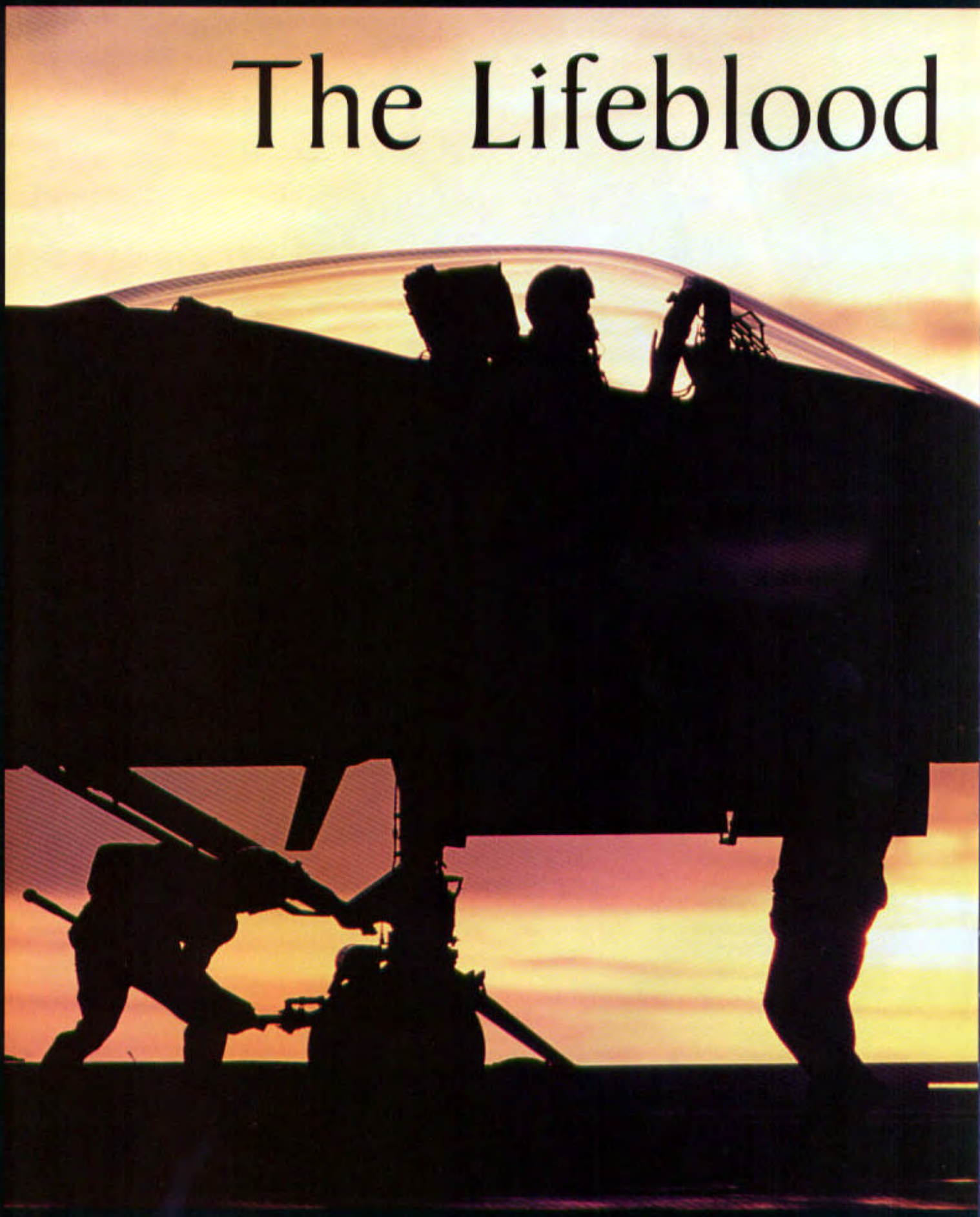
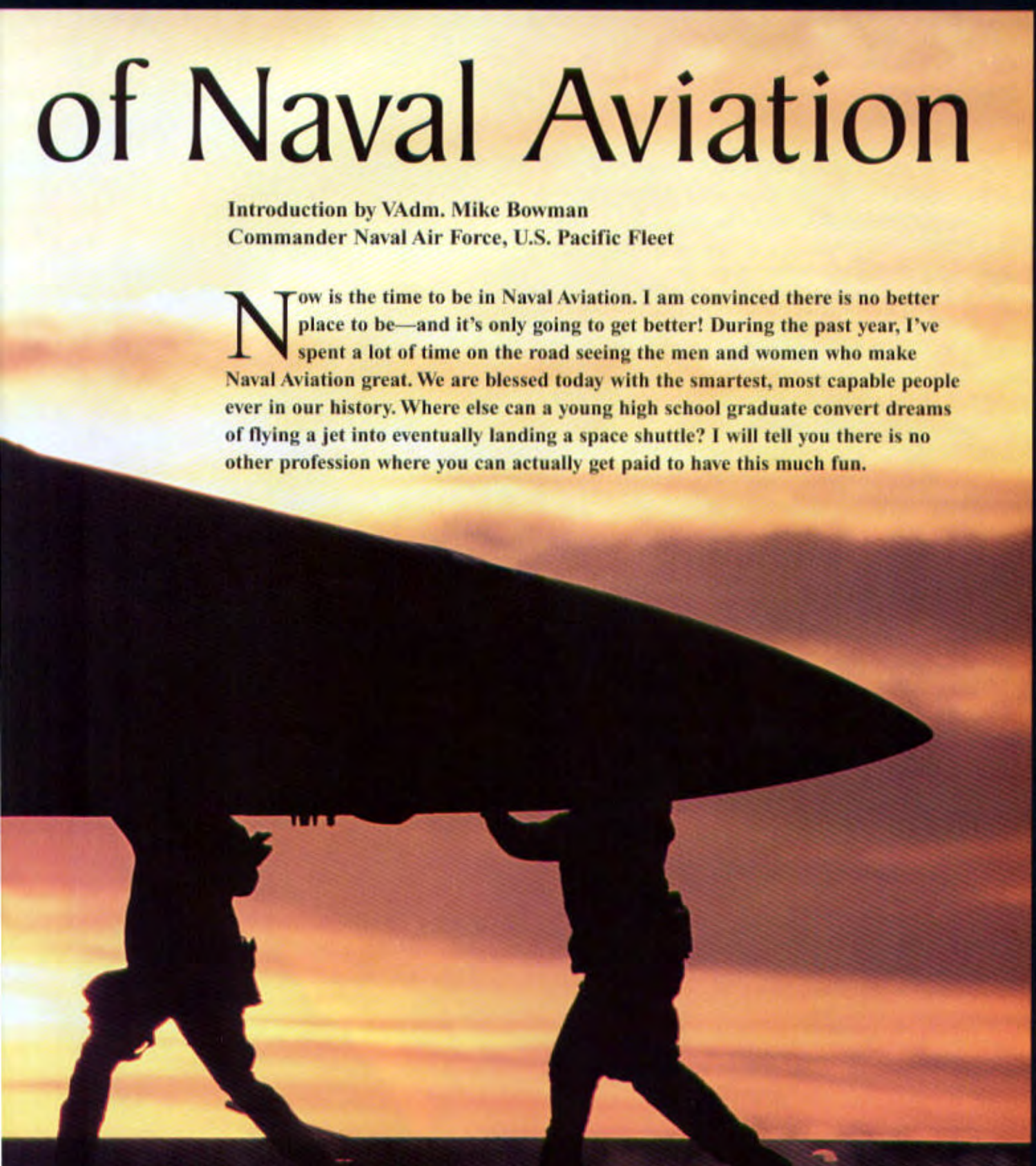
The Lifeblood



