

The Further Adventures of
YOUTHLY PURESOME

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Burners belched fire and mighty jets slipped the surly bonds as the “Foxtrot” flag flapped in the 30-knot breeze that Momma Nature and the captain of the mighty carrier had arranged for the 1300 launch. Clouds of steam boiled out of the catapult tracks as chaps in gaily colored jerseys carefully choreographed the dance of the jets on the big flight deck.

It was then that the ship’s engineers took the opportunity to blow stacks. A huge, noxious cloud of black gas roiled aft out of the funnels to rain cinders into the eyes of a group of distinguished looking, gray-haired, binocular-draped old farts crowded all around the ship’s island and especially in Vulture’s Row, the best seats in the house for today’s show.

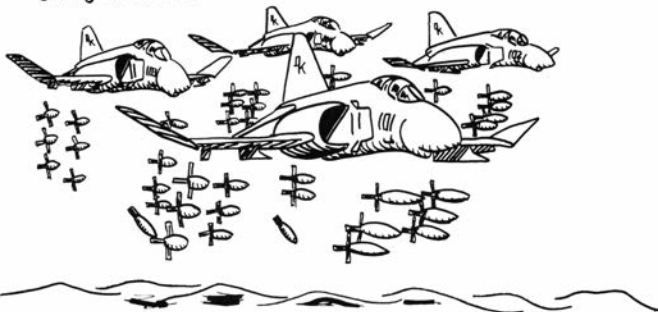
The Great Firepower Frab-up

For today’s mission was not merely dancing the skies on laughter’s silver wings, but a performance of great subtlety and symbolism loosely titled “Blowing Holes in the Ocean — a great many of your defense dollars at work.” For these observers were Congress Persons out to observe the handiwork of their industrial constituents and “our brave, Americun boys.” Spending the day being sucked up to on a Forrestal-class yacht, eating “chow,” and watching a major-league fireworks display wasn’t too bad, either.

Youthly Puresome didn’t care if they were the Bayonne Bowling Club or the Minions of Zoroaster — happiness was a warm gun, and he was going to be a shooter with an audience.

The firepower demonstration was to be awesome. A *Phantom* jet would fire a *Sidewinder* missile at a paraflare dropped by an A-4. A Scooter would do an over-the-shoulder bomb drop on a smoke light. Two *Phantoms* would make simultaneous, low-altitude supersonic runs on either side of the ship, guaranteed to cause organisms, minor losses of control and possible pacemaker interference. A daisy chain of some questionable propriety would fly by, consisting of consenting and adult tanker aircraft — an A-3 Whale, plugged by an A-6, plugged by an A-4, plugged by another A-4. And so on.

...four *Phantoms* in diamond formation would drop a great many Snakeye bombs...



But the best part was when four *Phantoms* in diamond formation would drop a great many 250-lb. *Snakeye* bombs from a low-altitude pass on a point just aft of the ship, followed 60 seconds later by Puresome firing five 19-shot rocket packs from his Scooter at the same spot of steaming ocean.

Since timing was everything in airshows, a great deal of practice had gone on prior to the real thing. Clocks got hacked and potatoes counted, and everybody honed up for the big day. Puresome had to arrive at a 7,000-ft. roll-in point, ready to start his 45-degree dive as the *Phantom* formation crossed the wake of the ship in its bomb run.

Of course, everybody was reasonably serious. It would be bad form to punch some kind of hole in the ship, and there was a long tradition of interesting frab-ups at airshows with today offering ample opportunity to repeat. Like the photo F-8 that had done a half Cuban-eight, popping out flash bombs instead of on the straight and level. Or like numerous aircraft that smacked each other or the water. It was one thing to be dead, but quite another to look bad.

But the big day was going like divine clockwork. Puresome orbited at a safe distance on the starboard side of the ship, watched the rest of the air wing do its thing, monitored the radio and waited his turn.

Finally, the flight of four *Phantoms* below moved out of orbit and started toward the ship, the flight lead shifting them into diamond formation as they dropped down for their low-level delivery. Puresome eased into high trail behind them.

The *Phantom* leader called the ship inbound and switched “hot.” Puresome triple-checked his ordnance station switches “on,” mode switches to “rockets,” gunsight and mil-lead, and armament switch “on.” He was real careful to stay away from the trigger, not anxious to send many, many 2.75-in. folding-fin rockets whoostling out before their time. Puresome hung in the air, almost at roll-in, and watched as the four *Phantoms* approached the ship.

Their diamond formation was impeccable. *Ace* lead was flying the bomb run steady and level, his wingmen glued to his airplane in their Sunday-best *Blue Angel* diamond formation.

“Stand by, stand by,” *Ace* lead called, prepping his wingies to drop their bombs on his call. Puresome rolled into his rocket run, still lagging his nose behind the *Phantom* flight slightly.

“Pickle! Pickle!” hollered *Ace* lead, and an impressive number of *Snakeyes* fell off the four planes.

Unfortunately, a couple of them had the bad manners to blow up almost immediately and Puresome, screaming down in his dive, watched fuel immediately start streaming in copious amounts from the wings of two *Phantoms*.



“Yaahaa! *Ace Two* is hit!”

“Yaahaa! *Ace Three* is hit!”

“Hey, neat!” thought Puresome. “Just like the Big War!” His eyes went all squinty as he guided his pipper to just the right part of the ship’s wake.

As the once-impeccable diamond formation deteriorated somewhat and disappeared in a haze of JP-5 and frantic radio calls, Puresome squeeze the trigger and punched 95 perfect holes in the ocean blue.

Such is life that the Congress Persons had cheered wildly. And Puresome had pulled off his rocket run and done exuberant aileron rolls off into the blue to what he hoped was thunderous applause. It seemed so real!

The two *Phantoms* made it to nearby NAS East Coast in good shape but with just enough gas to leak on the runway some.

The next time Puresome saw *Ace* lead, he told him how thankful he was to have *Phantoms* around to give tone to what otherwise would have been a disgusting display of military might. He added that the impressed Congress Persons would probably buy them a couple of new *Phantoms*.

Ace lead had adjusted his ascot and considered shifting his weapons systems to the ground-to-Puresome smack-em-in-the-mouth mode.

“You dirty, lousy, stinky, cheaty rat!” he snarled.

“Yes,” countered Puresome, well and truly adjusting his orange and black attack-puke ball cap. “Isn’t it pretty to think so?”