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FIGHTING SQUADRON SIXTY-THREE  
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FF13-7/A9-3  
SR:rep  
Serial:06

**DECLASSIFIED**

1 April 1949

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From: Commanding Officer, Fighting Squadron SIXTY THREE (VF-63).  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Attn: Aviation History Unit  
Op-519B).  
Subject: Quarterly Historical Report.  
Reference: (a) ACL 22-46.  
(b) ACL 71-46.  
(c) Manual for Historical Officers (NavAer 00-25Q-26).  
Enclosure: (A) Chronology and Narrative.

1. In accordance with references (a), (b), and (c), enclosure (A) is forwarded herewith.

DECLASSIFIED - OPNAV INST 5500.30  
BY 9/C DATE 1-2-94

W. H. IRELAND  
By direction

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CHRONOLOGY & NARRATIVE

1. Commissioned - 27 July 1948, Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia.
2. Commanding Officer - LCDR. Malcolm W. CAGLE, USN, of Knoxville, Tenn.
3. Moved to NAAS, Oceana, Virginia on 20 January 1949. Boarded USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42) on 21 February 1949 for four (4) weeks Atlantic Fleet Command Exercises in Caribbean and at Vieques Island. Returned to NAAS Oceana, Virginia on 20 March 1949.
4. Assigned F3F-2 aircraft.

1 January 1949, found Fighting Squadron SIXTY THREE with its aircraft grounded pending the determination of the cause of the sudden and complete power failures that this and other commands had experienced during the past few months. After checking poppet valves, fuel feed valves, rotary idle valves, and fuel pumps, VF-63 got in the air again the middle of the month in time to move with baggage to NAAS Oceana, Virginia on 20 January 1949. On 14 February 1949 the squadron began carrier qualifications on the USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42), and on 21 February stood out of Hampton Roads aboard the "FDR" for four weeks in the Caribbean and at Vieques--the Atlantic Fleet Command Exercises. Everything was running smoothly (reference is primarily to the F3F-2) until 1 March when, 15 minutes after a predawn launch, Ens. Marvin E. RUSSELL, USN, experienced a sudden and complete power failure. This was the second such failure for this pilot in five months, and for the second time in five months, Ens. RUSSELL went for an involuntary swim. He was picked up by the "FDR's" helicopter and was back aboard the carrier 25 minutes after the first Mayday call. VF-63 had two section liberty in Trinidad from 7 to 11 March, and spent 15 and 16 March in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. During the entire cruise, VF-63 flew CAP (both over the target and over the formation) coordinated attacks, strikes, close air support, and ASP hops. On 20 March 1949, VF-63 launched for the beach and two hours and fifteen minutes later landed at NAAS Oceana, Virginia. With the squadron Baker allotment cut, and the high cost of operations the previous four weeks, VF-63 "waits out" the remainder of the quarter in a grounded status.

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1 July 1949

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To: Chief of Naval Operations. (Attn: Aviation History Unit  
OP-519B).

Subject: Quarterly Historical Report.

References: (a) ACL 22-46.  
(b) ACL 71-46.  
(c) Manual for Historical Officers (NavAer 00-25Q-26).

Enclosure: (A) Chronology and Narrative.

1. In accordance with references (a), (b), and (c), enclosure (A) is forwarded herewith.

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BY.....J/L DATE 1-2-87

  
M. W. CAGLE

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CHRONOLOGY

1. Commissioned - 27 July 1948, Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia.
2. Commanding Officer - Lieutenant Commander Malcolm W. CAGLE, USN., from Knoxville, Tenn.
3. Boarded USS MIDWAY (CVB-41) for four (4) day SecNav cruise from 6-9 April 1949. 27 April, a single day's operation with the USS MIDWAY (CVB-41)--demonstration for Armed Forces Staff College. 1-4 May on board the USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42)--demonstration for Armed Forces Staff College. 7 May, a single day's operation on board the USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42)--demonstration for Armed Forces Food Institute. 24 May, single day's operation aboard the USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42)--demonstration for Armed Forces Industrial College. 6 June, participated in coordinated attack on TG-61. 20 June, single day's operation on board USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42)--demonstration for SecNav guests on Civilian Orientation Cruise. 27 June, on board USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42) for two (2) weeks Reserve Cruise to New York.
4. Assigned F8F-2 aircraft.

