

The Further Adventures of
YOUTHLY PURESOME

by CDR Jack D. Woodul, USNR(Ret), artwork by Carl Snow



“And the second thing I’m gonna do when I get back off cruise,” Puresome wrote on his kneeboard, “is set down my suitcase!” Somehow, he knew such tender words written on the back of a kneeboard card would touch the heart of the Child Bride, who appreciated subtlety in such matters.

Puresome’s teeny, tiny, tinker tanker was on autopilot at 20,000 feet, lazily circling USS Boat plowing through the wine dark sea below. The rest of the launch was off doing their thing and nobody had come back to the ship for practice plugs. The sun beamed in through the canopy, and Puresome actually started drowsing like a fat, yellow dog on a porch until he remembered his squadron mate, Jig Dog, liked to sneak back to the ship and zoom up just in front of unsuspecting tankers, tumping them over and causing cockpit stains. So Puresome had cranked the temp down, aimed the cold air out of the eyeball vents at his face and started a letter, warily looking out the windows every now and then.

OF TEENY, TINY TINKER TANKERS

Puresome knew better than to get complacent, even on a beautiful, sunny Med day. Besides Jig Dog’s, he had enjoyed some of the better furballs of his life over the ship. Everybody tried to get back to the ship with enough gas to jump someone/anyone/everyone before recovery. Puresome never let an extra 2,000-pound blivet like a tanker package stand in his way. Once, oxygen mask comfortably in his lap and camped at the six of a mighty double-demon F-4 Phantom jet, he had followed the twisting smoke trails into the stratosphere. Puresome was having a hell of a time until he realized the F-4 had activated his cloaking device and caused most of the world to disappear, and it was getting hard to see. Fortunately, he realized the F-4 was luring him into the Land of No Oxygen Atoms. He slapped on his mask and sucked up the oxygen, thus foiling the devious ploy.

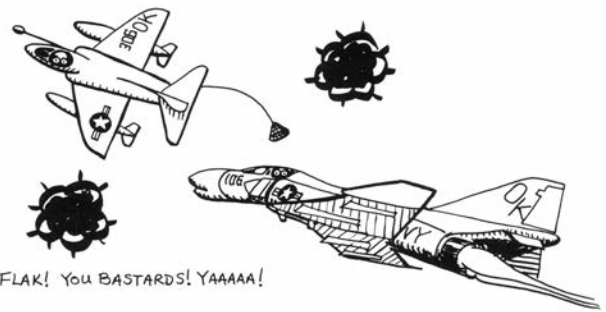


He had even jumped the really evil-looking RA-5C Viggie once. Screaming down in a classic pursuit curve, Puresome watched the wing come up and the Viggie start to turn into him. “Uh oh, here we go!” he thought. And absolutely nothing happened.

“Two turns, and I can be at anybody’s twelve,” its pilot told him later.

“It’s a good thing you can go like scat,” was the best Puresome could offer. Puresome still cringed watching them come aboard — he had a great deal of respect for them and wouldn’t be a Viggie driver for nuthin’!

But the worst affront to tankerism had happened to Puresome on another bright and shiny day in the VaCapes operating area off Norfolk. He had again been lazily circling the boat at twenty thousand and was writing the usual letter. A flight of Phantoms had called in on tanker frequency for practice plugs and were inbound. It was time to look out the window, and he saw...black puffs around him. Flak! Yaaaaaaa!



Puresome punched off autopilot and went into his 100 percent adrenalin jinking mode as the Phantom flight started screaming at the ship over the radio, “Flak! You bastards!”

“Yaaaaa!” Puresome joined in.

The ship had scheduled a gunnery exercise and, as often happened, hadn’t told anybody. They said they were very sorry indeed.

And it didn’t even count for another Air Medal or Distinguished Jinking Cross.

But today continued hot and dusty, and Puresome bored holes in the sky. Finally, a section of Blue Hawk A-4s from the other squadron showed up across the circle and rendezvoused for practice plugs. Puresome dutifully streamed the drogue; the section leader gave him a thumbs up and slud in.

“Just another walk in the park on a day in May, hooray,” Puresome thought, watching the Blue Hawk wingie flying formation off his left wing and giving the tanker pilot the holy mystic sign even as his leader was poking away. He recognized the fingerer as Uncle Carl, who had gone through the RAG with him, and nodded his head vigorously.

Finally, Blue Hawk lead got tired and backed out, moving off to the starboard for a simulated cigarette, bowl of wheaties and a nap. Uncle Carl moved in.

What fun Uncle Carl was having plugging away, right up to the time he backed out. The drogue valve stuck open and a stream of fuel ran into his engine, which had the bad manners to blow up!

“Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!” Hollered Uncle Carl, who had shut stuff down and dropped his rat so he could holler, “Mayday! Blue Hawk Two over Guntrain at 20,000 with an engine fire and I’ve shut it down!”

“Say, whut?” thought Puresome.

“Roger, Blue Two, lead’s with you, starboard side, you ok?”

“Everything but the part about not having an engine,” Carl responded.

“Say everything after ‘Mayday!’” said Guntrain.

After that, everything sorted itself out a bit, and Puresome followed the Blues down, keeping them in sight, and watched Uncle Carl eject at 10,000 feet, his Scooter smack the water and the helo come and pick him up. The rest of the recovery was routine.

Back on board, Puresome visited Uncle Carl, who was in fine shape after his dunk in the ocean and was participating in medicinal whiskeys furnished by Quack Doc. Carl found it in his heart to thank Puresome for facilitating his trip out of his nice airplane for a bit of a swim and helicopter ride. Puresome allowed that it was not nice to frabb with your tanker pilot and admitted he was mildly disappointed not to get to bid on Uncle Carl’s brand new 100-watts-per-channel-shiny-Sansui stereo setup.

The next morning found a small crowd on the hangar deck watching Puresome paint something on the canopy rail of his tinker tanker. Uncle Carl wandered up, noticed it was Puresome, and, sensing nothing good was afoot, edged closer.

Puresome was painting a little American flag on the canopy rail, symbolically making him one-fifth an ace.

“Puresome, you insensitive sumbitch, you can’t doooo that!”

“A kill is a kill!” Puresome righteously snarled back.

And Wusses wept, and Manly Men said “Yayus!” For it was Truth its Ownself.