

Hank Caruso's Aerocatures™ Sketchbook

# Seabirds over Korea

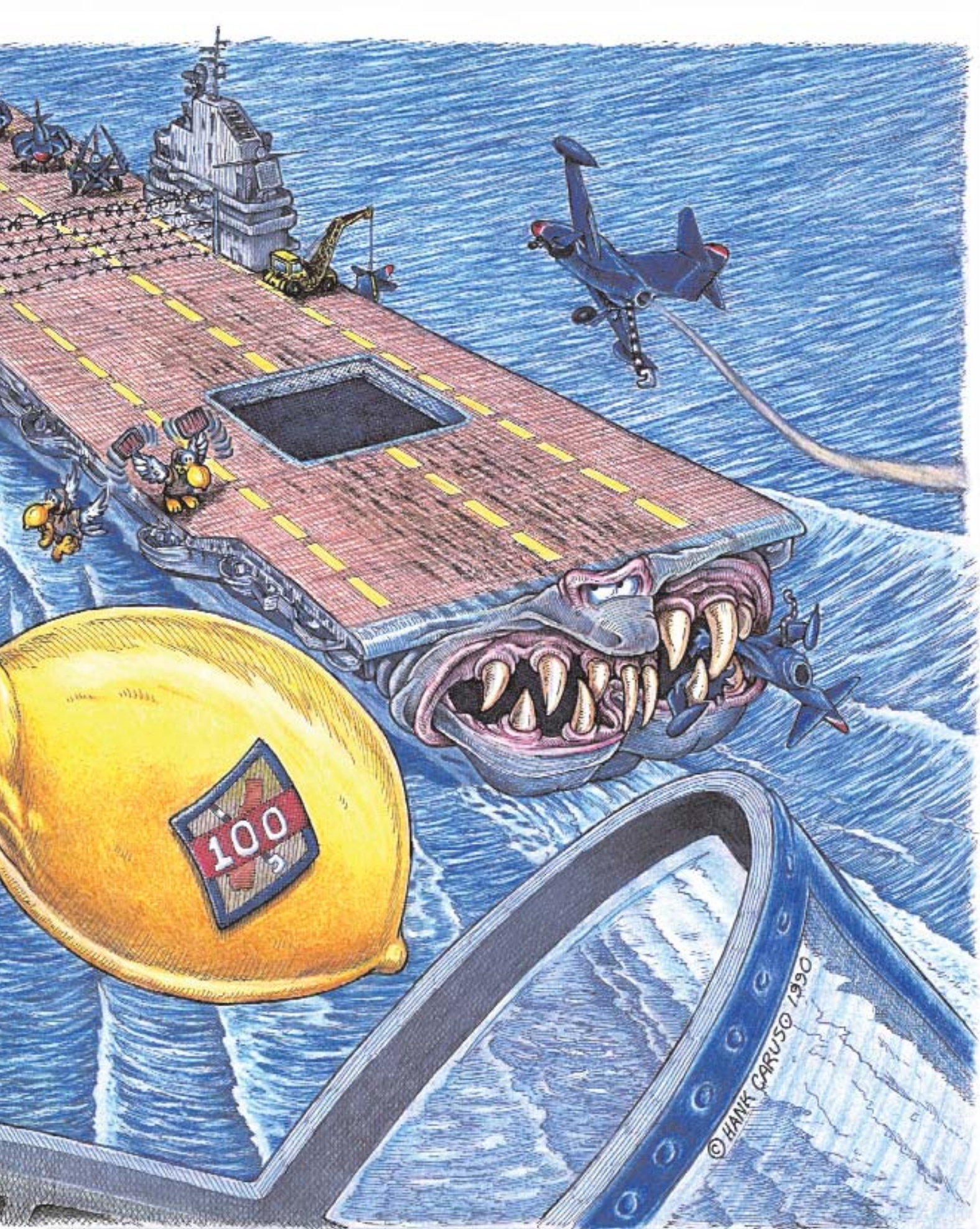
Art and Text © Hank Caruso, ASAA

The late 1940s and early 1950s were an exciting and dynamic time in the development of Navy and Marine Corps aviation. New jet aircraft designs were the darlings of flight test operations, straight-deck carriers were being pushed to the limits of their capabilities, and helicopters were being introduced for transport and rescue operations. In many ways the war in Korea was the combat test laboratory for evaluating the capabilities and limitations of these new designs and technology combinations. This sketchbook is a tribute to the Naval Aviators of that remarkable era.

## Ramp Monster

Trapping aboard a carrier is always fraught with potential peril and excitement. But during the birth of jet carrier aviation in the 1940s and 1950s, landing aboard the straight-deck carriers of the era took on added elements of pucker-inducing risk. Jets were underpowered and their engines were slow to respond to throttle movements. Operating procedures were still being developed. And the cramped, crowded decks were disasters waiting to happen. Aviators who earned Centurion status by dodging the ramp monster 100 times had truly accomplished something worth bragging about. (This Aerocature™ was created for the Tailhook Association's "Early Centurion" certificate.)

