



CAPT. CHARLIE PLUMB

Educator's Guide

Viterbo University October 11, 2023



**D.B. REINHART
INSTITUTE**
for ETHICS IN LEADERSHIP

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BIOGRAPHY

Captain Charlie Plumb has lived what he believes to be the American Dream. As a farm kid from Kansas, he fantasized about airplanes, although he felt certain he would never have the opportunity to pilot one. It would be the United States Navy who afforded Plumb the opportunity to live out that dream.

After graduating from the Naval Academy, Plumb completed Navy Flight Training and reported to Miramar Naval Air Station in San Diego where he flew the first adversarial flights in the development of what would be called The Navy Fighter Weapons School, currently known as "TOP GUN." The next year, Plumb's squadron the Aardvarks launched on the Aircraft Carrier USS Kitty Hawk with Fighter Squadron 114 to fly the Navy's hottest airplane, the F-4 Phantom Jet. Code named "Plumber," Charlie Plumb flew 74 successful combat missions over North Vietnam and made over 100 carrier landings.

On his 75th mission, just five days before the end of his tour, Plumb was shot down over Hanoi, taken prisoner, tortured, and spent the next 2,103 days in North Vietnamese Prisoner of War camps. His first prison cell was 8 ft. long and 8 ft. wide. During his nearly six years of captivity, Plumb distinguished himself as a pro in underground communications. He was a great inspiration to all the other POWs and served as chaplain for two years.

Following his repatriation, Plumb continued his Navy flying career in Reserve Squadrons where he flew A-4 Sky Hawks, A-7 Corsairs and FA-18 Hornets. His last two commands as a Naval Reservist were on the Aircraft Carrier Corral Sea and at a Fighter Air Wing in California. He retired from the United States Navy with the rank of Captain after 31 years of service.

Since his return home, Plumb has captivated more than 5,000 audiences in almost every industry around the world with stories that parallel his POW experience with the challenges of everyday life.

To this day, Captain Plumb continues to fly left seat at every opportunity. The most treasured plane he owns and flies is a WWII PT-19 Open-Cockpit antique which is currently on loan to the Palm Springs, CA Air Museum. He also owns a Rutan-designed experimental single-engine Long-Eze.



BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VIETNAM WAR

1964 - Gulf of Tonkin incident: the US says North Vietnamese patrol boats fire on two US Navy destroyers. US Congress approves Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, authorizing military action in region.

1965 - 200,000 American combat troops arrive in South Vietnam.

1966 - US troop numbers in Vietnam rise to 400,000, then to 500,000 the following year.

1968 - Tet Offensive - a combined assault by Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese army on US positions - begins. More than 500 civilians die in the US massacre at My Lai. Thousands are killed by communist forces during their occupation of the city of Hue.

1969 - Ho Chi Minh dies. President Nixon begins to reduce US ground troops in Vietnam as domestic public opposition to the war grows.

1970 - Nixon's national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, and Le Duc Tho, for the Hanoi government, start talks in Paris.

1973 - Ceasefire agreement in Paris, US troop pull-out completed by March.

1975 - North Vietnamese troops invade South Vietnam and take control of the whole country after South Vietnamese President Duong Van Minh surrenders.



HANOI HILTON POW CAMP

Hoa Lo Prison “Hanoi Hilton”

The most notorious POW camp was Hoa Lo Prison, known to Americans as the "Hanoi Hilton." The name Hoa Lo refers to a potter's kiln, but loosely translated it means "hell's hole" or "fiery furnace." Hoa Lo's 20-foot walls, topped with barbed wire and broken glass, made escape nearly impossible. The filthy, infested prison compound contained several buildings, each given nicknames such as "Heartbreak Hotel," "New Guy Village" and "Little Vegas" by POWs. The cells replicated in the museum's exhibit represent the Hanoi Hilton experience.

Prison Network

Most prisons in the North Vietnamese system were in or near Hanoi. All of them had nicknames given by Americans. Conditions differed at each camp, and prisoners were routinely transferred between them. In Laos, communist Pathet Lao guerillas captured and held a small number of Americans. POWs in Laos were often kept in cages, huts or caves, and lack of food and water was common. Some POWs captured by Viet Cong guerillas were held in South Vietnam and Cambodia. One out of three Americans taken prisoner by the Viet Cong died from disease, injury, or by execution.

The "Big Change"

Beginning in late 1969, the North Vietnamese consolidated POWs in fewer camps, allowed them some freedom to mingle, and gave them more food. Several factors made this happen. First, worldwide publicity about torture and North Vietnam's refusal to say who they held captive hurt the communist propaganda cause. Communist leader Ho Chi Minh also had died, and some believed orders to torture came directly from him. Finally, in late 1970, the Son Tay prison camp rescue raid demonstrated that the U.S. was deadly serious about the welfare of the POWs. Prisoners saw the 1969-70 turning point in retrospect as "the big change."

Ref. National Museum of the United States Air Force: <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/>

The Hanoi Hilton Exhibit: <https://www.hanoihiltonexhibit.org/>

POW FLAG



In 1971, Mrs. Michael Hoff, the wife of a U.S. military officer listed as missing in action during the Vietnam War, developed the idea for a national flag to remind every American of the U.S. servicemembers whose fates were never accounted for during the war.

