."

It happened, he attacked the submarine and we know he had a gunner in the back and he was the pilot. But he said, "It was only like six days after we declared war on Japan after the bombing of Pearl Harbor." It was like December 26<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> or something like that. It was just a few weeks after that and it was a scramble in the war. He really wasn't worried about getting the medal. There were going to be a lot of other things in the war for him. The battle over Africa and everything.

So, Delwyn sends me these books and I start reading through them and go, "Oh, man this is great." You go back in his whole training record and you see Cecil Field and you go, "You've got to be kidding." You go back and get the aerial photos which I managed to get of Cecil Field back in the '30's and it has two hangers standing there, thirteen and fourteen side by side. They're still there. Everything else is new.

So, I decided I was going to do that and I am up there as an Advanced Research Associate is what it was. I'm still a commander at this time and I've gotten orders saying that I'm going back down to Cecil Field to be the commanding officer of the training squadron which was VS-27. The wing commander down there at that time was Sam Houston. So, he was my boss. I go back to that same thing, I had my change-of-command and I take over down there but it's about that time I realize because of all these other things that happened to me which was really a lot of good luck but I had been picked up early for captain. My career was going great guns and everything else.



VS-27 Pelicans  
NAS Cecil Field, Florida

Back to the War College. I'm up there and I'm talking to Mike, my boss came over who has a doctorate, he was a doctor. He said, "What are you working on." I told him. I said, "I've got this other thing that I'm looking at too." I started telling him the story about Delwyn Liane and he says, "Do you know what, I don't whether you knew this or not, not many people knew it but everybody knows it but everybody thinks that the Washington Navy Yard in D.C. has all the Navy records, not Naval Academy but they go to Washington Navy Yard. But, during World War II they were worried that we may not win World War II so they split them up. They sent some to Newport, Rhode Island. I said, "You've got to be kidding. We're here in Newport." He said, "It's more than that. They're two floors below us."

In addition to all the German records that were Admiral Donitz who was head of the German navy submarine force, all the stuff that was translated by Naval Reservists in the '50's, all that was translated, all of that was down there too. So, I go down with this doctor, a lot of people don't know this part of the story but this is the catch of why I'm writing this book on Hangar 13. He is chapter one and there are thirteen chapters. My story is one of those stories. One of those stories is mine. One of those stories is the Achille Lauro. Chapter thirteen hasn't been written yet because the event hasn't happened yet.

It's gonna be about the first space program that's gonna leave from Cecil Field. That's sort of the pla. So you've got to keep me in the loop with all the Cecil Field stuff. The deal is this, as a matter of fact I'm get you to sign something, so you can't steal anything. (Laugh)

So, the deal is I'm there and I go down and there are two crusty old guys. I mean this, you couldn't make this up. I went down there and there are two guys with beards and nobody talks to them much and they say, "Yeah, we have all those records. They're here." I had been calling the Washington Navy Yard and they said, "We've never heard, we know about the USS Brooklyn but we don't have all those ships logs. If you need it you'll have to go somewhere else."

LYN-They didn't tell you where else that was.

PHIL-I go down there and it's literally dusty and stuff like that but the guys says, "This could be tough. Everything we have is on micro fish. That's what we do, we put it on micro fish. We're trying to convert to other things but we'll help you out."

So, I go back up to my desk and like maybe forty-five minutes to an hour later these two guys come up and I could hear them talking to Dr. (I forgot what his name was) and they came over to

the desk and said, “We have something to show you.” It’s the log of the USS Brooklyn and it’s the charts of where his airplane was and where and where the submarine, it was exactly approaching the Caribbean at this time. They told me, “You can’t have any of this stuff but we’re gonna turn our heads.” I have copies of all of it.

