

Preliminary Concept: VA-75 Vietnam Documentary

Background

Navy Attack Squadron 75 (VA-75) flew bombing and mining missions against North Vietnam from the carrier USS Saratoga as part of "Operation Linebacker" in 1972-73, a final push by President Nixon to end the war. Two UVA graduates from the Class of '69 flew many of these missions: Pilot Steve Bryan and Bombardier/Navigator Paul Hvidding. VA-75 received numerous honors for its performance, including the Wade McClusky Award, given annually to the most outstanding attack squadron in the Navy. In 2005, Carol Reardon, Professor of military history at Penn State University, published the authoritative account of the squadron's contributions to the war effort, *Launch the Intruders*.

[Launch the Intruders](#)

Two Bombardier/Navigators, Paul Hvidding and Jay Swigart, recorded footage of their missions using basic Super 8mm movie cameras. This footage was crudely spliced together and edited to create the YouTube video, "VA-75 at War."

[VA-75 at War](#)

50th Anniversary Reunion

While sixteen of the original 36 aviators died in the war or after their service, six of the remaining twenty are committed to returning to Vietnam in April 2023 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of VA-75's part in ending the war. The itinerary for the tour of Vietnam is designed to take them to many of the sites that were targets of their missions: Hanoi, Haiphong, Than Hoa, Vinh and areas in the vicinity of Danang and Hue in the South. The six crewmen will be accompanied by their wives, who served from home in support of their husbands.

Objective

Create a video documentary of the reunion tour of Vietnam, based on media documentation recorded by the twelve participants and the available raw footage of actual carrier operations and bombing missions in 1972-73.

Audience

- Military active duty and veterans, especially aviators
- Members of the Baby Boomer generation who experienced the cultural dynamics of the period
- Military historians

Documentation

Much of the tour footage will be taken with a GoPro 11, supplemented by phone photos and videos, to include conversations with the aviators and their wives regarding their own experiences, reflections and reactions to the current status of Vietnam today. If desired,

interviews may be conducted with the six aviators as well as many other squadron members who could not make the reunion trip. Of course, the original movies taken in 1972-73 are available.

Supporting Resources

- Paul Hvidding lives in Culpeper and will serve as primary collaborator
- Professor Carol Reardon can provide background history about squadron history and missions, as necessary
- It may be possible to engage student volunteers from the UVA Naval ROTC Unit at Maury Hall to assist with research and other activities
- Funding for related expenses

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