# of Naval Aviation

Introduction by VAdm. Mike Bowman
Commander Naval Air Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet

Now is the time to be in Naval Aviation. I am convinced there is no better place to be—and it's only going to get better! During the past year, I've spent a lot of time on the road seeing the men and women who make Naval Aviation great. We are blessed today with the smartest, most capable people ever in our history. Where else can a young high school graduate convert dreams of flying a jet into eventually landing a space shuttle? I will tell you there is no other profession where you can actually get paid to have this much fun.



F/A-18 photo © Erik Hildebrandt

I am impressed with the direction we are heading as we enter the next millenium. Our future is bright, and our civilian and top uniformed leadership is fully engaged in ensuring it stays that way. The new defense spending bill has been passed and signed into law. It equalizes retirement benefits across the force and gives the armed forces the largest pay raise we have seen since the early 1980s—4.8 percent, effective 1 January—and significant additional increases for targeted groups in July 2000. This is an incredible affirmation of the American public's appreciation of their military service members.

The "fun" of Naval Aviation is on the rise. Our senior leadership is committed to empowering our commanding officers and strengthening the chain of command. COs can once again lead, without looking over their shoulders. Through the Chief of Naval Operation's Inter-deployment Training Cycle Reduction Initiative, we are returning time to commanding officers—time that they can use to benefit their commands as they see fit. The success of this empowerment is already paying great dividends and will help us become an even stronger force.

