

DFW TAILHOOKERS PROJECTS SINCE 155629

FIRST PROJECT OBTAIN EA-6B PROWLER 162228

By Bob "Slick/Spock" Champney

Unable to acquire 155629 for Frontiers of Flight Museum (FOF). Scott "Beachball" Beach and Ken "Smo" Smolana, both VA-34 BNs that had XO/CO tours in VAQ-140 and VAQ-133, respectfully. Beachball pressured me to try and obtain a EA-6B Prowler from the last USMC VMAQ-2 squadron that was to be decommissioned.

I called the Duty Office at VMAQ-2 and talked to the enlisted Duty Officer. I explained what DFW Tailhookers was trying to do and asked him to ask the CO to give me a call. February 11 2019, I talked to LtCol A. A. "Grundy" Rundle. They had just flown one of the last three to MAPS Air Museum in Green, OH. He knew one was going the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum at Dulles International Airport. Grundy said he would pass along the information to their aircraft distribution manager.

Pat Fitzgerald the EA-6B program manager called me and said 162228 was scheduled to go to EAA Aviation Museum, but the museum canceled their request. Pat said he would initiate the process to have 162228 flown to Dallas Love Field for display at FOF.

Assignment of Navy aircraft to a museum are approved by NNAM. Marine aircraft are handled the same way, on loan from the National Marine Corps Museum (NMMC) in Quantico. Pat Fitzgerald worked with Ben Kristy, Curator, at the NMMC to obtain 162228 for FOFM. Ben Kristy started his museum career at Cavanaugh Flight Museum at Addison Airport in north Dallas. Dan Steelman, FOF VP of Collections & Exhibits, knew Ben from his time in Dallas. The approval process was expedited and 162228 flew to Dallas Love Field for an arrival ceremony at Business Jet Center on March 13, 2019.



162228 drops Tailhook for final time after Water Salute



Crowd watches from BJC Observation Patio

162228 was demilitarized by a VMAQ-2 detachment at a hangar provided by Business Jet Center. The detachment came with VMAQ-2 CO / EMCO LtCol "Grundy" Rundle from Washington DC. They performed the same procedure on the last VMAQ-2 Prowler flown two days later to the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum at Dulles. Canopies were removed for removing ejection seats for rocket motor removal for shipping back to MCAS Cherry Point. Demilitarization also included draining remaining fuel and perging hydraulics.



The FOFM dedication was held April 12, 2019 with RADM Jim “Gramps” Lair as keynote speaker.






Ribbon cutting ceremony with FOF Pres/CEO Cheryl Sutterfield-Jones, Smo, RADM Lair, Gina Collins (GM Sewell Infiniti/\$5000 Ceremony Sponsor), DFWTH Officers. FOF and BJC personnel involved in the project



162228 was moved to its final spot outside FOFM hangar. The location is visible from Lemmon Ave a main thoroughfare by Love Field to downtown Dallas. Ken “Smo” Smolana fabricated a canopy cover that draws lots of attention from drivers on Lemmon Ave.

Don't blame me for accidents on Lemmon Avenue from rubber neck drivers



 <h2 style="text-align: center;">Grumman A-6 Series Aircraft</h2>	
<p><u>A-6 Intruder</u> </p> <p>Flown by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aircraft carrier and land based • Max speed: 644 mph • Weight empty: 26,600 lbs. • Max catapult weight: 58,600 lbs. • Armament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple bombs - Rockets - Missiles • Primary mission Night/all weather attack of enemy radar sites • Dates of Service: 1960 - 1997 • Combat operations in Vietnam, Iraq, Bosnia, and Middle East 	<p><u>EA-6B Prowler</u> </p> <p>Flown by the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aircraft carrier and land based • Max speed: 651 mph • Weight empty: 31,160 lbs. • Max catapult weight: 61,500 lbs. • Armament <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Electronic warfare equipment - HARM missiles • Primary mission Disruption and attack of enemy radar sites • Dates of Service: 1970 - 2019 • Combat operations in Vietnam, Iraq, Bosnia, Middle East, and Afghanistan

Grumman A-6 Series Aircraft Plaque designed by Mike “Schu” Schuster

DFW Tailhookers had risers manufactured to keep the tires off the cement and an A-6 Series Aircraft Plaque for display.

SECOND PROJECT: BLUE ANGEL F/A-18C Bu.No. 163435

By John "JJ" Miller, President DFW Tailhookers Association

After the acquisition of the EA-6B our association was ready to take on another project. A unique opportunity would present itself in October 2020 because the Blue Angels were scheduled to transition from their well-used F/A-18C legacy Hornets to the newer F/A-18E Super Hornets at the end of the season. The retiring Hornets would be loaned to museums for display, but there would be more requests than aircraft available. Two of our members, former Blue Angels Bill "Soupy" Campbell (1985-86) and I (1976-78), began exploring the possibility of bringing a retired legacy Hornet to the Frontiers of Flight (FOF) Museum at Love Field.

Early in 2020 we met with FOF CEO Dan Hamilton and VP Collections and Exhibits Dan Steelman to gauge their interest. Both of them were very supportive and excited about the possibility of displaying a Blue Angel F/A-18. The museum submitted a formal request for the aircraft through the National Naval Aviation Museum (NNAM). At the same time Bill Campbell contacted the XO of the Blue Angels, CDR Todd Royles and NNAM Director CAPT Sterling Gilliam (Ret.) to help support the decision-making process. In late April FOF was informed by the NNAM Loan Manager, Lenore Taylor, that it was on the list to receive an aircraft. However, there was a serious problem. Due to the sharp decline in revenue caused by the effects of the pandemic, the museum did not have the funds necessary to transport the aircraft from Pensacola to Dallas.

