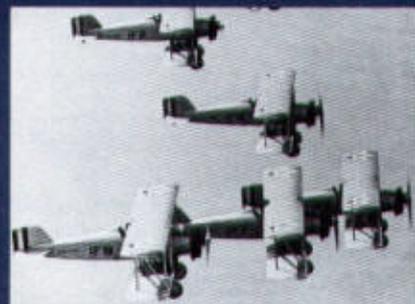




Tophatters Turn 80



The Tophatters have flown many different aircraft in their 80-year history, including (counterclockwise from above) the TS-1, F8C-4 *Helldiver*, SB2U-1, F-4B *Phantom II* and F-14A *Tomcat*.

By JO1 Joshua M. Hudson

The Tophatters of VF-14 will celebrate their 80th year of continuous active service this fall. As the U.S. Navy's oldest active duty squadron, the Tophatters have been around throughout most of Naval Aviation history. Established in September 1919 at NAS San Diego, Calif., the squadron has changed its designation 14 times and flown more than 22 different types of aircraft. The Tophatters got their carrier experience aboard the Navy's first carrier, *Langley* (CV 1). Then Fighting Plane Squadron 1, flying TS-1s, established a long-standing record for carrier landings in a single day, 127. The tophat insignia was originally adopted in 1927 to symbolize that the squadron was the very best and to boost the morale of the aviators who were flying the challenging Boeing FB-5.

In 1929, the squadron was assigned aboard *Saratoga* (CV 3) where it began as a fighter squadron and transitioned to a bomber squadron. Throughout the 1930s, the Tophatters flew various aircraft before being transferred to *Ranger* (CV 2) in the Atlantic Fleet. During WW II, the squadron distinguished itself during action in North Africa and Norway. It switched coasts again in November 1944 to the Pacific



PHC Neal Crowe

Fleet and participated in various campaigns. Postwar, while flying F4U Corsairs in 1949, the Tophatters were redesignated VF-14. The squadron adopted the F-14A Tomcat in June 1975. The Tophatters have since seen combat in Operation Urgent Fury over Grenada, operations off the coast of Lebanon, and countless sorties over Iraq during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The squadron is currently home-based at NAS Oceana, Va. ✪



PH1 Michael D. Flynn