



James A. Symonds, RDML, USN, (Ret.)
 “Symo”

Hometown: Sodus, NY

High School and College Career:

Sodus Central; State University of New York at Albany, BS Mathematics

Dates on Active Duty: 19 Sept 1975 - 1 Sept 2010

Date Commissioned/Source:

19 Sep 1975 / Aviation Officer Candidate School

Date of Designation:

NFO: 16 July 1976 Pilot: 12 August 1983

Total Flight Hours: 4572

Carrier/Ship Landings:

Pilot: 706 NFO: 376 Total: 1082

Approximate Flight Hours:

A-6: 4000 Other fixed wing: 570

Commands:

Medium Attack Weapons School: 1991-1992
 VA-165: 1993-1994
 USS *NASHVILLE* (LPD 13): 1999-2001
 USS *RONALD REAGAN* (CVN 76): 2003-2005
 Navy Region NORTHWEST: 2007-2010

Awards:

Defense Superior Service Medal
 Legion of Merit (4)
 Meritorious Service Medal (4)
 Air Medal (Strike/Flight)
 Navy Commendation Medal (3)
 Navy Achievement Medal (2)



Duty Assignment Chronology

- 09/19/1975 Commissioned at Aviation Officer Candidate School, NAS Pensacola.
- 09/75-07/76 VT-10/VT-86. Student Naval Flight Officer
- 09/76-05/77 VA-128. Fleet Replacement Bombardier/Navigator Training
- 06/77-01/80 VA-115. Public Affairs, First Lieutenant, AirWing Mining Officer. Forward deployed to Yokosuka, Japan on USS *MIDWAY*(CV41). On station during Iran Hostage Crisis, late 1979.
- 03/80-11/81 VA-128. Instructor, Schedules Officer, Navigation Phase Head
- 12/81-08/83 VT-6/VT-4. Student Naval Aviator
- 12/83-09/84 VA-128. Fleet Replacement Naval Aviator Training
- 10/84-11/87 VA-196. NATOPS Officer, Quality Assurance Officer, Tactics Officer. 1985 Deployment CVW-14 embarked on USS *CONSTELLATION*(CV64). 1987 Deployment CVW-14 embarked on USS *CONSTELLATION*(CV64), Operation EARNEST WILL.
- 01/88-06/89 VA-128 Instructor. Plans and Programs Officer, Crew Training Officer.
- 07/89-05/91 VA-196. Operations Officer, Maintenance Officer. 1990 Deployment CVW-14 embarked on USS *INDEPENDENCE*(CV62), Operation DESERT SHIELD.
- 06/91-09/92 Medium Attack Weapons School NAS Whidbey Island. Commanding Officer.
- 09/92-09/94 VA-165. XO/CO. 1993 Deployment CVW-9 embarked on USS *NIMITZ*(CVN68), Operation SOUTHERN WATCH.
- 12/94-12/95 US SIXTH FLEET. Air Operations Officer. Operation DENY FLIGHT and DELIBERATE FORCE.

Duty Assignment Chronology continued

01/96-08/97 Student Navy Nuclear Power School, Prototype Training, and Prospective Commanding Officer Training.

10/97-07/99 USS *DWIGHT D EISENHOWER*(CVN69). Executive Officer. 1998 Deployment to Mediterranean and Arabian Gulf.

10/99-03/01 USS *NASHVILLE*(LPD13). Commanding Officer. 2000-2001 Deployment to Mediterranean.

05/01-03/03 US SOUTHERN COMMAND. Deputy J3 Director for Counterdrug Operations (J36).

04/03-08/03 Prospective CVN CO training.

08/03-11/05 USS *RONALD REAGAN*(CVN76). Commanding Officer. Complete new construction. Homeport change Norfolk to San Diego. Workups toward first deployment.

12/05-06/07 Chief of Naval Operations Staff (N45). Director of Environmental Readiness.

7/07-8/10 Navy Region NORTHWEST. Commander.

9/01/2010 Retired from active duty.

