

In VA-195 AD-4 aboard Princeton - 1951

Robert E. Bennett, CDR USN (Ret.)
 "Bob"

Date of Designation: 23 June 1949 NA# V-191

Dates of Active Duty: 30 Oct. 1945 -13 Sept. 1946 A/S V-5
 USNR
 4 Aug. 1947-30 June 1975. Appointed
 Midshipman USN 4 Aug. 1947

Total Flight Hours: 4,462

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 419

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 1,473 Prop: 2,989 VF/VA: 2,117 VT: 1,741
 Proficiency: 603

Combat Tours:

Korea: VA-195 (AD-4) Dec. 1950 - May 1951, USS
Princeton - 50 combat missions
 Vietnam: VA-113 (A4C) Dec. 1966 - July 1967, USS
Enterprise - 113 Combat Missions
 Vietnam: USS *Hancock* Air Officer, July 1968 - March 1969.
 Total Combat Missions 163

Aviation Commands:

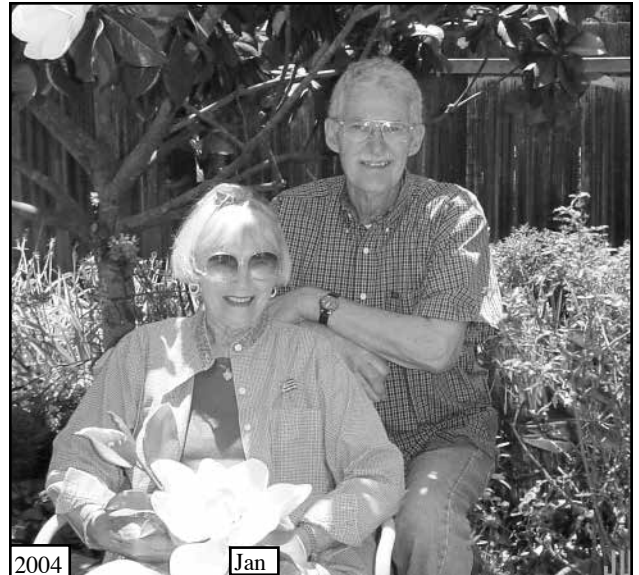
CO, VA-113, May 1966 - August 1967

Combat Awards:

Distinguished Flying Cross, Korea
 Distinguished Flying Cross, Vietnam
 Bronze Star, Vietnam
 14 Air Medals (1 individual and 13 Strike/Flight)

Duty Assignment Chronology

8/13/45 Enlisted – A/S, V-5, USNR.
 11/45-6/46 V-12 Unit Cornell University, Ithaca NY,
 Student, active duty.
 7/46-7/47 PNS University of Minnesota, Minneapolis,
 Student, inactive duty.



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8/47-6/49 Naval Air Training Command (DUINS)
 Midshipman USN: Holloway Aviation
 Midshipman program two year appointment.
 (SNJ-TBM).
 7/49-8/49 FAETUPAC North Island, ASW School
 Midshipman two year appointment completed
 4 Aug. Commissioned Ensign, USN.
 8/49-3/52 VA-195, NAS Alameda, (AD, SNB).
 10/49-12/49-Attended Mine Warfare School in
 Yorktown, VA .
 1/50-6/50 USS *Boxer* AD-3, Westpac (AD-3).
 12/50-5/51 USS *Princeton*, Westpac, Korea
 (AD-4).
 3/52-7/53 FASRON 8 Alameda, Personnel Officer (AD,
 F4U-4, FG-1D, F6F, TBM, SNB, F9F-2,
 F9F-5).
 8/53-1/56 Naval Air Basic Training Command: Basic
 Flight Instructor Whiting Field (SNJ) 8/53-
 4/54, Formation and Tactics Instructor Saufley
 Field 4/54-1/56 (SNJ, T-28, TV-2).
 1/56-11/56 USNPGS Monterey, student, General Line
 School. (SNB, JRB).
 12/56-2/57 NATTU Philadelphia, student, Catapult and
 Arresting Gear School. (JRB, SNB).
 3/57-3/59 USS *Hornet* (CVA-12) Catapult and Arresting
 Gear Officer. (AD, SNB, JRB, TV-2).
 Westpac 3/57-7/57, Westpac 1/58-8/58
 Hornet received the Battle Efficiency Award
 and the Aviation Safety Award during this peri
 od.
 4/59-5/59 JTTU Olathe Kansas, Jet Student. (F9F-8T,
 F9F-8).
 5/59-9/59 VA-125 NAS Moffett Field, Replacement Air
 Group training. (A-4).
 10/59-3/61 VA-113 NAS Miramar, Maintenance Officer,
 Operations Officer. Westpac *Hancock* 7/60-
 3/61. (A-4).
 4/61-2/63 Carrier Air Group 12 Staff Miramar, VA
 Training Officer. (F9F-8T, A-4, T-38).
 3/63-3/65 USNPGS Monterey, Student, Baccalaureate
 Program. (T-28, T-2).

