



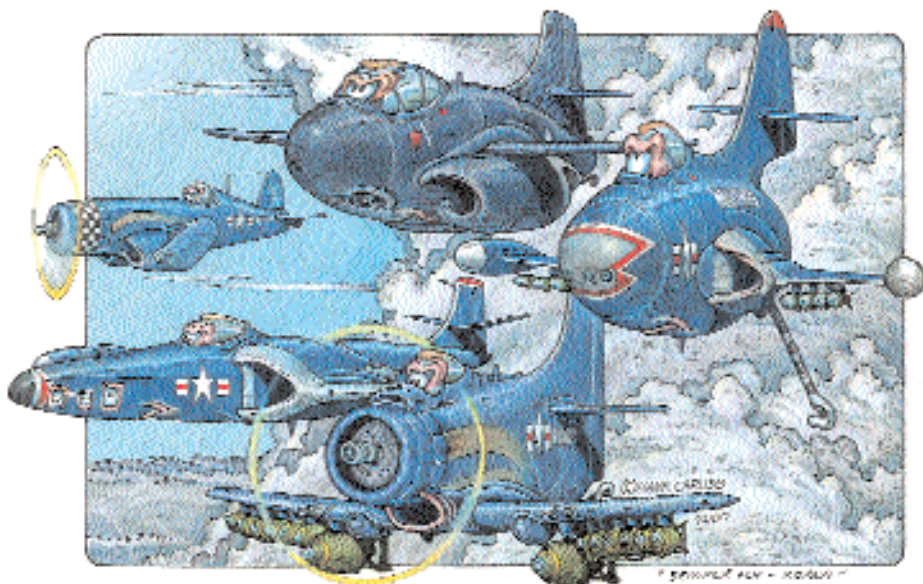
© HANK CARUSO 2008

"GATOR FLIGHT"

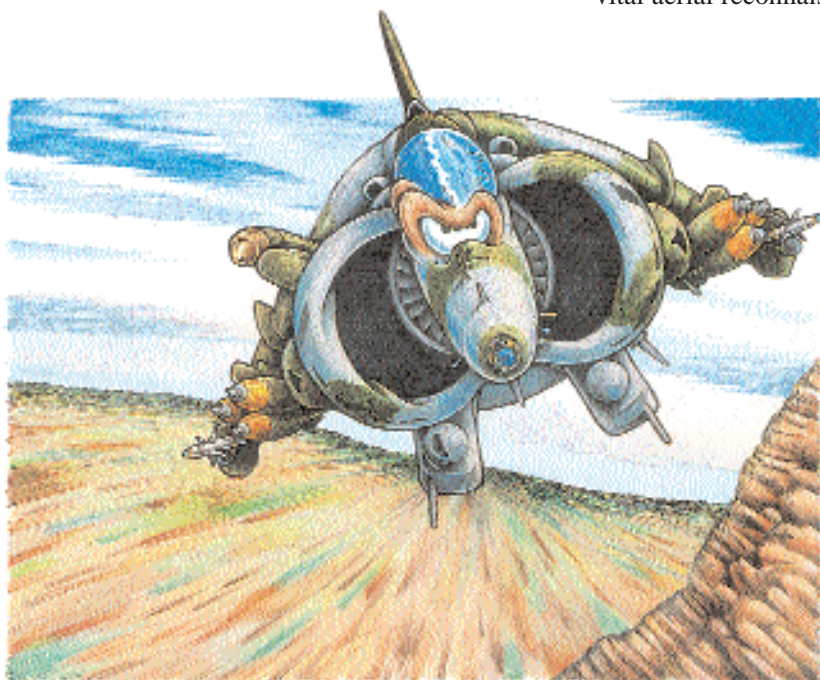
Semper Fly!

Illustrations and Text © Hank Caruso

The Gator's Teeth. As we enter the new millennium, Marine Corps Aviation is going through a growth spurt. Facing page: Some aircraft, such as the F/A-18 Hornet and CH-53 Sea Stallion, will grow older more or less gracefully with evolutionary upgrades. Others, like the KC-130J Hercules and the four-bladed UH-1Y "Huey" and AH-1Z Super Cobra, are the beneficiaries of major makeovers. And some, including the elderly CH-46 Sea Knight and spunky AV-8B Harrier II, will be phased out as they are replaced by the revolutionary MV-22 Osprey and F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Newer and larger LHD amphibious assault ships will replace the LHAs of the "Gator Navy" as seagoing roosts for many of the Corps' birds. And what about the aging but indispensable EA-6B Prowler? No one knows.



