



Cadet Tracy Gentry, Dallas Texas 1943

Tolbert Tracy Gentry, BGEN, USMC (Ret.)

Date of Designation: 2 June 1943 NA # C-5806

Dates of Active Duty: September 1942 - March 1973

Total Flight Hours: 4,195

Carrier/Ship Landings: Fixed wing: 121

Approximate Flight Hours:

Jet: 2,095 Prop: 2,100 VF/VA: 3,645

VR/VP: 250 VT: 300

Combat Tours:

WW II: VMTB-232 (TBF), Nov. 1943-Jun. 1944, Pacific (New Georgia, Bouganville, Rabaul) - 48 missions.

Korea: VMF-312 (F4U), Jun. 1952-Apr. 1953, K-6 and USS *Sicily* - 41 missions.

Vietnam: CO, MWHG-1 (TA4F), Sep. 1967- Nov. 1968, Danang - 52 missions.

Aviation Commands:

CO, Marine Base Air Warning Squadron One (MBAWS-1), July 1947 - May 1949

CO, VM/A-223, Sep. 1964 - Apr. 1965

CO, MWHG-1, 1st MAW, Sep. 1967-Nov. 1968

Combat Awards:

Legion of Merit

Distinguished Flying Cross

8 Air Medals

Duty Assignment Chronology

- 4/41-5/42 Georgia Tech, Atlanta. Civil Pilot Training (CPT), (J3-Cub, WACO, Low wing Fairchild).
- 8/42-9/42 Athens, GA, Pre-f;light.
- 10/42-3/43 Grand Prairie, Dallas, TX. Student (N2S, NP1)
- 3/43-6/43 Corpus Christi, TX, Student (SNV, SNJ)



1999

Ruth

- 6/43-9/43 NAS Ft. Lauderdale, FL, Pilot, Ops. & Trng. (TBF, SNJ).
- 9/43-10/43 MCAS Santa Barbara, CA. Pilot (TBF, TBM).
- 10/43-6/44 VMTB-232, Pilot. Solomon Islands, South Pacific (TBF, TBM).
- 8/44-10/44 MCAS Santa Barbara, CA. Instructor Pilot (TBF, TBM).
- 10/44-5/45 VMSB-943MCAS El Toro, CA. Instructor Pilot (TBF/M, SB2C, SBW).
- 5/45-4/46 VMSB-464, MCAS El Toro, CA. Pilot (TBM) MBDG-41, USS *Point Cruz*.
- 5/46-10/46 USNAS St. Simons Island, GA. Student-Radar School (F6F, SNB).
- 12/46-7/47 MGCIS-1, MCAS Miramar, CA. Air Controller (F6F, F7F, SNB, SNJ, F4U).
- 9/47-5/49 CO, MBAWS-1, Midway Island (SNJ, PBY).
- 8/49-6/50 MCS Quantico, VA. AWS Student (F4U, SNJ, SNB).
- 7/50-8/51 S-1, VMF-225, MCAS Cherry Point, NC. and USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CV-42) (F4U, SNB).
- 8/51-6/52 MCAS Cherry Point, NC. MGCIS Air Controller (F4U, FG-1D, SNB).
- 7/52-4/53 S-1, VMF-312, Korea and USS *Sicily* and XO, MGCIS (F4U, AU).
- 5/53-12/53 MCAS Cherry Point, NC. Pilot, S-4 SWDU-2 (AD4B, F2H-4).
- 1/54-7/54 S-3, VMF-533, MCAS Cherry Point, NC. (F2H-4).
- 7/54-7/56 USN Amphibious Base, Little Creek, VA. Instructor- Air Support School (TV-2, SNB, F9F-5).
- 9/56-12/58 S-3, VMF-224, MCAS El toro, CA. and MCAS Iwakuni, Japan (A4D-1, F9F-5).
- 1/59-9/60 S-4, MAG-15; Asst G-4 3rd MAW; O-in-C, SWTU, MCAS El Toro, CA. (A4D-2, FJ-4, TV-2, F9F-8T).
- 9/60-9/62 SAC Headquarters, Omaha, NE. Tactics Branch JSTPS (T-33).
- 9/62-5/63 University of Nebraska, Omaha. Bootstrap Program (T-33). (- Continued -)

Duty Assignment Chronology continued

6/63-6/64 US Army Staff & Command School, Ft. Leavenworth, KS. Student (O1E, U6A).
8/64-4/65 CO, VMA-223, MCAS El Toro, CA. (A4E).
5/65-8/67 O-in-C, Aviation Technical Section, G-4 FMFPAC, Camp Smith, HI. (C-47, C-45, TA4F - 55 hours during the month of 8/67 in TA4F at VMT-?, Yuma, AZ., just prior to going to Vietnam).
9/67-9/68 CO, MWHG-1, Danang, Vietnam (TA4F).
10/68-6/71 Head, Long Range Study Panel, USMC R&D Center, Quantico, VA.
7/71-4/73 G-4, 2nd MAW, MCAS Cherry Point, NC. (We had an excess of new pilots which we couldn't get flight time for. I chose to let them have my share).