Duty Assignment Chronology continued

- 4/65-1/66 COMFAIR Alameda Staff, Assistant VA-Training Officer, FAA Liaison Officer. (A-4, U-11, UC-45).
- 2/66-5/66 VA-125 NAS Lemoore, Replacement Air Group Training. (A-4).
- 5/66-7/67 Reported aboard *Kitty Hawk*, Yokosuka, Japan as Commanding Officer VA-113. Lemoore, USS *Enterprise* (A-4C) Westpac 11/66-7/67. Squadron received the Battle Efficiency Award during this period.
- 8/67-8/69 USS *Hancock* (CVA-19) Hunters Point, Alameda. Air Officer. (C-1, UC-45, US-2). Westpac: 7/68 – 3/69
- 8/69-6/7 CINCPACFLT Staff Pearl Harbor. Assistant Current Operations Officer, Command Center Officer, Emergency Actions Officer. (US-2). Aged out of Group I flight status 17 Dec. 1969. Most unwelcome Birthday present.
- 7/74-6/75 NAS Miramar. Community Plans and Liaison Officer.
- 6/30/75 Retired from active duty

Summary of Significant Career Events

Korea: 1950-51, *Princeton* (CV 37).

First combat missions in early December were CAS in support of the Marine withdrawal from the Chosen Reservoir. We were instructed that there were Marine patrols on the ridge above the road that was being used by the withdrawal and that we were clear to fire on anything moving or in place forward of the patrol's point man, and that he would be wearing a fluorescent red back panel.

Flew as section lead in an all Ensign division that was frequently tasked to lead bridge strikes supported by a division of Corsair flak suppressors. Our division consistently brought down one or more spans of the primary target and in several cases a span or two of the secondary target. Normally carried three 2000lb GP bombs on these missions.

On one occasion while flying CAS with the XO's division we were requested to assist an army unit in taking a ridge recently occupied in suspected regimental strength. The enemy was not completely dug in and we made multiple runs with VT fused 265lb frags. A message from the Army to the ship a day or two later reported that the ridge had been taken following that strike and 1000 KIAs were counted.

On 30 April we had been notified that morning by our night attack folks (AD-4N) that they suspected trains were hiding in tunnels during the day. We were given several tunnel coordinates and were working on a particular one utilizing 1000lb GPs with a 10 sec delay tail fusing. On my first run I was able to skip a bomb into the tunnel mouth. I called the bomb in and pulled up to observe. There was a huge back blast of dirt and debris and a few seconds later one of our Corsairs called "TRAIN ,TRAIN!!" " I looked to the other end of the tunnel and a locomotive and tender was accelerating out of the tunnel down the track toward a string of boxcars about a mile

away. The Corsairs rolled in and in seconds the locomotive and tender hit the boxcars at high speed, rolled on its side, down an embankment, and exploded.

1 May, flying as the CO's wingman, I carried a MK 13 torpedo on an eight a/c strike against the Hwachon Dam. The torpedoes were set for surface runs and were intended to damage or destroy the dam floodgates, effectively denying the enemy the ability to control flooding of the Han River downstream, in order to hinder bridging efforts, and further hamper traffic flow. The strike was supported by F9Fs. The operation was deemed successful as several floodgates were holed and at least one completely blown away. This was the last use of aerial torpedoes by the Navy.

Had the privilege of flying as CAG Richard Merrick's wingman from time to time and always admired his ability to find and prosecute targets, and his handling of a large K-20 aerial camera and a pair of 7x50 binoculars, all while puffing on his trusty pipe.

Finally on the 17th of May, the group was scheduled to be relieved and the ship departed for Yokosuka. That evening a heavy enemy push began and Princeton was recalled for two more days on the line. Maximum close air support strikes were ordered and, on a close air support mission East of Seoul during one of those days, CAG Merrick was killed.

During a period of about 10 years I flew eleven models of the AD Skyraider including BuNo 09110, the first AD off the production line. This model even had an ash tray. A true gentleman's airplane.

Vietnam: 1966-67, *Enterprise* CVAN 65.

Bull Pup equipped squadron. Led SAM Pouncer division on major strikes. Led routine strikes on bridges, supply areas, truck parks, POL sites, Rail Yards. On two occasions while delivering Bull Pups against SAM sites in the Hanoi area I was required to maneuver against oncoming SA2 missiles, quite obviously with my name on them. I felt the thump and heard the explosion of each missile warhead on both occasions but suffered no damage to my aircraft.

The squadron flew nearly two thousand sorties over North Vietnam on this deployment and delivered almost five million pounds of ordnance. We suffered no losses to our SAM Pouncer divisions on this cruise.

Flew from the following carriers:

Wright (CVL-49), Cabot (CVL-28), Boxer (CV-21), Battan (CVL-29), Princeton (CV-37), Philippine Sea (CV-47), Hancock (CV-19), Coral Sea (CVA-43), Oriskany (CVA-34), Bon Homme Richard (CVA-31), Bennington (CVS-20), Kitty Hawk (CVA-63), *Enterprise* (CVAN-65).

Personal:

Married to the former Janyce Nadine Wolter of Fairmont, MN. Daughters Brooks and Holly, sons Peter, Scott, and Christopher.