So, chapter one, my deal on this and why I’m telling you that is because that’s my connection to Cecil Field. I did not go into details. Dizzy doesn’t know the details. But I’ve got volumes of stuff on Cecil Field, pictures, outlying fields. You know, do you ever go over near Oakleaf Plantation? You know where Home Depot is over there? That is where one of the outlying fields was. I had a deer stand right where it’s built. I have a photo that was taken from higher up and several of these out-lying fields have runways and every fifteen degrees around the top was because they wanted to do cross-wind landings and practice. It’s a dirt field but it’s all overgrown now and everything else. It’s sort of eerie when you look at it.

Anyway, that’s my kick on Cecil Field but now back in the Navy I am the CO of the VS-27 and that’s when we transitioned from S-3A’s to S-3B’s. The S-3B became more of an anti-surface ship platform instead of just an anti-submarine platform plus they were the new in-flight refueling airplanes for all the Navy.



S-3B

I was the wing commander for that for about a year, not the wing leader, I was the commander of that for about a year, that squadron, and then this friend of mine, Admiral Boorda who is the same admiral aboard the Saratoga, who talked to my wife about staying. he is now the Chief of Naval Operations. He’s the Chief of Naval Operations and he took his own life. I don’t whether you remember that in the Washington Navy Yard.

He was a great guy, enlisted to officer first ever. (Loss of conversation) I have a whole story the Washington Post put out on why he took his own life. It’s chilling. So, I made training squadron CO and I get orders to go to this special thing, that’s when I was picked up for captain, me and two A-7 guys

TAPE 1 SIDE B

LYN-The three of you are picked early.

PHIL-So, we all get, we were assigned to go to ships which are called, they're called "grocery ships". These are the ones that follow along the carriers, it's when they haul lines going from one ship to the other and they haul people and they haul goods and everything else back and forth.

LYN-And the U.S. mail that sometimes falls in the ocean?

PHIL-That's where it is, right there. I've seen mail go in the ocean. (Laugh). But the Navy made a decision back then, this is now 1990-91, and I am, they send me to a thing called the Strategic Policy Analysis Group. That is a group where you have, you have ambassadors, you have PhD's out the gun stock, you have former secretaries of defense, and they have one, they have three Naval officers that were part of the group. That really doesn't make sense to us. All of us were commander/captains selected. I was the aviator; my predecessor was a not an aviator because I was a S-3 guy but Admiral Boorda was my mentor and he got me that job.

I was the aviator, we had surface warfare guy, and we had a submariner. We ended up all big friends. I ended up coming back to command a wing at Cecil. I was the last wing commander at Cecil. I was the one who made the push to get them to stay over at NAS Jacksonville. Sam [Houston] had left there by then. We had a new CO, the last CO was, the deal is my pitch in all of this is that when it came to Cecil is that after Sam left I was now, even though I wasn't the base CO, I was what they call SOPA which is the senior officer present this activity which means I was senior to the base CO.

So, that's how I got tied in with Tillie Fowler and everything else and Sam was very much involved trying to save the base and it was a lot of stuff. Then I stepped on the other side of that when I got out and got involved with Alberta Hipps and everything else about what are we going to do with this base. So, I went on my own. I was on the base reuse commission and everything else. So, I also wanted to make sure everything that they were doing protected.

LYN-We want to put on tape who Alberta was. Alberta Hipps became the councilwoman [city councilwoman] on the westside. There seems to be some family involving some acquisition of land that seems to be from the Hipps that was Cecil. Do you know that?

PHIL-Yes, there are several things, I don't know how much you want...but the thing is I was pushing big time at one time in my life after I had retired, when they were trying to figure out where they were going to put the national cemetery, I didn't want it to be up in the middle of nowhere up on the northside. I wanted it to be a Cecil Field because that's where I want to be buried.

LYN-That would have been logical.

PHIL-It would have been perfectly logical. Alberta wanted it all for development. Sometimes development is too much. First of all, they had all the northern part which is where the weapons



compounds were. Then you had the strip in the middle where Amazon has pretty much populating the entire place now.

But I was involved in a little company I started. My brother, being a real estate agent, said be very careful because you're not a licensed real estate agent and you can't go try to sell or advertise property. But, I worked with Jacksonville Airport Authority to make sure and one of the things I did, I started my own company when I retired. I retired in 1995 as the wing commander of S-3's and ES-3's at Cecil Field.

