

The Further Adventures of
YOUTHLY PURESOME

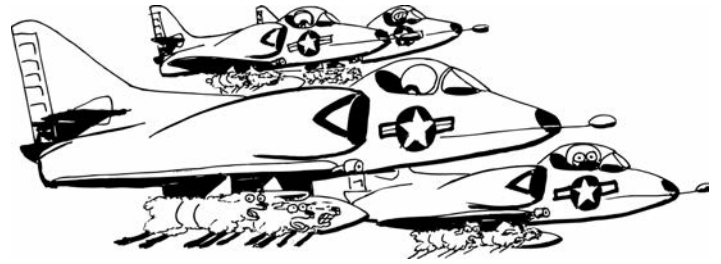
by CDR Jack D. Woodul, USNR(Ret), artwork by Carl Snow



“Bowling balls! That’s the ticket!” submitted Puresome from the extreme back of the ready room, slamming his fist down in such a manly manner on his flip-up desktop that nearby Candy Andy, the Buddy-Store Bomber, sloshed his coffee. Up in the front of the ready room, the XO scowled over his shoulder at Puresome, the outburst having made him soil a memo.

“No more crummy *Steel Tigers*,” continued Puresome, a strange, mesianic light in his eye. “I figured out how to close down the Ho Chi Minh Trail fer sure!”

Candy Andy and a few other worthless JOs, trying to look busy enough to justify hanging around the relatively cool ready room, happily stopped justifying.



Happy Trails to You

“What we do,” continued Puresome, “is load up with bowling balls, drop ’em on the sides of the hills above the trail, and all this mud and stuff slides down on the trail. Then ol’ Gomer will come to fix things up. And when he gets done, he’s got to stack the bowling balls. They keep falling down, he gets all mental and batshit, and we kick his ass and go home.”

Working the Bowling Ball Problem

Weed was the AvWeps division officer, and ordnance was his game. His analytical mind went to work on the problem. “Lessee, we could use a multiple-bowling-ball ejector rack, a ‘MBBER,’ carry six bowling balls per rack, use a centerline tank, two MBBERS and a single bowling ball on the outboard stations — that’s fourteen balls per plane, fifty-six per division. Don’t know about ballistics, though,” Weed thought. “Hey, Andy,” Weed shot in Candy Andy’s direction. “Reckon a bowling ball has about the same mil lead as a buddy store?”

Andy wearily lofted his middle finger at Weed as he had some four thousand times before, ever since he became known as the Buddy Store Bomber, inadvertently lofting it instead of the practice bomb on his outboard station in a great arc and, incidentally, getting a fairly good hit.



“Naw, naw, naw!” said Worm. “We make a run to Hong Kong, get a bunch of Chinese finger traps and stick ’em in the bowling ball holes. Then when the Gomers try to pick them up, they got bowling balls stuck on their fingers, get all mental and batshit, and we come turn ’em into crispy critters!”

The Scheme Evolves

Entire universes of possibilities were occurring to Puresome’s feverish mind. Not bowling balls, but sheeps!

“Sheeps! That’s the ticket!” Puresome’s manly desk slam caused XO Parker’s pen to blot the “white whizzer” he was composing about junior officer training, and he arose slowly from piles of paperwork to terminate Puresome with extreme prejudice.

Puresome, though, was on a roll, oblivious to all. “We get these sheeps, see, fix up some ‘multiple sheep ejector racks,’ — MSHERs — stick two sheeps per rack, two on the outboard stations, six per plane, twenty-four per division, use the same mil lead as a buddy store and, just before launch, the ordies will stick Chinese finger traps in their units. Drop ’em on the trail, and ol’ Gomer, got to be horny, sees these sheeps and it’s all over!”

Puresome, in the rapture of his vision, failed to check his six, from which the XO was rolling in off the perch.

“See,” continued Puresome, “you got all these Gomers in permanent carnival knowledge with these sheeps, they’d be too embarrassed to do anything but emigrate to Olongapo and do night club acts, and we win the war and go home in glory!”

They say you never see the one that gets you. Puresome surely did not. The lecture Puresome gave on principals of Naval conduct at an all-officers meeting after he got out of hack was, as Weed had said, “Not baa-aa-ad!”

And the rest is history.

Several days later, his lecture complete and for the time being out of trouble with the low Rocket numbers, Youthly found his name on the flight schedule — a zero-dark-thirty sort of a thing.

There wasn’t a commander’s moon out. No commanders, either. But Puresome was. It was dark, really dark. And Puresome wasn’t having a particularly good night.

“Power . . . power . . . don’t climb!” hollered Paddles as Puresome once again sunk into the mysterious black suck hole behind the ship, crammed on too much power and sailed over the top of all four arresting wires. The tailhook left nothing but a row of sparks on the flight deck as Puresome, however reluctantly, continued with throttle firewalled over the forward end of the angled deck and into the blackness.

“Bolter! Bolter!” radioed a disgusted Paddles as the position lights of Puresome’s Skyhawk disappeared into the darkness.

