Monday Maritime Matters

Description

It was a few days of interesting handshakes. Older gentleman and his wife pushing their shopping cart through the new WalMart â€œNeighborhoodâ€• Grocery Store. Looked to be Korean War vintage. I stepped in to his personal space, after spying the â€œUS Navy Veteranâ€• blue ball cap and introduced myself. When did you do in the Navy? I was an airframe mechanic. What airframes (now the tricky partâ€¦you had to be there)? â€œOh, SBDs and F6Fs.â€• My head was going tiltâ€¦.but I had set the filters for 50s stuffâ€¦Thenâ€¦I caught on. I complimented him on how well time had treated him, while I reframed. Wow! SBDs! I have always liked those planes.

Then, As reported in the prior post, breakfast with men from WWII (A rear gunner on PBMs, turned officer and Naval Aviator after the war, to RADM Charles B Hunter, USN (Ret) who earned the honor of wearing the Navy Cross for a single plane night mission into Hanoi, where he managed to dodge the SA-2s and still put his 18 500lbs MK80 series bombs on the intended primary targetâ€¦and then got back home. He didnâ€™t tell me that. I found it the web:

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> As the air war went on, year after year, the naval command adopted different tactics to improve the effectiveness of the carrier strikes, while minimizing losses of men and planes. One approach was the use of two or single-aircraft strikes. One such operation involved the all-weather, day-night A-6 Intruder attack plane crewed by Lieutenant Commander Charles B. Hunter and his bombadier/navigator, Lieutenant Lyle F. Bull. They volunteered to carry out an extremely risky night attack on a railroad ferry slip in Hanoi, which was ringed with a lethal array of surface-to-air missile batteries, antiaircraft artillery sites, and MiG bases. On 30 October 1967, the Intruder launched from Constellation in the Gulf of Tonkin, flew fast and low through the mountain valleys of northeast North Vietnam, and got to within eighteen miles of the target before the enemy discovered its presence. Then, the on board electronics intercept equipment indicated that Communist radar had detected them. Hunter flew the plane close to the treetops and â€œjinkedâ€• to left and right to avoid the SA-2 â€œflying telephone poleâ€• surface-to-air missile that soon lit up the night as it streaked at and then past them. In the glow of antiaircraft fire and searchlights crisscrossing the sky, the intrepid aviators pressed home their attack dropping eighteen 500-pound bombs on the railroad ferry slip. The pair saw the ordnance obliterate the target as they banked and escaped into the night.

He knows both my COs from MILWAUKEE (AOR-2). Just a normal guy, with a ball cap with embroidered pilot wings, sitting in a cafe on a beach near the gulf.

I got invited to attended regularly. Iâ€™m honored. Iâ€™m hoping they will entrust me with some sea stories, and actual reports of the times as they were.

Today, enroute the innards of where America now does business (Panera Bread), I stopped to intorduce myself to a man with a â€œVietnam Veteranâ€• ball cap. Started as a â€œDeck Ape,â€•

became and EM, then the S2 Ensign decided he could cut hair and he became the Shipâ€™s Barber on USS PURVIS (DD-707). Left after on hitch, got his electrical engineering degree and worked building big plants all around the Middle East and even worked for President Johnson, he proudly told me. He has my card and an offer to call and get a free cup of coffee out of me for the price of a few sea stories. I thanked his wife for allowing me to share him for a few minutes, which I do to acknowledge them allowing my random interruptions. She smiled and told me it was alright.

I look forward to what ever phone calls come my way, hoping to catch some first person stories I can share, or just keep to myself and know I heard a bit of real history or two.

Category

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Tags

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1. "Sea Stories"
2. navy veterans
3. USS PURVIS
4. USS PURVIS (DD-707)
5. veterans
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