

## **Bearcat and Rooster**

*Dave Tate*

During the two years, Aug 69-Aug 71, when Colin Curleigh and I were COs of HS 50 and VS 880 respectively there is little doubt that a fair amount of friendly rivalry existed between our two squadrons. This in turn precipitated a number of “hi-jinks”, attempts at “one-upmanship”(by both units) and “try and top this” escapades.

One of the more memorable incidents that comes to mind was the time HS 50 won the Cock- O - the Walk. The very fact that they beat us for this very prestigious trophy was humiliating enough but to rub it in the way they did was the last straw. This is what transpired: On the morning following HS50s winning of the Cock-O- the-Walk I received a telephone call from Colin suggesting I take a look at their hangar. There in all its glory was a very large red rooster, painted on the side of their hangar facing ours. Enough is enough I thought and with that I got hold of our Chief OM, Joe Saunders, and mentioned that we couldn't let this display of bragging go unchallenged. He agreed wholeheartedly and with a parting “leave it with me Boss I'll take care of it” he left my office.

The following morning Joe came to my office and told me to have a look at HS 50s hangar. This I did and there ,in all its glory, was 880s mascot, THE BEARCAT, mounted atop THE ROOSTER. I couldn't resist calling Colin and suggesting that he have a gander at the side of his hangar. I won't repeat the telephone alled and suggested we call a truce and quit wasting paint, to which I agreed. I then called Joe and advised him of the agreement I had made with HS50 to which he responded that if the agreement pertained to only the hangar wall then the hangar roof should be “fair game”. I had no argument with that assumption.

The following day Joe asked if we could take a Tracker and do a short recce of HS 50s hangar from the air. We did just that and there on the roof of their hangar was a white Bearcat stretching from one side of it to the other, painted by none other than Joe and his boys using a number of gallons of pussers white paint. Needless to say I called Colin and told him that the next time he got airborne he may wish to look at his hangar roof. I don't recall his comments after viewing 880s handiwork but can only assume they were not complimentary. It took awhile but 880 finally got revenge and more importantly, the last word (for then).

## **KNOWING WHEN TO LET GO**

*Jake McLaughlin*

In the summer of 1954 the Support Air Group VF870 Fury fighters and VS880 Avenger Anti-Submarine aircraft aircraft was moved temporarily away from HMCS Shearwater. The circuit, shared by Naval aircraft ranging from helicopters, C-45s, Harvards, Furies and Avengers, plus the then Air Canada and Maritime Airways DC3s and occasional USN aircraft of several types had become too limited, too crowded.

We moved first to Scoduc, an abandoned wartime RCAF airfield close to Moncton and just outside the coastal town of Shediac in New Brunswick. We were warmly welcomed, made honorary members of the Moncton Golf Club and the social Club Bois Hebert in Shediac itself. We flew regular training missions over the Atlantic always making sure that our return path to base took us over the beautiful coastal beaches close to the town of Shediac. Life was good. One day, a pair of Avengers were returning from an A/S exercise at about 2000 feet closing the

beaches, the crews admiring the assemble pulchritude on the sand. Suddenly I noticed a Sea Fury diving on us from about 10,000 feet seemingly intent on jumping our two helpless Turkeys. But that's not what the pilot had in mind, he hurtled past, continuing his trajectory toward the beach where at a few hundred feet he pulled up and began a beautiful "upward twizzle". The aircraft rose, the sun glinting off it's wings when at about 5000 feet it abruptly stalled and began to fall, inverted, toward the water below. We watched, absolutely certain that we were about to witness the Fury, flown by a friend (by this time we'd figured out who was flying the aircraft), crash into the sea.

No more than one hundred feet above the waves, the aircraft, still inverted, appeared to regain control. It climbed and as sedately as a Fury could do it, headed inland to the airfield.

Later, at the Wardroom bar, I joined my friend Jake Birks acknowledged by all as a superb pilot who was still obviously shaken and "wan with care". He explained that the aircraft had gone into a "flick spin" as he twizzled away from the beach (it was a notorious Sea Fury characteristic from which few pilots survived). He tried every thing he knew to regain control as he hurtled down. Finally and in resignation, he decided to take his hands and feet off the controls and await the inevitable. By Jake's reckoning the plane recovered itself, still inverted, at less than 100 feet.

He flew home, landed and adjourned to the bar a wiser and very much surprised to be alive, Naval Aviator.

## **PARALLEL PARKING**

*Bryan Hayter*

In the spring of 1957 HS 50 Anti Submarine Helicopter squadron deployed to Key West Florida to exercise with the USN. One particular day I was assigned the task of air Officer for an AS exercise aboard a US destroyer. Days work over, we were returning to harbour when the Captain invited me to be on the bridge to watch as the ship came alongside.

A strong offshore breeze was blowing as we began our approach but the Captain somewhat casually waved off the offer of assistance from a tug which was standing by. He began his approach at a shallow angle to the jetty but the breeze was too strong and the attempt had to be aborted.

The bridge was silent as he took the ship around to try again. The silence increased when the tug signaled it was ready to assist and was waved off again. I looked for a place to hide. A second failure. Tension on the bridge was palpable. More determined than ever, the Captain circled the ship back and out, then waved the tug off for a third time.

After much mucking about, the crew finally got the lines out and secured to the jetty. Silence still reigned on the bridge.

I noticed a lone, obviously pregnant woman standing on the jetty. In a voice that carried very clearly she shouted to the Captain, "Don't you ever talk to me about how to park the car again!". It was very difficult to control the guffaws. Matter of fact, we couldn't.