NARRATIVE

On 6 April, Fighting Squadron SIXTY THREE went aboard the USS MIDWAY (CVB-41) for a four day SecNav cruise, demonstrating the versatility of a sea-going air arm to the guests of the Secretary. The cruise went well, and on 9 April VF-63 flew back to its home field, NAAS Oceana, Virginia. For the next few days emphasis was laid on air-to-air gunnery, rockets, and fuel consumption checks. On 27 April VF-63 joined Air Group SIX for a single days demonstration aboard the MIDWAY for the Armed Forces Staff College--this demonstration, and the single day operations that followed were short cruises designed to give prominent guests (both civilian and members of the Armed Forces) a first-hand look at carrier operations. Again on 1 May, sixteen pilots and planes loaded aboard the USS FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42) for another demonstration cruise for the Armed Forces Staff College--which lasted four days this time. The squadron returned to Oceana, on 4 May, and on 7 May flew out to the FDR for a single days operation to show naval aviation to the members of the Armed Forces Food Institute. Operations on the beach continued through this period with emphasis on gunnery, bombing, rockets, and tactics, and on 24 May, sixteen Bearcats were again flown to the FDR for a single day's demonstration for the Armed Forces Industrial College. On Sunday, 29 May, four of the squadron F8F's were flown to Goldsboro, N. C., to participate in a "fly-over" Memorial Day show. On 6 June Task Force 61

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was just off the Virginia Capes, and this squadron joined in a coordinated attack on the force--high priority target was the "Mighty MO". 9 and 10 June were "Operation Blackjack" days--days in which the Atlantic Coast Radar Net was given an operational test. Having four Bearcats airborne in 20 seconds to intercept a high altitude "Bogey" is considered a record. During the week beginning 13 June, eighteen pilots began work on night field carrier landing practice. On 20 June this command participated in the coordinated attack on the ROOSEVELT--another single day's demonstration cruise--this time for the Secretary of the Navy Civilian Orientation Group. Upon the squadron's return to Oceana that same day, it was decided that the maximum number of pilots who could be night carrier qualified was only eight--so the week of 20-24 June was spent concentrating on night FCLP for the chosen eight. On the 27th of June, the Reserve Cruise began--VF-63 flew seven of her night fliers out that day, and began day refresher landings. The remaining pilots and planes awaited orders at Oceana to fly out to the ship after night qualifications. On the evening of 30 June, ENS. M. E. RUSSELL, USNR, sent fiscal 1949 on its way with an array of sparks as he plowed through the FDR's "fences" during a night qualification landing. This was the first time this command has had the opportunity to evaluate the anti-buffet helmet. ENS. RUSSELL's plane flipped over on its back when it crashed into the barriers, but he crawled out unscratched--except for a deep dent in the back of his helmet. It is felt that the helmet and, of course, his shoulder straps prevented serious or fatal injury. The helmets suddenly have become more comfortable, and are not nearly as hot as they have been--the pilots of Fighting Squadron SIXTY THREE are very happy to have the pleasure of wearing them.

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New York, New York



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MAR 10 1950

From: Commanding Officer, Fighting Squadron SIXTY THREE.  
To: Chief of Naval Operations (Aviation History Unit).  
Subject: Semi-annual Historical Report for period 1 July 1949 -  
31 December 1949.  
Reference: (a) ACL 18-49.  
Enclosure: (A) Subject report.

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosure (A) is  
submitted herewith.



L. W. S. CUMMINS  
By direction

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BY 916 DATE 1-2-87

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New York, New York



CHRONOLOGY:

1. Commanding Officer: LCDR. Malcolm W. CAGLE, USN, 27 July 1948 to date.
2. Attached to Air Group SIX, Air Force, Atlantic Fleet.
3. 1 July-8 July temporarily based aboard the USS F. D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42) for Reserve Cruise to New York, N. Y. 8 July - 27 October temporarily based at U.S. NAAS, Oceana, Virginia. 27 October - 22 November, temporarily based aboard USS F. D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42) for three weeks Northern Cruise. 22 November - 31 December temporarily based at U.S. NAAS, Oceana, Virginia.
4. Assigned F8F-2 aircraft.