The black and white image of a gaunt silhouette, a strand of barbed wire and an ominous watchtower was designed by Newt Heisley, a former World War II pilot. Some claim the silhouette is a profile of Heisley's son, who contracted hepatitis while training to go to Vietnam. The virus ravaged his body, leaving his features hallow and emaciated. They suggest that while staring at his son's sunken features, Heisley saw the stark image of American servicemembers held captive under harsh conditions. Using a pencil, he sketched his son's profile, creating the basis for a symbol that would come to have a powerful impact on the national conscience.

By the end of the Vietnam War, more than 2,500 servicemembers were listed by the Department of Defense as Prisoner of War (POW) or Missing in Action (MIA). In 1979, as families of the missing pressed for full accountability, Congress and the president proclaimed the first National POW/MIA Recognition Day to acknowledge the families' concerns and symbolize the steadfast resolve of the American people to never forget the men and women who gave up their freedom protecting ours. Three years later, in 1982, the POW/MIA flag became the only flag other than the Stars and Stripes to fly over the White House in Washington, D.C.

On August 10, 1990, Congress passed U.S. Public Law 101-355, designating the POW/MIA flag.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Silver Star Medal



The Silver Star Awards are the United States' third-highest award exclusively for military operations involving conflict and ranks fifth in the precedence of military awards behind the Medal of Honor, the Crosses (Distinguished Service Cross; Navy Cross; and Air Force Cross), the Defense Distinguished Service Medal (awarded by the Department of Defense), and the Distinguished Service Medals of the various branches of service. It is the highest award for combat valor that is not unique to any specific branch; it has been bestowed by the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Merchant Marines. It may be given by any one of the individual services to not only their own members, but to members of other branches of service, foreign allies, and even to civilians for "gallantry in action" in support of combat missions of the United States military.

Legion of Merit



For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service. Authorized in 1942, the Legion of Merit is normally awarded to a high ranking officer of staff or flag rank. It was the first US decoration created specifically for award to citizens of other nations for service to the United States and is awarded to members of the United Nations Armed Forces for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service to the United States.

Bronze Star Medal



For heroic or meritorious achievement of service, not involving aerial flight in connection with operations against an opposing armed force. Authorized on February 4, 1944 the Bronze Star Medal is awarded to members of all branches of military service and may be awarded either for combat heroism or for meritorious service.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Purple Heart (Oak Leaf Cluster)



Awarded for wounds or death as result of an act of any opposing armed force, as a result of an international terrorist attack or as a result of military operations while serving as part of a peacekeeping force. The oldest of our military awards, the predecessor for the Purple Heart was George Washington's "Badge of Military Merit" (1782). Washington's award was resurrected in 1932 as the Purple Heart and is awarded to any person wounded in action while serving in any of our Armed Forces. It is also presented posthumously to the next of kin of personnel killed in action or who die of wounds sustained in action.

Air Medals



For meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight or for a single act of heroism against an armed enemy. Established in 1942, the Air Medal is awarded for meritorious achievement in aerial operations, for heroic acts in aerial operations against an armed enemy, or for merit in operational activities. During the Vietnam War, for instance, a single award of the Air Medal denoted participation by ground troops in a requisite number of "Combat Air Assaults".

P.O.W. Medal



Awarded to any person who was taken prisoner of war and held captive after April 5, 1917, during World Wars I and II, Korea and Vietnam conflicts and Operation Desert Storm. Though not authorized until it was approved by President Ronald Reagan in 1986, the POW Medal was created with a grandfather clause making it an approved award to all former Prisoners of War since the beginning of World War I. The legislation authorizing the award does require that the conduct of the POW was honorable during their imprisonment thus preventing presentation to collaborators. The award is presented posthumously to the next of kin of deceased Prisoners of War.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Vietnam Service Medal



For service in Southeast Asia and contiguous waters or air space there over from 4 Jul 1965 to 28 Mar 1973. The award of the Vietnam Service Medal extends to members of all services who served in Vietnam (including its contiguous waters and airspace), Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, or airspace in direct support of military operations in the Republic of Vietnam. Authorized in 1965, U.S. service personnel who received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal for service in the region from July 1958 to July 1963 were allowed to exchange the Expeditionary Medal for the Vietnam Service Medal.

Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal

(1960's Device)



For six months direct combat support or service in South Vietnam between 1 March 1961 and 28 March 1973. Also for those wounded, captured or killed in action or in the line of duty during the same period. Award of the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal extends not only to those who served on the ground in South Vietnam, but also includes those Armed Forces personnel serving in surrounding waters or in aerial missions or mission support over Vietnam.

