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From: Commanding Officer, Fighter Squadron ELEVEN
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Subj: Command History Report; submission of

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Encl: (1) Chronology of events
(2) Narrative history
(3) Documentary annexes

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (3) are submitted.

J. S. Clare
J. S. CLARE

Reg 153687 (5-20)

Command History Report

1. Chronology of events

1 JAN 67 to 23 JAN 67: Based ashore at NAS Oceana, Va., conducting normal training exercises. Assigned to Carrier Air Wing SEVENTEEN. The fortieth anniversary reunion of the "Red Rippers" held on 21 JAN 67.

24 JAN 67 to 26 JAN 67: On board USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) conducting carrier qualifications. Received "Well Done" from FORRESTAL Commanding Officer, Captain BELING, for the professional performance of the maintenance personnel and 60 landings logged by squadron aircrews.

27 JAN 67 to 1 MAR 67: Based ashore at NAS Oceana, Va., conducting normal training exercise. Preparations in progress for deployment on board USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) to Caribbean Operating Area. First group of planes sent to NAS Norfolk for extensive modification in preparation for SEASIA deployment.

2 MAR 67 to 26 MAR 67: On board USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) operating in the Caribbean. Extensive air-to-air and ground training accomplished.

27 MAR 67 to 12 APR 67: Based ashore at NAS Oceana, Va., conducting normal training exercises and preparing for second Caribbean deployment aboard FORRESTAL.

13 APR 67 to 5 MAY 67: On board USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) in the Caribbean participating in the joint exercise "Clvehitch". "Red Ripper" flight crew makes 26,000th catapult launch from FORRESTAL.

6 MAY 67 to 5 JUN 67: Final preparations for 6 JUN deployment to SEASIA. All planes complete Shoehorn modification at NAS Norfolk.

6 JUN 67 to 16 JUN 67: On board USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) enroute WESTPAC for SEASIA deployment. Completed Operational Readiness Inspection with FORRESTAL and Air Wing SEVENTEEN.

17 JUN 67 to 18 JUL 67: Enroute WESTPAC. Extensive ground training and intelligence briefings for Yankee Station Operations.

19 JUL 67 to 24 JUL 67: Arrived at Cubi Point, R.P. Aircrews attend jungle survival school and receive final briefing for combat operations.

25 JUL 67 to 28 JUL 67: On board USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) participating in combat operations over North Vietnam with other squadrons of Air Wing SEVENTEEN. Squadron flew 67 combat sorties for 112 flight hours.

29 JUL 67 to 31 JUL 67: Disaster aboard FORRESTAL; VF-11 losses heavy. Squadron personnel distinguished themselves in efforts to save shipmates and fight fires.

1 AUG 67 to 12 AUG 67: In port at Cubi Point, R. P., effecting emergency repairs prior to returning CONUS.

13 AUG 67 to 14 SEP 67: Enroute CONUS aboard FORRESTAL. Commander CLARE relieves Commander DERRICK as Commanding Officer. Commander DAVIDSON becomes Executive Officer. Training commences for future operations.

15 SEP 67 to 1 OCT 67: Based ashore at NAS Oceana, Va.; leave period and stand down following cruise.

2 OCT 67 to 23 DEC 67: Based ashore at NAS Oceana, Va., conducting normal training exercises. Preparations made for MAAS Fallon, Nev. bombing deployment in JAN 68.

24 DEC 67 to 31 JAN 68: Christmas leave period.

Command History Report

2. Basic narrative

Commissioned 1 FEB 1927, the Red Rippers have had several designations, but remain the oldest continually active fighter squadron in the Navy. The insignia is composed of a boar's head from the Gordon Gin label with a string of bologna beneath it. A blue shield emblazoned with a red lightning bolt bracketed by two red balls comprises the remainder of the insignia. The insignia is probably best explained by the following excerpt written many years ago by one of the original members.

"The boar's head is taken directly from the one that graces the label of the Gordon's Gin bottle. The scroll effect under the head is a string of link sausage, a good line of bologna which all members of the squadron were to be adept at 'shooting'. The balls on the shield might be called balls of fire; actually, they were supposed to typify good, strong masculinity. The bolt of lightning was the bar sinister of bastardy. The whole theme was worked into a sort of toast or creed with which the squadron's members were to begin and end all good drinking bouts. I can't remember all of the toast, but it was something to the effect that, 'Here's to us, the Red Rippers -- a goddamn bunch of gin drinking, bologna slinging, two balled, he-man bastards'."

Following the very successful bombing deployment to Yuma in December 1966, the Red Rippers returned to home base at NAS Oceana, Va., and enjoyed the well earned Christmas and New Years Holiday vacation.

January 1967 was a busy month which combined the ever increasing

tempo of training operations for the SEASIA deployment with the hectic but enjoyable preparations for the fortieth anniversary of the Red Rippers. The 21st of January saw the arrival of six flag officers, including VADM C.T. BOOTH, COMNAVAIRLANT, and six Captains, all past skippers of the Red Rippers. These gentlemen were among the over fifty Red Ripper Alumni who were in attendance with their ladies. The activities of the day included an open house which contrasted a completely restored FF1 of 1933, an F6F Hellcat of WWII fame and our present F4B Phantom II. The highlight of the day was a flight demonstration by these planes which not only spanned 34 years of aviation history but also a large segment of Red Ripper history.