So, to the end of my story, being a wing commander for three years was phenomenal, no one else would, most of the guys had a one-and-a-half-year tour. I had a three-year tour and I loved every second of it. I loved being a Commodore because you know that's the title. The thing is with Commodore nobody really knows where it comes from. It comes from Lord Nelson's Navy.

LYN-I wanted to ask about "commodore" and now you're telling us.

PHIL-I'll tell you a clip out of one of the books in there that defines exactly what a commodore is. That's the clip for the commodore right there. The little saying underneath it is one that I clipped out.

LYN-We'll take a picture of that. [quote from "The Maritime Command" by Patrick O'Brian]

PHIL-You can take a picture of that because it tells what commodore does. You can do it with your camera and if I not I can send it to you.

**"This Commodore lark, and my pendant...does not mean that I am promoted at all-it is not a rank but a post, and I do not shift from my place on the captains' list by so much as the hundredth part of an inch. I hold this post just for the time being, and when the time is over, I go back to being a captain again. But while it lasts I am as who should say...an acting temporary unpaid rear-admiral; and I command the entire squadron (wing). It is only when you have an enterprise of this kind on your hands, and enterprise where you have to depend on others, that you understand what command amounts to." Patrick O'Brian, *The Mauritius Command***

So, anyway, is what I got involved in is after that I got very heavily involved, I stayed on the commission, on the reuse commission for the City of Jacksonville so I was the naval officer responsible for that because I was senior to the guy whose call sign was "Hawk", which meant "hair on fire", a good guy, really a nice guy. He ended up being the head of JU ROTC program. Then the final one that came back was Ken Check. He was the final when we shut down Cecil he was the last guy. That was just turning off the doors. Most of the airplanes had gone by then.

But my involvement is, I got very much involved with Cecil because that's when I got my friend the master chief the job at the city to work out at the base and this type of stuff. I wanted to see it developed with the right places. So, my credit, and I still get credit for this is that I was the guy

in my own little company which was called Aviation Connections International. I wanted to make sure that the Jacksonville Airport Authority didn't do the wrong thing.

Alberta was really excited when Northrup Grumman came out and they said, "We want to rent everything on the whole base." I was against it and she said, "Why are you so against that?" I said, "Because if Northrup Grumman leaves then they are all vacant again but if we do it like other places and we have a Boeing and we have a Lockheed Martin and we have the Northrup Grumman." We have LSI which was the company, it was then bought by and merged my company with LSI because this guy Michael McKinney, the group of twelve remember way back in the beginning that he wanted me to help him? We were going through a recreation of what LSI did way back then when they trained international students in the S-2Tracker, the propeller driven airplanes. We're now training the P-3 guys that are over here at this base because they are getting P-8 aircraft and we still have twenty-two countries that fly the P-3 and they're asking for assistance.

So, LSI is doing that very thing right now out there at Cecil Field. They just got awarded a new hangar at Cecil Field and they got a second hangar at Cecil Field right next to the main facility they had.

It was time for me to leave and I was the chief marketing officer when I left there. There were three of us and you know we talk about the AT's and the enlisted guys. When we bought the company from the two owners who started it back in 1978 we bought it in 2006 for thirty million dollars. We didn't pay for that. Bank of America paid for that. We created an ESOP, employee stock ownership plan. So, we still get, you know that's all part of my retirement package. Every person there has that. It isn't a matching thing. You have stock in the company that the company gives you until you retire. That's when you get paid out.

You know why I had to move the meeting this morning from ten o'clock until now? I got my check in right after I talked to you, my ESOP check, and it has to be deposited with Fidelity. That's why I had to change this thing. (Laugh)

LYN-It was a bank thing.