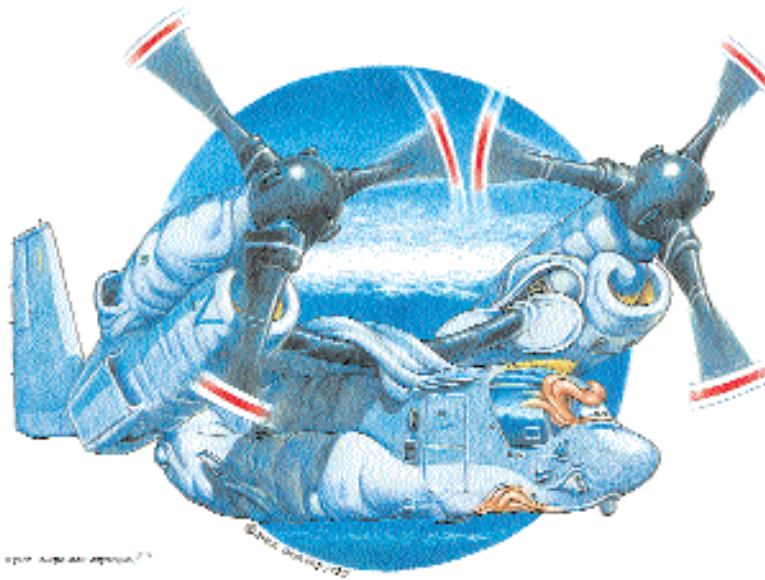
Corps Values—Korea. By the time the Korean War ended, Marine Corps Aviation was well on its way to becoming a modern jet force. The new Grumman F9F Panther (right) joined the venerable Vought F4U Corsair (top left) and Douglas AD Skyraider (bottom) in their ground attack missions. The Douglas F3D Skynight (top) flew night-fighter missions using advanced airborne radar, while the McDonnell F2H-2P Banshee (bottom left) provided vital aerial reconnaissance.



Harrier's In Hot! The AV-8B Harrier II could well be a poster child for Marine Corps Aviation. With its vertical/short takeoff and landing capabilities, it can operate from small-deck carriers and unimproved fields. It can deliver a wide variety of ordnance to support close-in ground operations. And with its extraordinary vectored thrust capabilities, it's a major threat in air combat. Eventually, it will be replaced by the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, but until then no other U.S. military service flies anything like it.

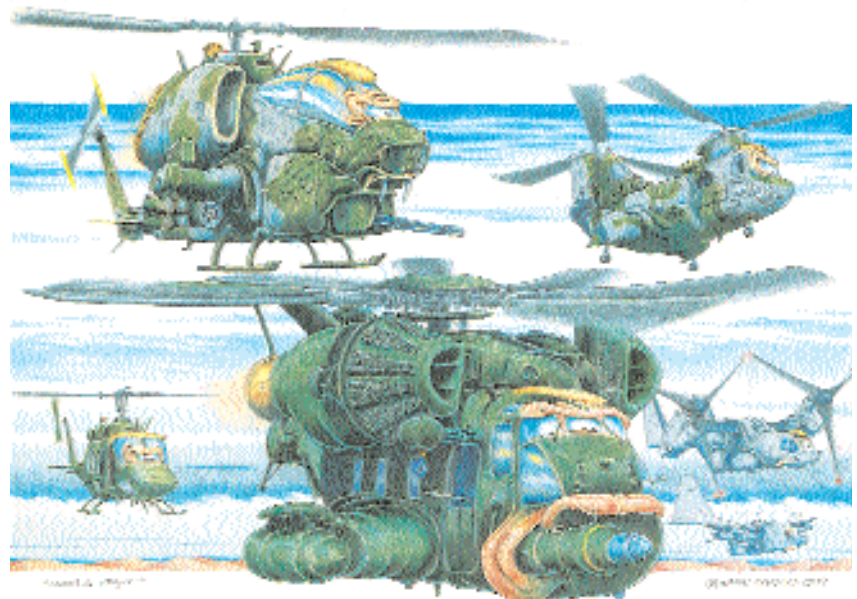
Palms Away! NAS Miramar, Calif., was known as “Fightertown USA,” the home of TOPGUN, the Navy’s Fighter Weapons School. All of this changed in 1997 when the base became MCAS Miramar. The base is now home to the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, whose “palm pilots” have introduced the area’s trademark vegetation to a new breed of aviator and aircraft, including the F/A-18 Hornet (left), CH-53 Sea Stallion (below) and the occasional AV-8B Harrier II (right).

