

1966-1975

New Aircraft:

- 1968: Developed from the A-6A with an extended cockpit, the EA-6B Prowler makes its first flight.
- 1971: The AV-8A Harrier arrives in Marine Corps squadrons.
- 1972: The S-3 Viking makes its first flight.

Important Dates:

October 26, 1966: A massive fire erupts aboard USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34), killing 44, many among the embarked air wing's flight crews. It is the first of three major fires aboard carriers during the war.

August 24, 1968: New NFO wings are approved, replacing the old Naval Aviation Observer wings.

July 20, 1969: Apollo 11 astronauts land on the moon.

April 1, 1970: Naval Air Reserve reorganization creates CVWR-20 and CVWR-30, mirror-image air wings.

May-December 1972: The air war in Southeast Asia heats up. Two Navy F-4 crewmen become the first American aces since the Korean War. Operation Linebacker II sends formations of Air Force, Navy and Marine aircraft over North Vietnam's capital Hanoi in an effort to bring the enemy to the bargaining table.

January 27, 1973: A ceasefire brings the war to an end, resulting in the release of 591 POWs, including 145 Navy and Marine Corps members, all but one of whom were flight crewmen.

April 30, 1973: MGSgt Patrick J. O'Neil retires as the last enlisted Marine Naval Aviation Pilot (NAP) on active duty.

February 22, 1974: Ltjg. Barbara Ann Allen receives her wings as the first female naval aviator.

April 1975: The American presence in Vietnam ends with the Communist advance on Saigon.

May 5, 1975: The first training class for Aviation Medical Officers (AMOs) begins at Pensacola.

July 1, 1975: The aircraft carrier designation CVA is changed to CV, to reflect a multi-mission role rather than simply attack.

These 10 years were dominated by the war in Southeast Asia. It was a time of more changes as carrier air wings (originally called air groups during World War II, from which the term CAG originated) relinquished their remaining piston-engine aircraft to become all-jet groups. The first nuclear-powered flattop, USS *Enterprise* (CVAN-65), joined the war.

While the headlines focused about the jet strikes from carriers, other communities saw considerable action during the war. The last American flying boats, Martin P-5 Marlins, patrolled the labyrinthine waterways of South Vietnam before retiring in 1967. P-2s and P-3s covered the open seas, and H-2s and H-3s made daring rescues. Armed UH-1s flew up and down the South Vietnamese coast, often with OV-10s.

The Navy's workhorse Douglas A-1 Skyraider, more familiarly known as the "Spad," flew combat missions in its single-seat form and multi-seat ELINT variants until 1969.

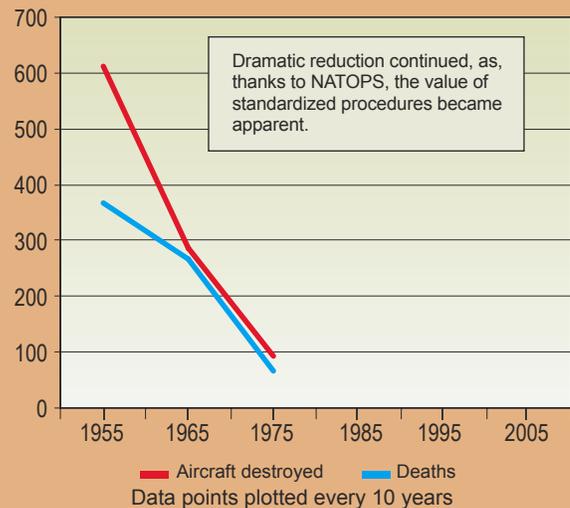
Besides the H-2 and H-3, the CH-46 and CH-53 were the primary cargo haulers, serving in Navy and Marine Corps squad-

rons, again often in the thick of battle. The long-serving H-34 left Marine Corps service in 1969. And we can't forget the CODs, delivering people, supplies and mail to the carriers. C-1s and C-2s did unsung but vital work, as anyone who has spent a month—or more—at sea can attest.

The A-4, F-4 and A-6 formed a partnership throughout the war, becoming the backbone of the Navy and Marine Corps strike groups. This troika soon was augmented by the arrival of Vought's A-7 Corsair II.

New systems, including zero-zero ejection seats and computer-driven bombing gear, were introduced during this time. Commissioning sources, as well as the flight-training squadrons, pumped out officer crewmen, while the enlisted training schools also worked overtime providing qualified maintainers and operators.

Naval Aviation Mishaps



In July 1969, man landed on the moon for the first time, and the first human to set foot on another world was a former naval aviator, Neil Armstrong. Naval Air Reserve squadrons were reorganized along fleet lines. Returning aviators from Vietnam could now fly the same aircraft they had flown on active duty.

The Marines took delivery of their first AV-8A Harrier jump jets in January 1971. The revolutionary vertical-takeoff-attack fighter immediately showed itself to be a colorful new addition to the Marine Corps lineup, but it would have to wait 20 years before it saw its first combat with the Marines.