Summary of Significant Career Events

(1) During December 1943 and January and March of 1944, while flying TBFs in VMTB-232, I participated in the neutralization of the airfield complex and harbor at Rabaul, New Britain. Initially, these missions were staged from Munda, New Georgia through the airstrips on Bouganville (Piva) built by the Seabees immediately after enough real estate was secured to do so. During March we moved permanently to the Piva Bouganville airfield complex. Typical missions consisted of more than 150 aircraft. SBDs usually went in first against the AAA followed by the TBFs hitting airfields and/or shipping. We would have New Zealand P-40s for close cover, Marine F4Us for medium cover and Army Air Corps P38s for high cover. One of the more successful strikes occurred on 17 January 1944. It consisted of 29 SBDs and 18 TBFs escorted by 70 fighters. Over 70 Japanese fighters intercepted with 17 shot down--10 by Marine Corsairs and 1 by a TBF tail gunner. Five Japanese ships were sunk. As I recall, on this day for some reason we wound up short of medium cover or more likely they were out numbered. As a result the P-38s had to come down and they lost 8 aircraft. We also lost one each TBF, SBD, F6F and F4U.

During the defense of the perimeter airfield complex on Bouganville, I flew a number of "close air support" missions which marked the beginning of such tactics in the "modern sense" of the word. Had total of 48 Missions in WWII

(2) Speaking of memorable pioneer aviation events, on 13 April 1949 on Midway Island, I took my wife, Ruth, on a ride in a SNJ. We did a few rolls and she loved it.

(3) In the Spring of 1951 flying Corsairs in VMF-225, I did a Med cruise on board the USS *FDR* (CVA- 42). The tour included a shake down cruise to Gitmo prior to the Med deployment. The Air Group consisted of two F4U squadrons, an AD squadron, an F9F squadron, an F8F photo detachment and a detachment of F3Ds. With a mixture of aircraft this diverse it had to be an aircraft maintenance nightmare, but as I recall the cruise went very smoothly. During the Gitmo shake down we night carrier landing qualified. When it was all over we also learned we had, at the same time, qualified our LSO.

(4) During the summer and into the fall of 1952, in the Korean "police action," I flew Corsairs with VMF-312 from a jeep carrier the USS *Sicily*. We supported the war effort by mostly keeping the area in and around the Hae Ju peninsula neutralized--Road Reccees, bridge cuts, gun emplacements, supply dumps, and troop concentrations. The carrier could only carry about 2 weeks of fuel and ammo so we were "on line" for two weeks then be back in Sasebo, Japan for a week to refuel and rearm. Not a bad way to fight a war.

There were a few unusual operations around the ship. The Skipper was really afraid of a submarine attack and hated to get out of his zig-zag course. I don't really know the extent of the threat, but he insisted on having an aircraft at the cut the moment he got into the wind. As a result, I remember making straight in approaches (try that in the long nosed bent wing) and even approaches from the starboard with the LSO on the starboard side. Also, he would allow no hung ordnance to be brought back aboard. Rather than resort to a long trip to an inland airfield we worked out a routine with a SeaBee outfit on one of the off shore islands, to off-load the hung bomb or rocket after we landed on the beach next to the camp. That was a fun thing to do but you had to be sure the sand was wet hard pack. Very smooth. 41 Missions in Korea

(5) MY ASSOCIATION WITH THE A4 "SCOOTER" (10 years). In the late summer of 1956. I joined VMA-224 as Operations Officer at MCAS El Toro, CA. VMA-224 was just getting the A4D-1, the first Marine Squadron to do so. The next two and a half years were spent developing, refining and training atomic weapons delivery tactics in the "Scooter". This included a 15 month deployment to Iwakuni, Japan, where we had "assigned" targets.

This tour led to my selection in September of 1960 to the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff (JSTPS) at SAC Headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska as the A4 "expert" to participate in the preparation of a National Strategic Target List and the first Single Integrated Operations Plan (SIOP) for the utilization of Atomic Weapons Delivery Forces of the Unified and Specified Commands. The target list and SIOP were approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President on 20 December 1960. We did another one over the next year, refining and improving the original.

In the fall of 1964 I took Command of VMA-223 with A4Es. Then during my tour in Vietnam (1967-68), although I was not in a flying billet, I flew 52 missions in the TA4F.

(6) My twilight tour was as G-4 of the Second Marine Aircraft Wing. We were responsible for over 500 airplanes, introduced the Harrier into the Marine Corps inventory, supported numerous deployments and exercises all the while maintaining the best "fully" operational ready rate in the Corps. During this tour, it was my privilege to introduce the Marine Corps Aviation Association Aviation Ground Officer of the Year Award, now known as the Earl Hattaway Award. Earl Hattaway was our Aircraft Maintenance Officer for the period.