We did not want to lose the window of opportunity to bring a highly recognizable symbol of Naval Aviation to the DFW metropolitan area. Therefore, DFWTH leadership made the decision to form a committee for the purpose of raising the funds required to bring the aircraft to FOF. With Bill Campbell assisting, I chaired a committee consisting of Larry "Panther" Walton, Ken "Smo" Smolana, Bob "Slick/Spock" Champney, Scott "Beachball" Beach and Don Rhodes.



The museum set a target date of September 15th as the decision point for fundraising to accept the aircraft. Our time line was short. With experience gained from our attempt to move the A-6E from Quonset Point we began a fundraising campaign. We initially explored hosting a golf tournament, but the front-end expenses and COVID restrictions soon made us realize this was untenable. Our focus quickly turned to outreach and traditional fundraising. Bob Champney, our Webmaster, began our marketing campaign with posts on our Facebook and LinkedIn accounts and by reaching out to local businesses. Ed “Fast Eddie” Flynn (a fellow retired Southwest Capt., F-4 pilot and CO VF-201) contacted former squadron mates and Southwest Airlines Golden Eagles (SAGE). Tim Gleason (Marine A-6/VMFA-214) Secretary and Treasurer of SAGE supported our fundraising effort by getting the word out to fellow retired Southwest Airlines pilots. Corporate sponsorships came from Jupiter Chevrolet, family owned by DFWTH member Mike “Chevy” Matetich (F-4/F-14 pilot) and Sewell Automotive, where Bob Champney worked for 20 years. Additional support came from our membership, ex Blue Angels and Naval Aviation enthusiasts. Through many generous contributions we achieved our fundraising goal.

Concurrent with fundraising we searched for a contractor to disassemble, transport and reassemble the aircraft. We chose All Coast Aircraft Recovery run by Chuck Mosely. Chuck served for 35 years in the fighter community and retired as an LDO CDR in Aviation Maintenance before starting All Coast. Unfortunately, Chuck contracted COVID and passed away. With three months remaining before the move date, we began the search for a new contractor. One of my former BN’s from VA-75, Sandy “Rat Man” Sanford, runs Potomac River Enterprise Solutions (PRES). His business performs work for the NNAM inspecting aircraft on loan to museums. I contacted Sandy to see if PRES was capable of the disassembly and reassembly work necessary to move an F-18. He assured me they had the capability and gave us an excellent bid on short notice. Les Chapman trucking, part of the original bid with All Coast, informed us that they would honor their original bid for transportation with PRES as the new contractor.



Loading at NAS Pensacola



Off loading at Business Jet Center

The funding was assured and a contractor and transportation were ready, but we still had to resolve the timing of the move. The determination was made to hold a dedication ceremony when restrictions prohibiting large gatherings were lifted. The earliest we could do this at FOF was January 2021. 163435 was demilitarized by the Blue Angel maintenance crew immediately after the season and moved to the NNAM ramp in late October. NNAM was very accommodating and allowed us to leave the aircraft on the ramp until our January pickup date.

With the unpredictability of January Dallas weather hangar space was needed to reassemble the aircraft at Love Field. Unfortunately, there was insufficient room at FOF. Our friends at Business Jet Center (BJC), ownership and manager Jason Pons, stepped up and provided hangar space for four days. The aircraft arrived in Dallas on January 11th and over a three-day period was reassembled by PRES and then washed and polished by Hangar Services. This service was donated by the owner, Grady Simmons. On January 15th the aircraft was moved to FOF. Last minute preparations were then completed, including attachment of variable exhaust nozzles, which were expertly attached using mounting brackets fabricated by Ken Smolana. Although it was built in 1987, served in the Gulf War and was flown by the Blue Angels for 15 years, 163435 looked like it just rolled out of the factory.



We held the dedication ceremony on January 16th 2021. The keynote speaker for the event was ADM Pat Walsh, a Dallas native, former Vice CNO, PACFLT and Blue Angel #4 in 1987. In honor of his exemplary service the aircraft is displayed as LCDR Walsh flew it in 1987. In conjunction with the dedication, we also held a panel discussion with five of the six demonstration pilots from the 1987 team, the year the Blue Angels transitioned from the A-4 Skyhawk to the F/A-18 Hornet. The team members participating in the discussion were the Leader #1 Gil Rud, #3 Donnie Cochran, #4 Pat Walsh, #5 Dave Anderson and #6 Wayne Molnar.

The placement of this highly recognizable Blue Angel F/A-18C at FOF has created a lot of excitement for the museum and helps draw visitors back after the lockdown year. Naval Aviation is well represented in Dallas.

JOIN DFW TAILHOOKERS ASSOCIATION (DFWTH)

DFWTH is the Dallas-Fort Worth area Ready Room for both the Intruder Association and Tailhook Association.

DFWTH contracted with Studio Movie Grill in February 2020 for a premier private showing “*Top Gun: Maverick*”.

Due to COVID the release date has been changed multiple times. Our premier showing is now scheduled for May 26, 2022.

Go to our website <https://dfwtailhookers.org/> and fill out member form to join. No dues with Happy Hours or events once a month.