As we enter the next century, our mission remains clear and as crucial as ever. We in Naval Aviation should be very proud that every time we take to the skies, over land or over sea, what we do has a significant effect on world events. In this past year alone, Naval Aviation has been critically involved in all the hot spots on this globe. We continue our presence in the Arabian Gulf, flying in support of Operations Northern and Southern Watch. Naval Aviation played an integral part in the operations flown over Kosovo. Navy and Marine Corps aviation forces have also been critical links in performing humanitarian operations in Africa

Photos of VAdm. Bowman and F/A-18 by David Peters

and Southeast Asia. These operations highlight the adaptability and flexibility of Naval Aviation assets, and again underscore the capabilities of our naval forces. In time of crisis, it is the United States Navy and Marine Corps team that sustains our nation's ability to rapidly respond around the world.

Our mission success, as it has always been, is primarily due to the dedication and hard work of our officers, Sailors and Marines and their families. Each and every individual on the Naval Aviation team contributes to our effectiveness. I thank ALL of you for everything you do and I hope that your enthusiasm will continue to grow. It is truly the power behind this wonderful thing we call Naval Aviation!

Keep your knots up!

The life force that flows through every aircraft comes from the people who fly, maintain, manage and support our winged instruments of lethality. The following interviews showcase people from a wide cross section of the personnel spectrum—from carrier CO to wrench turner. As the century draws to a close, *NANews* staffers Wendy Leland, JO1 Josh Hudson and JOSN Amy Pittmann captured a glimpse of what it means to be a professional in Naval Aviation.