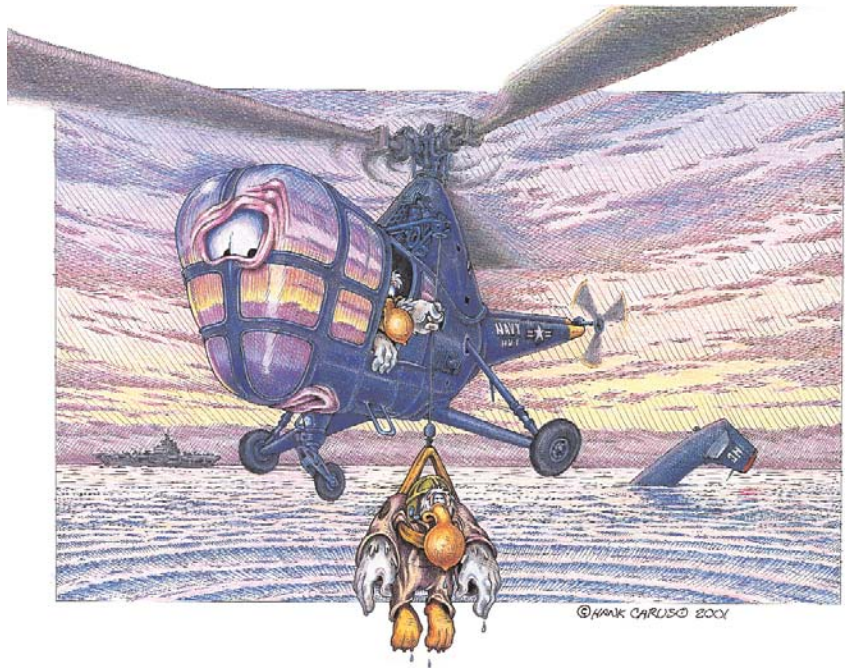






### Sink the Hwachon!

During the Korean War, attempts to destroy the robust Hwachon Dam with conventional bombs just didn't work; the dam was too strong and the water blunted the bombs' effect. On 1 May 1951, Douglas AD-4 Skyraiders from VA-195—subsequently known as the Dambusters—dropped Mk 13 aerial torpedoes to breach the dam. F4U Corsairs suppressed flak guns and F9F-2P Panthers provided damage assessment photography. (The artist thanks Cdr. Bob Bennett, USN (Ret.), one of the Dambusters who flew this amazing mission, for his inspiration and technical assistance.)



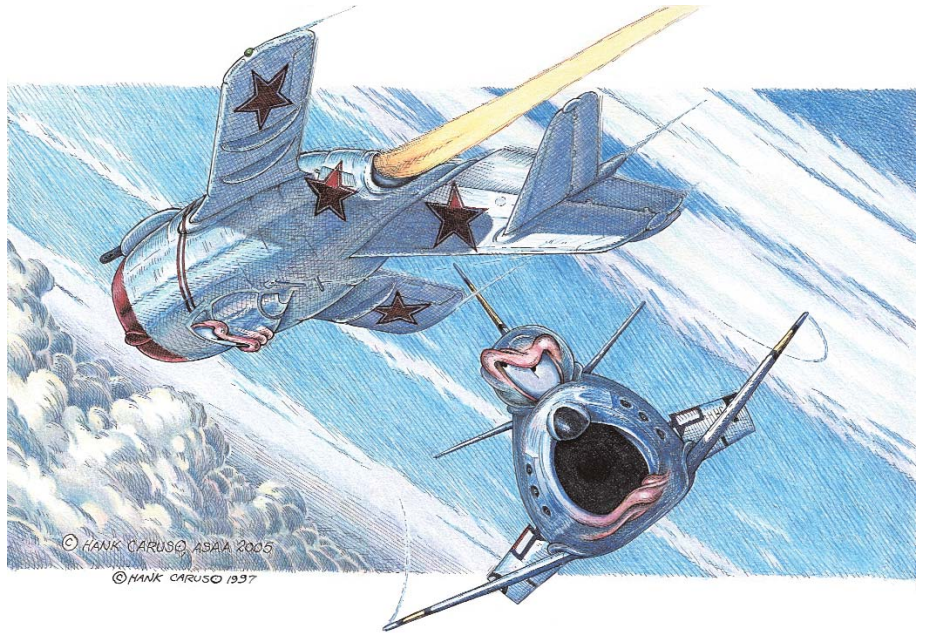
### Rinse, Spin, Drip Dry

Although described conceptually several hundred years ago, the helicopter didn't come into widespread operational use with the U.S. military until the Korean War. The four-seat Sikorsky HO3S-1 (S-51) Dragonfly was the

preeminent shipboard search and rescue helicopter during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Many injured ground troops and downed aviators owe their lives to this helicopter's unique capabilities and the courage of its flight crews.

## Knife Fight Over the Yalu

Jet air combat became a reality during the Korean War. The most widely recognized adversaries were the elegant North American F-86 Sabre and the spunky MiG 15. Both aircraft sported swept-wing designs derived from German WW II research. This new feature, combined with the power of jet engines, gave these aircraft performance capabilities far beyond their propeller-driven predecessors. In the end, the Sabre ruled the skies. But why is an Air Force fighter featured in this article? Because Navy and Marine Corps aviators downed more than two dozen MiGs while flying as exchange pilots with Air Force Sabre squadrons.



## Cats and Traps

The F9F Cougar was the first Grumman Aircraft Corporation “cat” to sport swept wings. Developed from the F9F Panther series, the Cougar was intended to give Naval Aviators more speed and maneuverability for air combat. Introduced too late to serve in the Korean War, it nevertheless became one of the mainstays of

carrier aviation during the 1950s. It is best known for its performances with the U.S. Navy’s famed Blue Angels Flight Demonstration Squadron in 1955–1956. Here, a Cougar with its hook down approaches for another trap.