“Young Puresome’s got a bit of wind up tonight, if you don’t mind me saying so, sir,” yelled an assistant LSO, who had just written a highly lyrical, 30-line description of Puresome’s last pass at the blunt end of the boat, as seen by the grizzled senior LSO holding the pickle.

“Yes, but don’t we all?” yelled Paddles back at the little group huddled on the platform amid the wind, rain and clouds of stack gas the boat’s

engineer had conveniently blown in time for Puresome's approach. "Or do we?" he added cryptically, and his assistant dutifully added these comments to Puresome's pass in the LSO book.

Things Not Improving

Things were not improving in the Scooter's cockpit.

"Yaaaaaaa!" Puresome screamed into his oxygen mask, "this can't be happening to me. Had to be a hook skip . . . pitching deck . . . Paddles suckered me into it . . . vertigos were in my eyes . . . hole in my glove, and I've got a headache!"

Puresome's search for a convenient rationalization for temporarily looking bad was interrupted by the necessity of recovering from the unusual attitude the twitchy little A-4 had managed while the driver was absent without leave from the flying instruments.

"Yaaaaaaa!" Puresome again screamed into his oxygen mask with the true knowledge that 600 feet over the ocean at night was not the time to lose your instrument scan. It had almost led to the dreaded "bust your hiney" syndrome. Puresome locked onto the "abba-jabba" gyro horizon and, as a starter, concentrated on keeping its shiny side up.

"Sidewinder 411, say your state," queried someone safe in CATC with a cigar, jelly donut and a cup of coffee.

Puresome had just enough time for stick, rudder and throttle only, and no time at all for any instrument as far to the edge of the instrument panel as a fuel gage. Especially no time for dumb questions, like "say your state."

"Ax me something in the middle," squeaked 411.

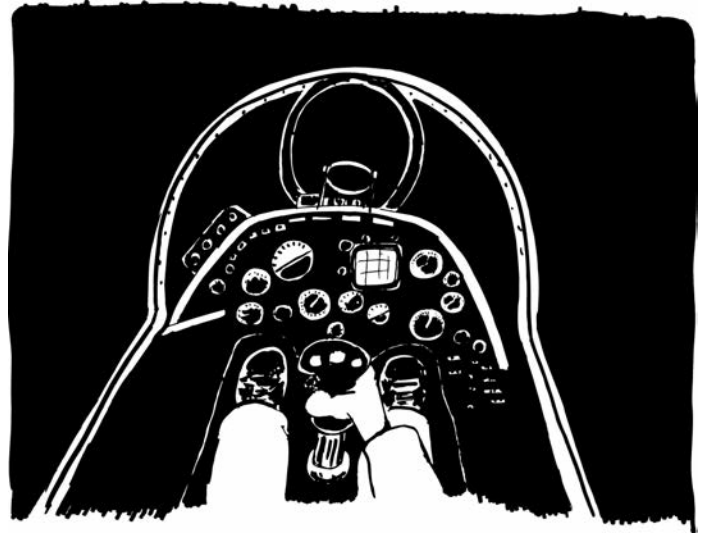
The Holistic View

Even in better moments, annoying things like "say your state," or "say your gross" involved totaling up tank quantities or bombs and stuff hanging under wings, and it took all Puresome's willpower not to say "West Texas," or "you're gross," instead of doing the figgerin'. Puresome, ever the realist, held to holistic, qualitative views, like "a whole bunch" or "not enough."

Besides, they didn't pay him to add. Especially not on such a night.

Naturally, management took a dim view of this kind of thing, and on one occasion his skipper and the air boss had invited Puresome in for a little senior citizen vivisection of a JO after the ship had asked him, "Say your position," and Puresome had replied, "Missionary!"

Finally, Puresome was able to take one eyeball off the abba jabba and slew it over for a quick peek at the fuel gage, which indicated a tad more than not enough. Buoyed by this information, Puresome grasped hold of



himself for one more shot at the deck before he had to try and find the tanker, which in the bumpy darkness he really didn't want to do.

So Puresome settled down, stooged around the CCA pattern, fought the suck hole to a draw and impacted the deck acceptably.

"Yes! Are we not men?" exulted Puresome as the two-wire dragged his aircraft to a halt.

Safely back in the ready room, Puresome was greeted by a bunch of touching, caring, sharing, feeling, nurturing, supportive '60s kinda guys who had decorated the blackboard with witty sayings and cartoons, and thus were devastatingly helpful with Youthly's self-image.

Since Bolter Harassment Coordinator was one of Puresome's favorite collateral duties, he expected no less when it was his time in the barrel. However, now in the safety of the ready room, their mindless critiques were as the babble of fishwives.

"I may have boltered some, but it wasn't because I'm not good," Puresome explained to Weed on the way up to the dirty-shirt wardroom for double cheeseburgers mit egg and jolly green bug juice.

Weed just sat there and nodded. It was absolutely, without doubt, the only thing to say.