AMS1 David Brown

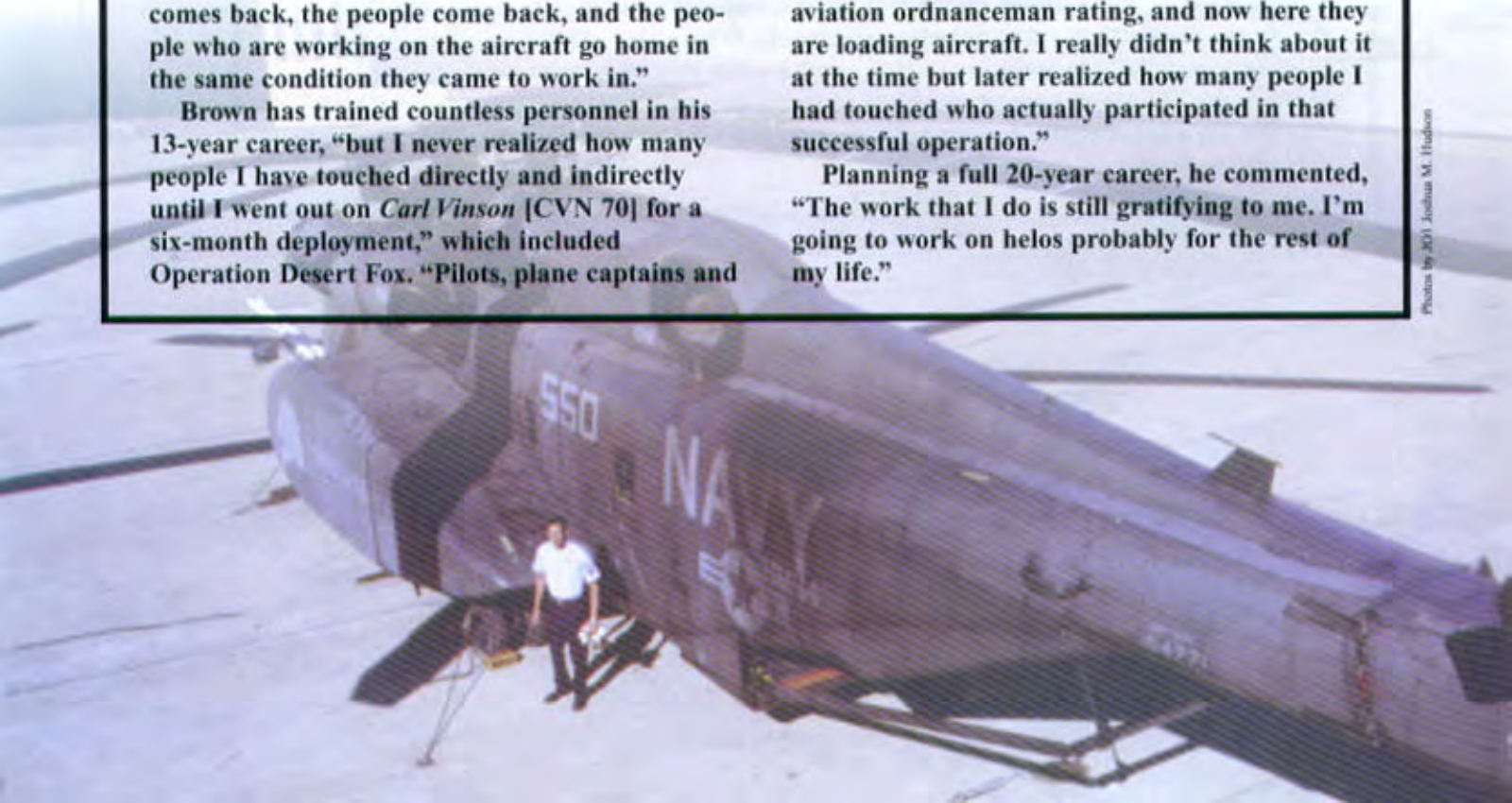
HM-14

AMS1 David Brown, a quality assurance representative (QAR) with Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron (HM) 14, NS Norfolk, Va., "always wanted to be an aircraft mechanic, and the Navy gave me the best opportunity to do that." It also gave him the opportunity to learn many different airframes, from the P-3 *Orion* and F-14 *Tomcat* to the SH-60 *Seahawk* and the MH-53E *Sea Dragon,* with previous tours in HM-14 and HM-15. "I liked the HM community, and I requested to come back here because out of all the aircraft I've ever worked on, this one is my favorite."

Although his job as QAR puts him further from the wrenches he loves as an aviation structural mechanic, it's key to HM-14's operations. "I make sure that when an aircraft goes flying it comes back, the people come back, and the people who are working on the aircraft go home in the same condition they came to work in."

Brown has trained countless personnel in his 13-year career, "but I never realized how many people I have touched directly and indirectly until I went out on *Carl Vinson* [CVN 70] for a six-month deployment," which included Operation Desert Fox. "Pilots, plane captains and other air framers that I trained were there. Those guys out there launching that helo, I trained them. And the guys working on the engine on that E-2 [*Hawkeye*], I trained them. Some of the ordnancemen lifting those bombs, I helped them get their courses done so they could go for the aviation ordnanceman rating, and now here they are loading aircraft. I really didn't think about it at the time but later realized how many people I had touched who actually participated in that successful operation."

Planning a full 20-year career, he commented, "The work that I do is still gratifying to me. I'm going to work on helos probably for the rest of my life."



Photos by JO1 Joshua M. Hudson

Ltjg. Jim Flanagan

VF-143

JO1 Joshua M. Hudson

Naval Aviation was the first choice for Lieutenant (jg) Jim Flanagan upon his graduation from the Naval Academy in 1996. "I had wanted to fly almost my whole life. When I was about 5 years old I saw WW I fighter planes at a local air show, and from that time on I was hooked." He reported to Fighter Squadron 143, NAS Oceana, Va., in May for his first operational tour as an F-14 *Tomcat* radar intercept officer.

"The old standbys of radar, navigation and communication still apply, and I'm generally the primary talker on the radio. I run the radar system and the associated forward-looking infrared and laser targeting, with support from the pilot. I back him up in his job and he backs me up in mine—definitely a real crew concept. It's a lot to learn but a lot of fun, and a really challenging environment. It's impossible to be bored!

"I've already done things routinely I never imagined I would ever do—just seeing the ground from 25,000 feet or going supersonic. Where else are you going to get that kind of experience? In tactical aviation you have the opportunity to do things no one else can do. There are a lot of sacrifices to be made and it's very difficult to get here, but you see a lot of really amazing things. And there's more to come; I've only begun to scratch the surface."

Major Timothy Royston

VMFA-321

Photos by JO1 Joshua M. Hudson

Selected Reservist Major Timothy M. Royston has been an F/A-18 *Hornet* pilot with the VMFA-321 *Hell's Angels* at NAF Washington D.C., since 1994. As a civilian, he is a pilot for Federal Express.

"One main difference between an active duty and a reserve Marine," Royston explained, "is that reservists have to balance their schedules between their family, their civilian job and their Marine Corps job. It takes a person who can manage time well to do it responsibly."

What are the differences between flying civilian aircraft and military fighter aircraft? "A lot of the challenges of flying are the same," he said, "but in civilian flying, takeoff and landing are the critical phases of flight. In F/A-18s, we worry about that the least. The tactical mission is 90 percent of our job."

A veteran of Desert Storm, Royston's concern for the future is training. "The drop in funding for training has made us adapt to less-than-optimum training conditions. We still get the job done, but if I could change one thing for tomorrow's Marines it would be more training funds."