NARRATIVE:

Fighting Squadron SIXTY THREE moved into the second half of the 1949 calendar year, still aboard the USS F. D. ROOSEVELT (CVB-42), for a two weeks Reserve Cruise to New York City. The period afloat was spent in simulated strikes at the ROOSEVELT, flying CAP for the ROOSEVELT, and simulated Carrier Controlled Approaches. The squadron returned to its temporary quarters ashore at U.S. NAAS, Oceana, Virginia on 8 July, 1949 to carry out its routine of maintenance and engage in type instrument training with the planes available for flight. Other activities during this period included group strikes, a coordinated attack on TF-61 - high priority target, the USS MISSOURI on cruise with 2400 Midshipmen aboard, night section tactics, and an Administrative Inspection by ComAirLant on 27 July which was also the first Commissioning Anniversary of Fighting Squadron SIXTY THREE. August brought replacement pilots to the squadron for the five "plank-owners" who were leaving. The new Executive Officer,

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NARRATIVE (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Commander T. J. BALL, USN, reported aboard on 2 August. The squadron remained ashore, engaged in normal training exercises of FCIP, night FCIP, type instruments, familiarization for the new pilots, with the main emphasis being placed on air-to-air gunnery. An attack against the USS MISSOURI and participation in Operation CAMID IV marked the highlights for August. September brought increased activity for the Gunnery Department. All pilots were scheduled for gunnery flights as often as possible to better their proficiency with the Mk 6 Fire Control System in preparation for formal exercises. In the middle of the month, the squadron provided a CAP for the USS MISSOURI when she arrived off the Capes returning from Midshipmen Cruise, and then began preparations for cold weather operations inside the Arctic Circle. October brought formal exercises in gunnery, training for cold weather operations, carrier and instrument qualifications, GCA practice, and night FCIP ending in Fighting SIXTY THREE's loading aboard the ROOSEVELT for the three week 2nd. Task Fleet Northern Cruise. November brought interesting developments concerning the problems inherent to operations in cold weather. Even such hazardous conditions as landings with 68 knots relative wind across the deck left SIXTY THREE with only two minor accidents. The tour at sea ended on 22 November when the squadron returned to Oceana. For the remainder of the year, operating schedules were necessarily light due to the leave period and transfer of senior pilots who

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NARRATIVE (CONT'D)

were replaced mainly by officers fresh from the Training Command.

The main influence on the operations of Fighting SIXTY THREE was the rapid turn-over of officer personnel. The loss of half of the squadron's experienced personnel was noticeable not only in the administrative operation of the various departments, but also in the degree of Combat Readiness which Fighting SIXTY THREE was able to maintain. Most of the replacement pilots were the proud possessors of brand new Navy Wings, and a period of indoctrination and familiarization was necessary to insure safe operations. Time and further training will provide the "green" pilots with the experience with which to meet the rigid standards the rest of the squadron expects them to maintain in both flight and administrative capacities.

It would be highly appropriate if Fighting SIXTY THREE could advance several theories and suggestions with supporting statistics concerning the Mk 6 Fire Control System since their official score in formal gunnery exercises was the highest to date for any unit in the Atlantic Fleet. The only gunnery statistics available for the squadron pilots are for the Mk 6 System only since that type sight was installed on the F8F-2 aircraft when received. Interviews with pilots whose gunnery experience includes combat, however, shows the esteem in which they hold this new sight. Early scores in gunnery practice were naturally low, but these scores improved with each firing. No one

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NARRATIVE (CONT'D)

pilot can be cited as a consistently high scorer, but several had better-than-average percentages of hits with high spot scores scattered through the gunnery syllabus. The concensus among the pilots is that record scores can be obtained with the Mk 6 sight after the pilot becomes familiar with how to use it. The only method of familiarization known is repeated and frequent gunnery practice with "dry" runs substituted when funds are too low to permit actual firing. Two conclusions concerning operation of the Mk 6 System have been reached by the members of the squadron after various experiments:

(1) It is a wise procedure to leave the sight caged until after the reversal to prevent tumbling the gyro; and (2) a slight leading of the target with the ranging "pips" (i.e. a slight spacing between the edge of the target and the inner edge of the ranging markers) produces more hits since there is approximately .4 second delay in the computing mechanism.

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