

The Further Adventures of
YOUTHLY PURESOME

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Screaming out of the sky, Puresome the Pitiless, Terror of the Air and ex-Yankee Air Pirate, searched for victims. The test hop on the mighty A-4B, dredged out of the Arizona desert and made ready to do battle with the wily Gomer, was complete. The more important business of jumping unsuspecting Florida ANG F-102s or the unwary A-4 separated from the herd was at hand.

Puresome had raised the test hop on aircraft coming out of maintenance to a high art. When his old squadron had decided to step up to brand-new A-7As, he had cheerfully declined and walked across the hangar to be an instructor in the Tinker Toy RAG. This had proved to be a bagger's paradise, because even if he was not scheduled to fly, he could often hang around the duty officer's desk and snivel a couple of hops. Being assigned to the maintenance department, Puresome could often pick up a couple of test hops as well. Despite the considerable number of clicks on his body's counting accelerometer and corresponding dent in his supply of Med Cruise skorch at the end of the day, Puresome was sprinting for the flight time gold ahead of fellow bagger Worm, who had been temporarily stymied by unreasonable A-7 RAG types.

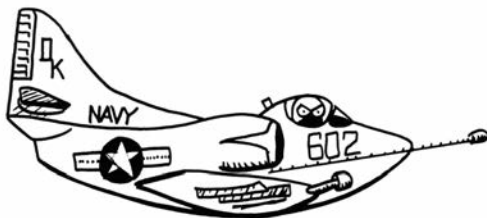
Bouncing the Spider

The cruel war was raging and ancient A-4Bs were filling breaches in the ranks of the more modern A-4Cs and Es. "Where are the 'Echoes' of yesterday?" Puresome wondered as more and more of the runty-nosed Scooters showed up.

But flying the prehistoric bird wasn't all bad. The needle-ball-airspeed usually worked, and below 2,000 lbs of gas, the "Bravo" compared well with the Echo and easily whupped the "Charlie" in aircraft-bending contests.

The Florida air around NAS Cecil Field was a target-rich environment. Puresome had honed his test-hop routine into a 30-minute thing of compact beauty, leaving some 30 minutes available to teach unwary aircraft to beware of the Puresome in the sun.

But today had been ratty. Other than the one square turn he was able to get out of an F-102 and an *Atoll* pass through a four-plane formation headed for Pinecastle, which had dutifully broken left and resumed after Puresome whoostled by, the morning had not been all that interesting. Since he didn't have gas enough to lurk around Cedar Key, another well-known choke point, Puresome reluctantly headed back to home plate.



THE TEST HOP ON THE MIGHTY A-4B... WAS COMPLETE, ... JUMPING F.A.N.G. F-102s... AT HAND.

But things started looking up shortly after he switched to tower frequency. *Sidewinder 404* called for takeoff on 27 Right, and Puresome recognized the voice as belonging to his pal Spider who was flying one of his old squadron's brand-new A-7As.

"Yee...haw."

Puresome immediately leveled off and headed west toward the field. High, the sun at his back and at perfect fighting weight, his eyes went all squinty.

Spider was an ex-squadronmate who had made the transition to Slufs and, in spite of being a LCDR, was a long-time particular pal. He had shown up as a replacement at the beginning of the second line period on

Yankee Station, then a bull LT coming back to sea duty. Spider blustered his way into the ready room, hoping to divert attending from his FNG status with noise. Spider waved his hands and carried on in front of a small group about how they used to do stuff back when he was a *Fighting Redcock*.

Prematurely salty LTJG Puresome was having none of it. Mindful of the rules of ascendancy of sea duty over shore duty pukes, he was especially offended that Spider didn't know enough to be humble in the presence of mighty warriors who had already fit the forces of evil. Puresome's mouth autoloading, cocked and fired.

"Yaaa, right! You boot!" he said with a sneer.

"Boot? ...Boot?" Spider sputtered in disbelief, his hands going unsynchronized and out of control. "I've got more time at high station than you've got in the NAVY!"

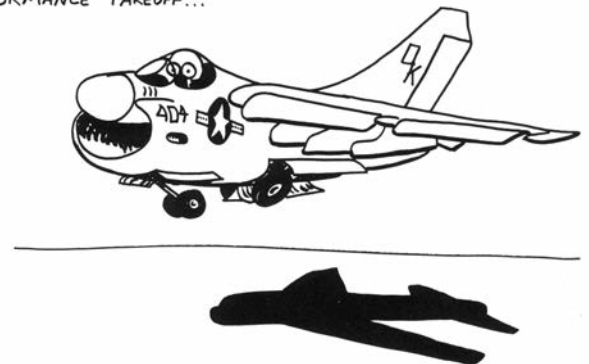
"Ya, and I've got more in the Phuc Yen GCA pattern than you've got in post-grad school!" Puresome interrupted. The potential game of smack 'em in the mouth was narrowly averted by the intervention of Captain Zoderly, boy SDO, and other less smarty types.

