

The journey to discover the details of the events leading to the death of my biological father is near complete. It has been an enlightening and uplifting experience due to the incredible people I have met along the way, starting with the Project Remembrance Team led by Pat Macha. This team possesses a unique sense of duty, empathy and a great American Spirit that reinforces to me daily the greatness of our Nation and its people. Since my site location visit on 8 August 2014 I have visited with two of my father's squadron mates, Bruce Whitcomb and Ron May. Both of these men departed Naval Service and went on to have extremely successful careers as pilots for American and Continental-United Airlines respectively. I have also visited the Moffett Field Historical Society Museum, meeting with the Curator, Bill Stubkjaer and volunteers, and also visited the National Museum of Naval Aviation and the Emil Buehler Library at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida. I thank all these wonderful people for their time, effort, friendship, and the honor their organizations bestow to the heritage of Naval Aviation.

My father was recruited as a Naval Aviation Cadet (NavCad) while attending the Newark College of Engineering. He was planning to be an Electrical Engineer, but, the allure of Naval Aviation and of service to country brought him to aviation flight training at Naval Air Station, Pensacola, FL. He was a talented junior pilot and upon obtaining his "Wings" was assigned to Saufley Field, Pensacola, FL as an Instructor Pilot. He flew and trained the T-34 Mentor, T-28 Trojan, TV-2 SeaStar, and the F9-F Panther for two years prior to his AD-6 Skyraider type training at Naval Air Station, North Island, CA and assignment to the VA-215 "Barn Owls" at Moffett Field, CA.

On the early morning of 6 July 1960 two AD-6 Skyraider aircraft, NP-503, designated Flight Leader, and NP-508, designated Wingman, departed Moffett Field on a planned 7 hour, 1127 mile "Sandblower" training mission. "Sandblower" missions were low altitude navigation flights designed to increase the proficiency of the pilot in both navigation and maneuver. The flights also involved steep mountain climbs and mountain passes due to the extreme local geography. In summary these flights were inherently aggressive in nature and truly a young Aviator's dream. The pilots that flew the AD-6 Skyraider were training for the missions of Close Air Support to troops in the field, and also to deliver small tactical nuclear weapons if ordered. The "Barn Owls" were scheduled for deployment aboard USS Lexington (CVA-16) and future operations in Southeast Asia. Both AD-6 Skyraider aircraft were fully loaded with MK 76 practice bombs and two auxiliary fuel tanks for this long duration training flight. My father, designated NP-508, led the initial two legs of the flight northeast from Moffett Field over the Sierra Nevada mountain range and then south towards the Mohave Desert. The pilots swapped lead/chase pilot roles at the end of the second leg with NP-503 taking the lead position on the third leg through a mountain pass to the next planned check point at the Lucerne Valley Dry Lake. The fateful fourth leg was a steep climb southeast over the San Bernardino Mountain Range to the next checkpoint near Big Bear Lake. The AD-6 Skyraider aircraft were only 3 hours into their "Sandblower" mission and still in a heavy load condition. The weather conditions were extremely hot at 104 degrees resulting in reduced lift effects. The lead pilot, NP-503 recognized that his current RPM and manifold pressure was insufficient for the climb, increased both, and radioed back to my father his increased settings. NP-503 asked my father if he could "make it." My father, in the trailing chase position, acknowledged "yes", and then shortly thereafter radioed "I've hit." The accident investigation revealed that my father's aircraft

had struck a tree with the port wing close to the fuselage, pitched horizontal and struck the canyon wall approximately 6-8 foot below the crest of the Marble Canyon.

My father, Jack E. Joynson, died on 6 July 1960, at age 24, and in service to our great Nation. He left behind a young widow, Katherine, a 15 month old daughter, Diane, and son, Jack, born 22 days later. Katherine departed quickly from Moffett Field and flew back to New Jersey with her daughter Diane and future son. Katherine moved into an apartment with her mother and Aunt. She was a very strong and practical woman and had no time to grieve. She had to move on with her life as a young Navy widow and take care of her children.

My mother, Katherine, remarried 5 years later and my sister and I were fortunate to have had a caring stepfather who embraced us as his own. Katherine kept every Navy document, every letter, every newspaper article and every memory of my father's aviation career and passed it on to me. I have never met nor spoke with the lead pilot of the fourth leg of the fateful training mission, but, the lead pilot did speak with my mother after the incident and wrote a heartfelt tribute letter to my father's parents. I hope someday to connect with him and learn more about my father.

Jack E. Joynson Jr.