



John J. Zerr, RADM USN (Ret.)
 “Jack”

Date of Designation: 25 Mar 1969 V27858

Dates of Active Duty: Aug 1959 to Dec 1995

Total Flight Hours: 4,668

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed Wing: 1,017 Rotary: 52

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 4479. Prop: 66. Helo: 123.

Combat Tours:

Vietnam: USS *Gurke* (DD-783) 1966

USS *Hancock* (CV-19) 1970 - 1971

USS *Hancock* 1972

Total Combat Missions: 321

Aviation Commands:

VA-192

VA-94

CVW-14

USS *New Orleans* (LPH-11)

USS *Constellation* (CV-64)

Navy Operational Test and Evaluation Force, OPTEVFOR

Combat Awards:

2 Distinguished Flying Crosses

Air Medal + 24 Strike Flight Awards

5 Navy Commendation Medals

2 Navy Unit Commendations

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross

Duty Assignment Chronology

1959 Recruit Training and Electronics Tech School.

1960 - 1961 USS *Manley* (DD-940).

1961 - 1965 Purdue U. NESEP (BS-EE).

1965 Officer Candidate School.



1966 - 1967 USS *Gurke* (DD-783).
 1968 - 1969 Flight Training, Pensacola, FL.
 1970 VA-23.
 1970 - 1972 VA-55.
 1972 - 1974 Naval PG School (MS-AE), Monterey, CA.
 1974 - 1975 VA-55.
 1976 Test Pilot School, Patuxent River, MD.
 1977 - 1980 VX-5 China Lake, CA.
 1980 - 1982 VA-192.
 1982 - 1983 VA-94.
 1983 - 1985 CVW-14.
 1985 - 1986 Naval Air Systems Command (AIR-511).
 1986 - 1988 USS *New Orleans* (LPH-11).
 1988 - 1990 USS *Constellation* (CV-64).
 1990 - 1993 SHAPE, Mons, Belgium.
 1993 - 1995 OPTEVFOR, Norfolk, VA.

Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) At OPTEVFOR, promoted early and continuous involvement of Operational Testers in development programs. Resulted in significantly reduced operational test failure rates.
- (2) At SHAPE, participated in crafting new NATO strategy to deal with “after the wall came down.” Participated in developing a huge number of contingency plans for possible NATO intervention after Yugoslavia came unglued. Attended dinner parties where a sentence sometimes contained words from half a dozen different languages.
- (3) A hick kid from a hick farm town in Missouri commanded an aircraft carrier. On USS *Constellation* just prior to starting workups, a fire destroyed No 1 engine room. Took us twelve hours to put the fire out. We completed workups with 200 yard workers aboard and deployed battle ready and on time.

-Continued-

Summary of Significant Career Events continued

(4) Conducted haven ops with USS *Constellation* in Aleutians, 1988.

(5) Introduced F-18s into fleet with Air Wing 14. We picked up some of the planes from the factory. Flying a plane with a new car smell, priceless. During a major exercise, I (career light attack guy) flew an F-18 on a low-level ingress to a bombing target. Just prior to the pullup point, the radar, in auto-acquisition mode, picked up a bogie. Stepped the plane into fighter mode with the click of a button and shot the bad guy down with a Sparrow. Pushed one button to step back into Attack Mode. Bombed the target. Pulling off, picked up another bad guy. Pushed one button to step into Fighter Mode, and shot him down with a winder. F-18 was a monumental step in technology and combat capability. Seven years later, I was privileged to present Mark Fox with a Silver Star for flying a very similar combat mission during Desert Storm, only Mark achieved real results during a real war.

(6) 1982, following the death of squadron CO of VA-94 in a plane crash a week after he assumed command, I was moved over to the Mighty Shrikes.

(7) Fought SAMS as Ironhand over Nam in 1972.

(8) May 27, 1972. Launched on Nam strike. Engine failed. I punched out in front of Hancock. Roommate, Tom Latendresse became POW on same mission.

(9) In 1966, on a tin can on North SAR Station in the Tonkin Gulf, watched the guys flying above on the way to and from Nam. Decided I wanted to be one of them.

(10) In 1961, the day I made third class petty officer, got off mess cooking, and found out I was selected for NESEP (Naval Enlisted Scientific Education Program).

(11) PO3 and everything since proves it's better to be lucky than good.

(12) Frequently abandoned wife, My One and Only Squeeze, with houseful of sick kids.

Significant Post Career Events

(1) Served as P-8 Program capture lead and then P-8 Program Manager at Boeing.

(2) Published five historical fiction novels.