PHIL-That's, the big deal now is to set, my company LSI, was the very first lease that the City of Jacksonville. I had to go before City Council because the Jacksonville Economic Development Commission still used to exist back then. With Cathy Bartow on one side and Alberta sitting up there rooting us on to get that first lease. We got it for seven hundred and fifty-two square feet. That's about the size of this room. They said, "Why do you want that?" I said, "Because the deal is that the Navy was still there. We found one empty room that we could go ahead and start our manufacturing stuff in. Every time that a different group moved out to go to Oceana or go to NAS JAX, we would get to occupy that space until we got up to a hundred and fifty thousand square feet."

LYN-How much was your lease, the initial lease?

PHIL-I'm not gonna tell you but I'll put it this way, we locked in for twenty-five years so they couldn't change us. It was less than ten dollars a square foot but they needed people out there.

We took a chance. We were down on Lake Ray Boulevard and unfortunately, we were down there...

LYN-What boulevard?

PHIL-Lake Gray. If you go down 103<sup>rd</sup> Street right before you get to the interstate you turn back in there. It used to be a Pier I Imports right there. You aren't from this side of town I guess. But if you come across the beltway and you don't want to go on that horrible where all the wrecks are right there as you are going down Blanding Boulevard where you are going to Argyle.

LYN-Oh, a horrible intersection.

PHIL-Right there on the right was a street called Lake Gray because it was a lake that is gray back there. It has some really nice buildings on it. A lot of defense companies were right there. That's my status with the Navy. The big deal is that after that with Cecil is that I had just been infatuated with it because I spent the majority of my life out at Cecil Field.

LYN-Let's go back to retirement. You retired when?

PHIL-I retired, I wanted it to be on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July week-end so it was June 30<sup>th</sup>, at that particular time, in 1995. I had already gone down and registered my company, Aviation Connections International, and I hired nothing but veterans. I placed a lot of those guys with LSI and Lockheed Martin and other places here in town. I kept a lot of them. I had twenty-five consultants and that's what LSI which was Logistics Services International, who does all this training for the military and international military.



The reason that I ended up on Lake Gray Boulevard is because Michael McKinney ran into my wife one day after I retired, which was like the first week in August. Michael said, "How is Phil doing?" She said, "He's going nuts. He's loving his job but he's trying to operate off of this porch with five kids on the other side of that door." I would be on a conversation as a consultant to an ordinance system or Lockheed or whoever, and it was just intolerable.

I get a call one day from Michael, it's the type of guy he is Michael McKinney, and he invites me down to get a briefing on LSI. So, I did. He took me for lunch and he says, "I want to show you something when we get back." We went to Club Continental for lunch. Came back and he said, "I want to show you something." We walked across the street to the building over there. He said, "Do you have the office over here too?" He said, "Yeah, the overflow. There's some stuff I want to show you." He opened the door, it's all coded, and we go in and there's about five cubicles there and then there's an office and a desk, "Phil Voss-President ACI." He said, "Why don't you operate out of this for about six months and if you want to pay me some rent later on at least it's a start." It was completely furnished. That's a friend.

LYN-That is a friend.

PHIL-So, anyway, we are still really, really, really tight. He is the title sponsor of the Navy League's dinner that they are having.

I retired. Did that for three years and every year their CEO kept coming over and saying, "We want you guys. We want all those guys that you have collected because it would be a different way for us going forward because we're getting long in the tooth." In fact, we're older than them.

So, in 1998 I sold my company to them. I call it a merger but they bought me. But I went in as the vice president of marketing which is what I wanted because I had all those contacts. We went from twenty-two million a year to seventy-six million by the time I retired. That was the reason I retired. I wanted to go to visit all of my five children no matter where they are, every year with my wife. I want to be able to bring her to every place on earth that I've been to before.

LYN-Mentioning that, my husband's first cruise was in '71, his only cruise.

PHIL-If he had been on the Intrepid we would have been shipmates.

LYN-He was on the Forrestal. He was in Malta. Did you make Malta? I can't find anyone who went to Malta but my husband.

PHIL-My oldest brother went to Malta.

LYN-They were there twice.