Summary of Significant Career Events

- (1) Commodore's List in both NFO and Pilot training pipelines. #1 in NFO class at VT-86.
- (2) VA-115. Air wing Mining Officer. Planned series of events leading to air wing certification and real world contingency mining operations.
- (3) While a RAG instructor at VA-128, selected for Naval Aviator training. As Student Naval Aviator, #1 in CQ in both intermediate and advanced. #1 in guns. Earned three E's in bombing during advanced training. Returned to A-6 community. As RAG Fleet Replacement pilot, earned best CQ grades in previous 12 carrier qualification classes at VA-128.
- (4) Top Nugget in CVW-14 landing grades during line period in Indian Ocean on USS *CONSTELLATION* in 1985.
- (5) VA-196 Tactics Officer in 1986, developed air wing war-at-sea doctrine for HARPOON missile employment. CVW-14 Nominee for 1987 Tailhooker of the Year Award for outstanding contributions in tactical development.
- (6) VA-196 second tour. Operations and Maintenance Officer while embarked with CVW-14 on USS *INDEPENDENCE*(CV62). Operating in Indian Ocean when Iraq invaded Kuwait. On station within two days and began planning strike missions. Remained on station throughout Operation DESERT SHIELD.
- (7) Won deployment Top Hook for CVW-14. Named COMSEVENTHFLEET Golden Tailhooker for 1990.
- (8) Selected to command Medium Attack Weapons School at NAS Whidbey Island.

(9) VA-165 XO on 1993 deployment embarked on USS *NIMITZ*(CVN68), flew missions over Iraq in support of Operation SOUTHERN WATCH. Led CVW-9 forward detachment to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to provide early integration in JTF-Southwest Asia. Only CVW-9 pilot with no bolters or one-wires for entire deployment. CAG's choice to fly both Major Generals who held command of JTF-SWA during deployment.

(10) CO of VA-165, led the squadron in Exercises ROVING SANDS and RED FLAG, gaining kudos not only for aircraft availability for strike sorties, but specific praise for night strike and suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD) tactical prowess.

(11) AIROPS, COMSIXTHFLEET, oversaw carrier and air wing operations in DENY FLIGHT and DELIBERATE FORCE, the NATO and UN action to reduce the military capability of Serbia in 1995.

(12) Accepted to Navy Nuclear Power Training in 1995. Selected as XO of USS *DWIGHT D EISENHOWER*(CVN69). Deployed 1998 to Mediterranean and Arabian Gulf.

(13) CO of USS *NASHVILLE*(LPD13). Hosted US Coast Guard Commodore, over 100 Coast Guardsmen, four helos, and Naval Coastal Warfare boats all in support of US government operation to clear Vieques Island and ready it for turn over to the government of Puerto Rico.

(14) Deployed with USS *NASSAU*(LHA4) ARG and 22 Marine Expeditionary Unit embarked.

(15) Deputy J3 Director for Counterdrug Operations (J36) in US SOUTHERN COMMAND. My team responsible for executing Congressional supplemental PLAN COLOMBIA to equip and train Colombian counterdrug forces. Stood up Joint Inter-Agency Coordination Group in response to Global War on Terror tasking after September 11, 2001 attacks. I was Navy Element Commander as senior officer present.

(16) CO, USS *RONALD REAGAN*(CVN76). Executed homeport change from Norfolk to San Diego without incident. Participated in UNITAS exercise, Brazilian and Argentinian aircraft touch and go's, and first transit of the Straits of Magellan by a nuclear powered aircraft carrier.

(17) Specifically called on by the family of President Reagan, upon his death, to participate in the funeral. Travelled from Rio De Janeiro, having safely anchored the ship, to Southern California. Presented the folded flag from the President's coffin to Mrs. Nancy Reagan at the graveside ceremony.

(18) No notice tasking in January 2005 to transport two C-2 COD aircraft to Hawaii for further flight to join USS *ABRAHAM LINCOLN* in support of post-tsunami recovery efforts in the Indian Ocean.

(19) Selected for Flag in December 2004. CNO Staff (N45), Director of Environmental Readiness. Led Navy effort to defend against environmental groups' challenges to Navy use of active sonar. Resulted in a Presidential exemption, which held the questionable legal charges at bay, allowing Navy time to develop the requisite Environmental Impact Statements (EIS).

(20) Commander, Navy Region NORTHWEST. To make execution of installation support to the fleet as efficient as possible under nascent regionalization concept, successfully wrung out excess infrastructure, billets, and spending to lean the organization. I tirelessly travelled throughout the region to ensure the highest morale possible in tough fiscal times.

Summary of Post Military Work

(1) Founded Golf for Warriors (no longer extant). Free golf lessons for Veterans. Volunteer for PGA HOPE, a PGA of America sanctioned program providing free golf lessons to Veterans.

(2) Served on two commissions in the city of Chandler, Arizona, in volunteer commissioner roles.

(3) Co-founded College Find, LLC. Provides online research for college-bound high school students, including interactive national map, of over 1300 colleges and universities nation wide. Marketing tools for students to provide talent profile to college admission centers.

Personal

(1) Married to Jane MacDonald.

(2) Five children in blended family.

Associations/Membership/Boards:

(1) Tailhook Life Member

(2) Association of Naval Aviation Life Member