But Spider was a kindred spirit — he loved to fly — and it showed. Puresome came to really envy Worm for having Spider as his section lead. He was a good stick, a good leader and was not just a little nuts. So it wasn't too long before Puresome assigned Spider a place among the very elder gods and they became pals.

But now Puresome hung on the perch, watching Spider's A-7, fat with a full bag of gas, waddle down the runway and get airborne.

"Must have called for a low-performance takeoff," Puresome mused as he dropped the nose and crammed on the throttle.

MUST HAVE CALLED FOR A LOW PERFORMANCE TAKEOFF...



The lightly loaded Scooter picked up megawarp in the dive and Puresome rapidly overtook Spider from six o'clock low. Timing it just right, Puresome zoomed up from below and passed just in front of Spider's aircraft. Whoomp! Spider's life flashed before his eyes and his head whanged upside the windows as his plane passed through Puresome's jet wash.

"Etail!" Puresome sang out as he zoomed straight vertical and, keeping the g's on, barrel rolled around for a classic gunnery pass of great beauty. Spider, recovering, had dumped the nose of his thunder pig in an attempt to gain some smash.

But it was a slow thing, and Puresome relentlessly smoked in.

"Budda, budda, budda!" Puresome squeeze the trigger as the A-7 filled his gunsight.

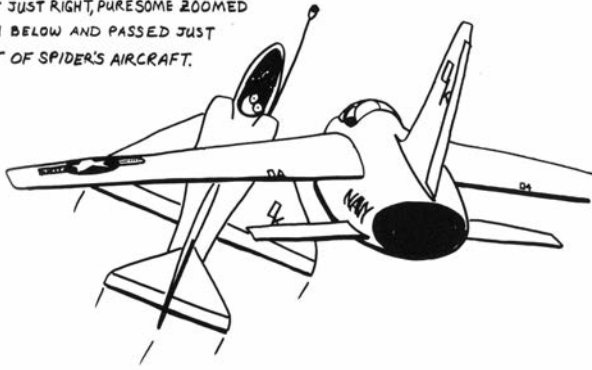
Once again, Puresome pulled vertical. But just before rolling over the top, he realized something was a bit wrong. The cockpit had mysteriously filled with smoke.

"Whut?" Puresome stuck his head inside and cleverly noted that the fire light was on.

"Whut?" thought Puresome again, closing the throttle. "This can't happen to me."

With his nose pointed straight up and his airspeed rapidly dwindling back toward the lower peg, the next order of business was to recover from

TIMING IT JUST RIGHT, PURESOME ZOOMED UP FROM BELOW AND PASSED JUST IN FRONT OF SPIDER'S AIRCRAFT.



the unusual attitude. Puresome eased the stick over and the nose fell through.

Foom! Spider's airplane swooshed by! After Puresome's initial attack, he had madly started dumping a great deal of gas over the Florida countryside and had pitched back into the fight with a vengeance. By now Puresome, somewhat distracted, was the grape and Spider was the plucker. As Puresome started regaining some airspeed and his nose started to come out of the dive, Spider scorched by again. Puresome was too preoccupied to notice that he was drinking simulated leaden death.

Puresome had leveled off and was trying to figure out where exactly he was. All the electrical instruments were dead and the wet compass was still madly wobbling around. Knowing he was west of the field somewhere, Puresome scientifically figured that he had to go "E" and, since it

was still morning, that was where the sun was. As he started turning in that direction, Spider roared by, having Puresome's ass and loving it.

"Jerbis Flinderbars! HEFOE! HEFOE!" Puresome yelled into his mask, holding his forearm across his helmet.

The good news was that the motor did not seem to be melting and ran OK with the power set at 88 percent. Cecil had to out there somewhere through the cockpit smoke and haze.

But the better news was that Spider had finally figured out that something was a bit wrong, and he joined on Puresome's left wing. Puresome whanged the glare shield with his open palm several times, then held his forearm across his helmet and held up five fingers, the signal for engine troubles. Spider nodded his head, understanding perfectly, and Puresome passed him the lead.

The wind had died down. Spider led Puresome to a straight-in approach to 9-Right at Cecil. After visually checking Puresome's gear, Spider broke off and Puresome put 110 mils on the gunsight to get a good hit on the runway. He taxied off the active and shut down among the flashing lights of fire trucks and the meat wagon before leaving the quietly smoking turd wagon as quickly and with as much style as possible.

Of course, the problem was a rat-gnawed bundle someplace that had caught fire and burned stuff up, not an expertly fired golden BB as Spider maintained later when he wandered over to (a) collect a souvenir piece of wreckage for his "I love me" room, (b) drink a small, silver goblet of Puresome's blood and (c) generally jerk Puresome's chain.

"Years from now, when you speak of this...and you will...be kind," Puresome axed.

But he really didn't care.

Puresome the Pitiless would be back.