PHIL-They said Malta was great.

LYN-He enjoyed it because of the history. You know Paul was on Malta.

PHIL-Yeah.

LYN-You're the first one [interview] that had any connection to Malta. So, you are going to be traveling a lot?

PHIL-We have. I went to Budapest, Hungary about a month ago in June. Nancy and I did and took one of those Viking Cruises. When I first came back, when I first retired she says, "I want you to go on these cruises with me." I said, "Honey, I made nine deployments. (Laugh)

LYN-I've been on those cruises.

PHIL-The thing is I've got, Dizzy and I see each other quite a bit because we both are in ANA, Association of Naval Aviation, which has a monthly meeting with a bunch of Cecil guys. Something you may be interested in. The guy who took my international marketing piece at LSI was a guy that I personally recruited and hired. He retired as a Navy captain because he was in charge of all international training for the United States Navy and the Marine Corps before he retired in Pensacola. His name is Ed Turner.

The reason I want you to meet him and I'll arrange that is because Ed did a presentation for the Association of Naval Aviation, on the history of Cecil Field. Slides, everything, he's got it all. You may want to interview him.

LYN-Absolutely.

PHIL-He's gonna give me all of his packages because it fits into my book.

LYN-We're going to well-document this Cecil Field.

PHIL-Well, I've got, mine is the historical perspective of, do you read a lot?

LYN-Yes., History.

PHIL-If you like the history, did you ever read any of Herman Wolf's stuff? He just died recently. He wrote two books that grabbed me. He wrote a bunch of them but one was called "The Winds of War" and the other one was "War and Remembrance". In those books, I can't find one of them but I have the other in there, but his style of writing is this. It starts out like Hangar 13 starts out, it starts with a month and a day and where they are at Cecil Field. There's a prologue all about what Cecil Field is and why this book was written and all that kind of stuff.

It starts out with this young navy ensign and I have, it's straight out of his log because Herman Wolf started his off with historical accuracy, something that happened. It may go for one page or two pages and if you think about it, "The Winds of War" were things that happened to a certain family before the war. Then "War and Remembrance" is what happened during the war, especially with the Jews and all the way through. Then what happened to all the family members. Each chapter started out with something historical, it's non-fiction. It was there, it was real.

Mine starts out with the log book write-up that Delwyn Liane did as an ensign. That goes to, it sort of stops at the end of this about him sinking the German U-boat. It stops. Then it goes, and all is in italics. Then it goes into Delwyn Liane checking in for duty. The rest of it can be fiction. It's gonna have to be fiction.

Mine, for my story it's gonna be more operational but it will end with, "Oh, by the way, this person is me." I'm not gonna have the actual names but I will for the main part. I just thought that writing style that he had was fascinating.

LYN-I think that's wonderful writing style.

PHIL-You know it's not gonna win anything but everybody says that you should, you gotta do...I had a bucket list of the last forty things and I took them all off. I've taken them all off, I narrowed it down to three things that I can do before I die. That's what a bucket list is. One of those is to write a book and the other one is to read the Bible from cover to cover. I've read the Bible, all of the different pieces, but I've never read it from one cover to the other cover.

LYN-Why not?

PHIL-Because it was, I got too soaked up in one particular, I've read the Bible. But to go from cover to cover.

LYN-Because it jumps around in history chronologically.

PHIL-That's right. Friends give me books, you'd think I'm a Baptist, my friends, I've got books in there about the historical characters of the Bible and another book on the geography of the Bible and that's a whole other book. So, I'll start reading and OK I'll, I pick up Genesis or Leviticus. I read them and then I go, "I have to get in this other book."

LYN-You would so love talking to my husband about that. We just let go of twelve thousand books. He accumulated, he inhales books. He's a wonderful speaker. He's a wonderful theologian. But, he does read through the Bible continuously and we do different plans on how to do it but reading cover to cover, he challenges every church member to do that. But it is difficult to start in Genesis.

