



Duane D. Thiessen, LTGEN., USMC (Ret.)
“Drano”

Date of Designation: 26 March 1976

Dates of Active Duty: May 1974 - October 2012.

Total Flight Hours: 3900+ Hours: 2862 Military, over 1100 civilian.

Military flying was primarily AV-8A and AV-8B. As Wing Commander I flew the FA-18 C/D and copiloted CH-53D and CH-46E.

Civilian flying experience is diverse but primarily single engine and light twin. Civilian ratings include ATP, Commercial, and CE-500 type rating. I have owned six different aircraft including a vintage Taylorcraft and an unlimited aerobatic Pitts S2S.

Marine Corps Commands:

- Harrier Detachment commander aboard USS *Nassau*: 1986
- CO, VMAT-203: 1991-1992
- CO, MAG-13: 1997-1999
- CG, 1st MAW: 2004-2005
- CG, Marine Forces Korea, J-5 Combined Forces Command, Korea: 2005-2007
- CG, Marine Forces Pacific: 2010-2012

Awards:

- Distinguished Service Medal
- Defense Superior Service Medal (2)
- Legion of Merit (3)
- Defense Meritorious Service Medal
- Meritorious Service Medal (2)
- Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal

Significant Aviation Accomplishments

In 1976, I was fortunate to become first Second Lieutenant to go directly from flight school straight into the Harrier program without prior operational experience in other type model series aircraft. This was largely a matter of timing and



luck but it was also an experience that impacted much of my early career.

As a Captain, I was chosen to become a Weapons and Tactics Instructor at MAWTS-1 in Yuma, Arizona. Responsibilities included the standardization of tactics training across the Harrier community and the fixed wing community.

While assigned to MAWTS, I participated in the air to ground portion of the AV-8B OPEVAL. The focus of my efforts centered on procedures and techniques used to optimize employment of the Dual Mode Tracker and the Angle Rate Bombing System.

Again while at MAWTS-1, I designed a standardized course teaching IR principles, IR tracking methodology and counter measures for Marine fixed wing aviation.

Commanded a Harrier Detachment that deployed to the Mediterranean Sea. While deployed, coordinated and conducted the first fixed wing operations aboard an Italian aircraft carrier, the ITS Garibaldi.

Assigned as the Deputy Program Manager for the AV-88 aircraft program in Naval Air Systems Command. Coordinated the negotiations for foreign military sales of AV-8Bs to both Italy and Spain.

Commanded VMAT-203, a Fleet Replacement Squadron and the largest squadron in the Marine Corps at the time with 45 aircraft on the line. We improved the training syllabus, increased the transition flight time and dramatically decreased the accident rate for first tour pilots. Our Squadron flew between 900 and 1000 hours a month without a major accident for the two years of my command.

I was in the Requirements Directorate for the Joint Advance Strike Technology project (JAST) which transitioned into the F-35, Joint Strike Fighter aircraft program. The JAST/JSF program office conducted detailed studies and extensive,

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Significant Aviation Accomplishments continued

analytical war games comparing all the aircraft performance and signature requirements to determine the trade space for the RFP that was provided to manufacturers.

Commanded Marine Aircraft Group 13 at a point when OPTEMPO was high but engine availability was low. Helped establish the Harrier Aircraft Reliability Program (HARP) to address relevancy, reliability, and capability of the platform. Initiated a program to exchange engine component sections which, though it increased maintenance man hours required, doubled the available number of engines with a corresponding impact on availability and readiness.

Initiated the integration of existing Army laser range finders with standard Forward Air Controller GPS and digital radio capability directly into the inherent AV-8B Aircraft Mission Computer capability. This gave the pilot precise real time target designation in the Heads Up Display without the pilot actually seeing the target first. Coordinated the development and integration through Naval Air Systems Command simultaneous with aircrew training with the result that from in-house testing to deployed capability was six months. This effort was the precursor to the current day targeting pod capabilities on the AV-8.

Was the director of Aviation Plans and Policy (APP) for Deputy Commandant for Aviation. Responsibilities were spread across all aspects of Marine Corps Aviation programs but principle achievements would include orchestrating the operational planning and successful defense for the V-22 Osprey program during a time of program vulnerability.

Directed the Expeditionary office of Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Research Development and Acquisition (DASN, RDA, Exp). Program responsibilities ran the gamut of Marine and Navy expeditionary capabilities including aviation counter mine programs.

Was Deputy Director of Operations in the National Military Command Center on September 11, 2001.

Commanded 1st Marine Air Wing in Okinawa at the time a tsunami hit Phuket Thailand, Sumatra Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. I became Marine Expeditionary Force (rear) commanding the air logistical efforts for the region while the MEF split into three elements to cover and coordinate the national efforts in the three locations.

For three years I was Deputy Commandant for Programs and Resources working budget submissions, budget defense, and budget execution for all Marine programs.

Commanded Marine Forces Pacific as the Marine component commander. Provided fully trained operational ground and air forces to CENTCOM and PACOM, participated in the coordination and deployment of aviation assets during a particularly tense time with DPRK's early nuclear tests. Participated in direct support of national efforts to assist the

government of Japan following a devastating tsunami and subsequent Fukushima nuclear reactor crisis.

Current Activities

I am currently the President and CEO of the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation whose mission is to support the Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Florida and operate the National Flight Academy which is collocated.

My wife Lynn and I were married in 1979 so we have spent 41 years of running around the world together. She is the one that has held everything together. In retirement we found our way back to Pensacola and plan to stay. Lynn restores vintage dolls both as a business and for pleasure. She has some that date back to the 1800s but most are early and mid-1900s. She has accumulated well over 500 total, most of which she has personally restored to original condition. Besides my work, I have rekindled my early love for general aviation. We have an old Piper single engine which we keep flying and I am completing the complete restoration of a Vans RV-6. I am already trying to figure out my next experimental amateur homebuilt project. Lynn and I have two children, both married with families of their own. My son is a professional pilot flying heavy helos primarily in support of fire fighting efforts. His wife is a nurse. My daughter is an Elementary school teacher, she married a Navy Officer who is stationed at Canaveral and is nearing the end of his military career. We have a total of three grandchildren all of whom want to be a pilot just like grandpa.