A fine afternoon was followed by a festive reception at the club, during which our traditional toast was made by the Red Rippers to a future, hopefully, as bright as our already colorful past. It was a time when both old and new members of the squadron could exchange experiences and learn what the spirit is, that not only made, but also continues the tradition of the Red Rippers.

The remainder of January saw the squadron preparing for their first trip to the USS FORRESTAL (CVA-59) in which the Red Rippers would deploy to SEASIA. The squadron's first cruise aboard resulted in 60 landings and a "Well Done" for the maintenance department from Captain J.K. BELING, FORRESTAL Commanding Officer.

The squadron resumed its busy training schedule at Oceana in late January, and also sent its first group of planes to MAS Norfolk for a major modification prior to the SEASIA deployment.

The latter part of February was devoted to preparing for the first of several "short deployments" to the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range as a part of the Air Wing SEVENTEEN and FORRESTAL team. During the cruise the Red Rippers participated in numerous air wing/ship training evolutions and engaged in extensive air-to-air and air-to-ground training.

The Red Rippers returned in late March for a short rest, but were soon operating at a fast pace to prepare for the second trip to the Caribbean aboard FORRESTAL. Mid-April saw the squadron again deployed as part of Air Wing SEVENTEEN aboard FORRESTAL. By this time it was apparent that the squadron, air wing, and ship were fast becoming a tightly knit fighting unit. That this was fact was evidenced in the success of numerous ship and air wing coordinated strikes on Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range targets. Simultaneously, the FORRESTAL/Air Wing SEVENTEEN team was also supporting and participating in the joint service exercise Operation Clovehitch. The high readiness level of the squadron was apparent when the squadron logged some 229 day and 82 night landings and 528 flight hours. In addition, a Red Ripper crew logged the 26,000th "Cat Shot" from FORRESTAL.

The Red Rippers returned to Oceana in mid-May and completed final preparations for the SEASIA deployment. June 6th the Red Rippers bid farewell to loved ones and set out to continue a tradition that has seen the squadron participating in every theatre of war since its birth in 1927.

The first stop of the long journey was to the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Range for operational readiness inspection. The Red Rippers

passed their final test with flying colors as members of the FORRESTAL/
Air Wing SEVENTEEN team. FORRESTAL resumed her journey by mid-June
with the excitement of the trip enhanced even further by thoughts
of Rio de Janeiro, our first port-of-call. The Red Rippers, always
thinking ahead, waited in rapt anticipation for Rio. Certain officers,
with an extra measure of foresight, had written ahead to ensure a
proper reception. As the ship approached zero degrees latitude, the
Red Rippers could boast having only 5 worthy shellbacks and had to
admit to being manned by some 290 Pollywogs. This rueful situation
was soon corrected as the ship entered the realm of Neptunis Rex.

Finally, Rio and all that the mystique that famous city implies.
Pleasantly fatigued after three wonderful days, the Red Rippers were
on their way again.

The ORI complete, the fun of shellback initiations, a memory and
the delights of Rio put away for recall on a quiet night at sea,
the Red Rippers devoted long days to the business at hand, North
Vietnam.

In early July FORRESTAL arrived at Subic Bay, R.P. The few days
in port were devoted to jungle survival school and final briefings on
Yankee Station Operations. Squadron aircrews were each flying two
missions per day and were being kept in the air by a well-tuned and
skillful maintenance department. The initial four days on Yankee
Station saw the squadron keeping well ahead of the ever increasing
tempo of operations. The FORRESTAL/Air Wing SEVENTEEN team was per-
forming as the well-trained fighting unit it, in fact, now was.

Each day, as experience increased, the strikes drew closer to

the heartland of North Vietnam. Then disaster. 29 July was a bright, sunny day; the morning's second strike was ready to be launched. In two minutes, from an undetermined cause, all the strike planes were transformed from a ready-to-be-launched strike group into a roaring, exploding holocaust. The toll was heavy. The ship lost 134 men and among those, the Red Rippers counted 47 of their own. In addition to those killed, hundreds more were seriously injured and half of the air wing's planes were lost. The ship suffered crippling damage that prevented her from continuing operations.

The men of FORRESTAL and Air Wing SEVENTEEN distinguished themselves during those tragic hours with acts of bravery and self-sacrifice. Pending now are twenty awards for men of the Red Rippers; some still with us, others a proud memory.

The FORRESTAL and Air Wing SEVENTEEN effected emergency repairs in Cubi Point and set out on the long voyage home. As the shock and fatigue wore off, the Red Rippers' traditional spirit soon started thoughts and plans for the future.

On the final leg home Commander J.S. CLARE relieved Commander A.C. DERRICK and became the fortieth Commanding Officer of the Red Rippers.

Home at last on 14 September 1967, FORRESTAL arrived in Norfolk. The welcome was unsurpassed. The squadron wives decorated an adjoining ship with a huge banner replete with the squadron insignia and a welcome home message.

After a short stand down and leave period, the Red Rippers received new airplanes, actually vintage models, but the squadron was

back in the air and more determined than ever to turn adversity into promise.

During the Autumn months at Oceana, the squadron, already a well-trained unit, remained intact and continued sharpening old skills. Through the early winter the Red Rippers planned another bombing deployment, this time to NAAS Fallon, Nevada. Hopefully it will be an even more fruitful bombing deployment than last years trip to Yuma, and start the coming year on a successful note.