This Aerocature™ was created for the Marine Corps Aviation Association.



Tilt with an Attitude. Perhaps the MV-22 Osprey should be renamed Phoenix since this remarkable and controversial aircraft has twice risen from the ashes of skepticism and tragedy. Nevertheless, the Marine Corps is counting on the Osprey with its tilting prop-rotors to fill vital operational roles in the coming years. Currently, the MV-22 is undergoing a new round of flight tests to exorcise the demons lurking in unexplored regions of its unique flight envelope. Whatever the outcome, the Osprey is certain to leave its mark on aviation history.

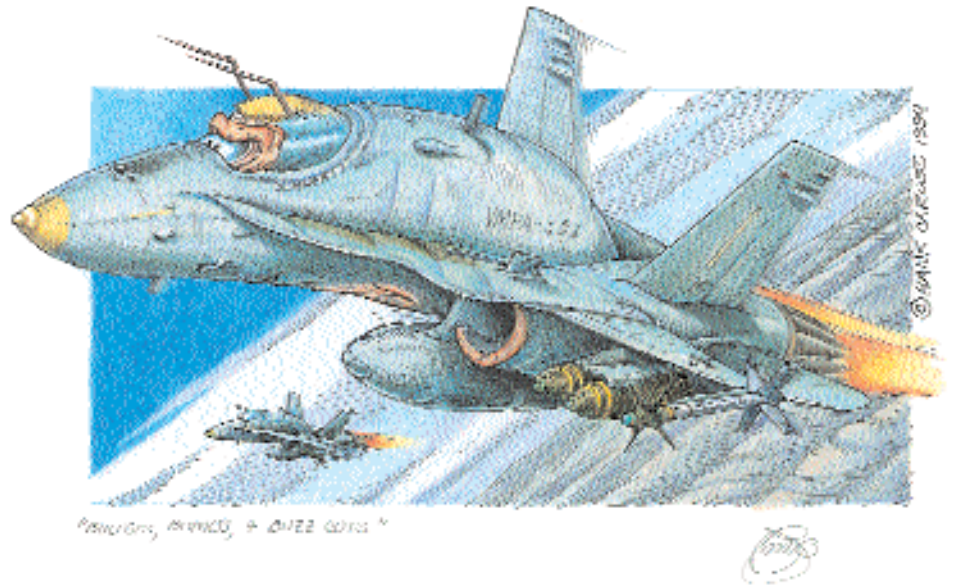
Semper Torque. Aircraft with spinning blades are indispensable to Marine Corps operations. The massive CH-53 Sea Stallion (bottom) moves troops and cargo in and out of harm’s way. The AH-1W Super Cobra gunship (top left) is a lethal chaperone for ground forces. The twin-rotor CH-46 Sea Knight (top right) ferries supplies and ordnance between ships at sea and transports assault troops. The KC-130 Hercules (bottom right) refuels Marine Corps and Navy aircraft in flight. The UH-1 “Huey” workhorse (bottom left) has a long history with the Corps, while the MV-22 Osprey (middle right) awaits its chance to serve.





Looking Out for Number One. Specially created for the Marine Corps Aviation Association, this Aerocature™ shows the diverse range of missions that Marine Corps Aviation fulfills in service to the nation. National interests are represented by the USAF F-106 (top) at one time flown by President George W. (note the posing of the aircraft) Bush. “He” is guarded by the F/A-18 Hornet (left) and the AH-1W Sea Cobra (below left). The VH-3 Sea King (below right) serves as *Marine One* when the President is aboard, while the EA-6B Prowler (right) provides vital electronic countermeasures protection.

Bullets, Bombs and Buzz Cuts. The Marine Corps’ big gun for now and the foreseeable future is the F/A-18 Hornet. The versatile aircraft can fight the bad guys both in the air and on the ground during the same mission. With the addition of night-vision goggles, Marine Corps Hornet drivers can fly their deadly missions regardless of where the sun is—or isn’t—in the sky.



The Greatest Meets the Latest. This Aerocature™ salutes the Marine Corps Aviation community, which has served the United States with consistent determination and professionalism since 1912. Although the aircraft have changed, the spirit and attitude of Marine Corps aviators, flight crew members and ground support personnel remain constant as the torch is passed to each new generation.