PHIL-My mother used to say, at one point I would get it confused because one time she would say with all seven of her children that's what she did during her pregnancies when she was alone. She would read the Bible from cover to cover and later on she said, "And also, also I read 'Gone With the Wind'."

PHIL-Well, that's me.

LYN-A very interesting "Me".

PHIL-My, the me now is my connection with Cecil Field. I love going out. I have given tours out there. I've given tours for West Jax Rotary, several of them now. I'm usually on one bus and the airport manager is on the other bus taking all the Rotarians around. I have taken people from out-of-town out there just to do it. I run a lot of Navy squadron reunions. We had two here in Jacksonville and it always includes, it's called just a look back to where we were when we first came down.

LYN-My husband was in 83, VA-83.

PHIL-Well, when I was on Saratoga, no that was VA-81. They were sister squadrons. They were on Saratoga.

LYN-Yeah. He was on Forrestal and then we left and went on up to Norfolk where he taught. We lived in Virginia Beach but he was stationed at 83 here.

PHIL-What do you like the best? Virginia Beach, here, Memphis? I don't know about Memphis.

LYN-Are you kidding, Memphis is the worst place I've ever lived in thirty-one moves.

PHIL-You didn't have a chance to live in Mississippi.

LYN-We weren't in Mississippi. We were in California for a short time when he went out to write the VAST program. I loved the weather. I'm a Floridian and I fell in love with the fabulous weather.

PHIL-Where?

LYN-He was out at, we were living in Mission Bay and he was going out to...Name the bases.

PHIL-Lemoore? That's an attack base. North Island down in San Diego. It was a Navy base? Up in San Francisco area?

LYN-No we lived in San Diego, it was Miramar.

PHIL-That was a fighter base. What year?

LYN-He was, we lived in Mission Bay. Let's see, we had a three-year-old so about '74. He went out, that was the beginning of VAST and he was writing the programs with a chief who was stationed out there. He went out for two weeks and we ended I think five months.

PHIL-So he wasn't associated with a squadron. He was with the base. One of my best friends.

LYN-I never went on base.

PHIL-Really. I had a buddy that flew fighters on the exact same cruise on Saratoga. He was in VF-11 outfit out at Miramar at that time. He made the cruise where Primm Wright's husband was shot down on the Saratoga. The interesting part about him is that he got out of the Navy after that and became an airline pilot. I never wanted to be an airline pilot.

LYN-So many of our interviews have been airline pilots.

PHIL-So, this guy and I, we all went to Southern Mississippi together and there were three of us. There was me a S-3 pilot S-2's at that time, and Bobby Vinson he ended up getting fighter, and third man we went down and took our physical in New Orleans, Louisiana to get in the Naval aviation, all three of us really wanted to be Naval aviators. The other guy had something wrong with him, a heart murmur or something like that so he couldn't do it. So, instead that guy who couldn't do it wrote a book and he has us in there. That guy was Jimmy Buffet.

LYN-Jimmy Buffet, wow.

PHIL-He was my room-mate in college. It's incredible some of the things.

LYN-But you asked. Where did you enjoy living? Of course, you lived on a ship but where did your family enjoy?

PHIL-I did, but I tell you, we had a child born in Newport. As my mother used to say, we were like cats because cats never have a kitten in the same place. They go to a different place to have kittens. So, we had kittens all up and down the east coast. But, we fell in love with Jacksonville



and my wife did not want to go back to Pensacola even though she grew up there. I loved Pensacola. But, she said, “You know, a lot of her friends that she was close to and everything else it was small enough to be a little snotty.”

LYN-I had grown up with family there and we spent a lot of time there.

PHIL-Well, that’s where her family was from but she didn’t want to go back. So, we were here but the thing is is that when I was dating her, I met her on Memorial Day week-end and we went water skiing, she didn’t know how to water ski and I was teaching her to water ski because I lived at Cedar Cove Apartments and she said, “You were saying that you were looking for a house on this river. Why don’t you buy that one that has a sign in front of it?” I came up here and I...

LYN-You bought it.

PHIL-Yes. It was very different back then. This was like all dirt drive-way and there were no houses there and no houses there.

LYN-So, Jacksonville, when you first came when you were first married, when you were stationed here, was a good supportive community for your Navy life?

PHIL-The people?

LYN-Yes.

PHIL-Yes. It was never anything like Norfolk was. Norfolk used to have the signs “Dogs and Sailors Keep Off the Grass.” My brothers lived up there so the one who was Navy was stationed at NAS Norfolk.

LYN-It’s interesting. That is what provided us the greatest opportunity but our lives revolved around our church community. Being able to go to college and still be in the Navy, it’s very beautiful in Norfolk. It’s hot and humid there and hot and humid here.

PHIL-But then my son is out in LA right now, that’s not Lower Alabama but Los Angeles, and it’s breaking all kind of records this week.

LYN-Yes, thank you for a wonderful career.

PHIL-It was great. If I could have stayed in the Navy and done things differently it was, I turned down a couple of opportunities.

LYN-Tell us about that.

PHIL-Well, I had screened for command for a ship, I didn’t tell you the rest of that story. What happens is the other two guys had been picked early. Went into the head of Naval Aviation’s Office, we were all in the Pentagon. At that time, I was in the Pentagon. I had finished that other strategic policy. We didn’t know what it was about and they told us that the military sealift command was now taking over those grocery ships so they named two guys who were attack pilots and they say, “Both of ya’ll are going to go off and be one of these new senior air wing commanders at sea. In other words, it used to be the CAG, now it’s a captain’s position”. He

said, "Phil you three guys, we're gonna put you in charge of the air wing." I went, "You know, the decision of which course my career started way back", this was a three-star admiral, I said, "Admiral, it all was one decision in one day in Pensacola that we were going to end up flying. That's where the decision is made. That was twenty-five years ago and I have been right on par with these guys." They were sending me to a ship that was an amphibious ship out in Long Beach, California." It was going to be in the yards the entire time so my career was finished. I said, "I'm out of here. I don't want to do it."

Admiral Boorda was not happy about that but they managed to move me to the shore command side which is like what Sam Houston had done so I got picked for a major shore command and they said, "You know," I said, "I'm gonna get to go back to Florida. We can get back in our church where we know all of our friends. My wife can finish her master's degree. My children will grow up alongside of the Ortega River." I said, "It's the types of things that I can go to work and fly every day. I have twelve squadrons under me. I have two thousand five hundred people underneath me. I love all of them and I know all of them by their first name usually." They said, "But, you'll never make admiral." I said, "Maybe you didn't hear what I said." (Laugh) "Who cares?" So anyway, I made those decisions and you know what, I have no regrets.

LYN-Sounds like you've had a wonderful life.

PHIL-It has been a wonderful life. It really has been. I've still got a long way to go.

(INTERVIEW CONTINUES WITH TOUR OF PORCH AREA)

LYN-We're looking at a case with medals. Can you give us an explanation of what they are?

PHIL-These were my different ranks. This was as a 3<sup>rd</sup> class petty officer in the Navy, then an ensign, lieutenant junior grade, lieutenant, lieutenant commander, commander, captain. That's a command at sea pin that you wear when you are in command. The highest I got as far as medals was the Legion of Merit.

LYN-Tell us about the Legion of Merit.

PHIL-It is the third highest non-combat medal that you can get.

LYN-And how do you get awarded the Legion of Merit?

PHIL-It was when I was the wing commander. Anyway, this was all the different squadrons that were in my wing.

LYN-Let's read them all.

PHIL-VQ-6 which was the electronic warfare squadron, then that's VS-32, VS-31, VS-30 I was in that squadron and commanded that one, then VS-28, that's VS-27 and I commanded that squadron, then that's VS-24, and that's VS-22 that was the one on the Kennedy. That's the wing logo there.

This is the commodore's pennant and that's the little write up that I took from Patrick O'Brian's book that describes "what the heck is a commodore".