USN Aviator Wings



USN Aviator wings are awarded to those aviators of the United States Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard who have qualified as Naval Aviators upon successful completion of flight school. To qualify for the Naval Aviator Badge, a service member must have completed Primary and Advanced Flight Training. Service members must also be designated a qualified pilot of a military aircraft. The decoration is similar in design to the Naval Flight Officer Badge. It consists of a single fouled anchor, surmounted by a shield, centered on a pair of golden wings. Until 1981 the Navy and Marine Corp also had enlisted personnel trained as pilots, referred to as Naval Aviation Pilots.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Presidential Unit Citation



The Presidential Unit Citation (PUC) (re-designated from the Distinguished Unit Citation on November 3, 1966) is awarded to unit of the Armed Forces of the United States and cobelligerent nations for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy occurring on or after December 7, 1941. The unit must display such gallantry, determination, and esprit de corps in accomplishing its mission under extremely difficult and hazardous conditions as to set it apart from and above other units participating in the same campaign. The degree of heroism required is the same as that which would warrant award of a Distinguished Service Cross to an individual. Extended periods of combat duty or participation in a large number of operational missions, either ground or air is not sufficient. This award will normally be earned by units that have participated in single or successive actions covering relatively brief time spans. It is not reasonable to presume that entire units can sustain Distinguished Service Cross performance for extended periods except under the most unusual circumstances. Recommendations for units larger than brigade will not be submitted.

Combat Action Ribbon



The Combat Action Ribbon was established on February 17, 1969, by Secretary of the Navy John H. Chafee and announced by SECNAVNOTE 1650 of February 17, 1969. The Annual Defense Authorization Bill (Public Law 106-65) signed into law by President Clinton on October 5, 1999, authorized the Secretary of the Navy to award the Combat Action Ribbon to members of the Navy or Marine Corps who participated in combat during any period after December 6, 1941. The Combat Action Ribbon is a personal decoration awarded to members of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard (when operating under the control of the Navy) in the grade of captain (or colonel in the Marine Corps) and below who have actively participated in ground or surface combat.

USS KITTY HAWK (CV-63)

USS KITTY HAWK was the lead ship of the Navy's second class of "super carriers" and the second ship in the Navy to bear the name. Initially commissioned as attack aircraft carrier CVA 63, she was redesignated as multi-purpose aircraft carrier CV 63 April 29, 1973.



Keel Laid: December 27, 1956

Launched: May 21, 1960

Commissioned: April 29, 1961

Decommissioned: May 12, 2009

Builder: New York Shipbuilding Corp., Camden, NJ

Propulsion system: eight Steam Boilers

Main Engines: four Steam Turbine Engines

Propellers: four

Blades on each Propeller: five

Aircraft elevators: four

Catapults: four

Arresting gear cables: four

Length, overall: 1046,5 feet (319 meters)

Flight Deck Width: 252 feet (76.8 meters)

Area of flight deck: about 4,5 acres

Beam: 129,6 feet (39.5 meters)

Draft: 35,8 feet (10.9 meters)

Displacement: approx. 82,200 tons full load

Speed: 30+ knots

Cost: about \$400 million (1961)

Planes: approx. 85

Crew: Ship: 2,900 **Air Wing:** 2,480

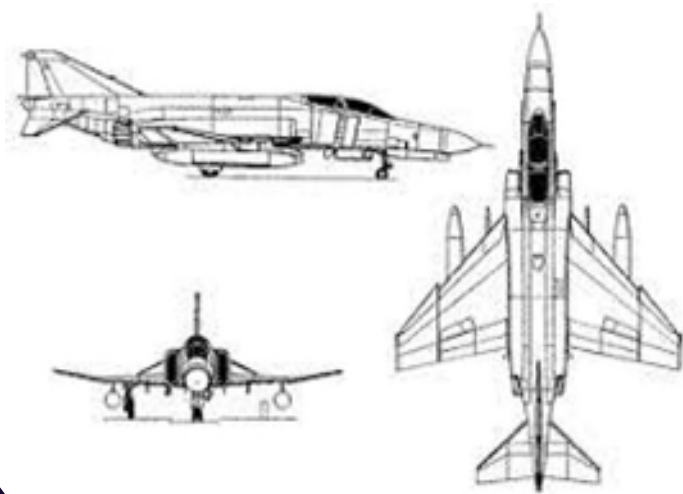
Armament: two Mk 29 NATO Sea Sparrow launchers, two 20mm Phalanx CIWS Mk 15, two Rolling Airframe Missile (RAM) Systems

VF-114 AARDVARKS

Fighter Squadron 114 (VF-114) was a fighter squadron of the United States Navy that was active from 1945 through 1993. Nicknamed the "Aardvarks", it was based out of Naval Air Station Miramar, California. The squadron flew combat missions during the Korean War and Vietnam War. VF-114 was disestablished as part of the post-Cold War drawdown of forces on April 30, 1993.



F-4 PHANTOM



Wingspan: 38 feet, 5 inches

Length: 63 feet, 0 inches

Height: 16 feet, 6 inches

Empty weight: 29,535 lbs

Max. weight: 61,651 lbs.

Powerplants: Two 17,900-pound thrust afterburning General Electric J79-GE-15 turbojets

Armament: One 20-mm M61A1 rotary cannon;

Four AIM-7 Sparrow missiles or 3,020 pounds of weapons under fuselage;

Up to 12,980 pounds of various weapons on underwing pylons.

Crew: Two

Performance: Max Speed: 1,485 mph (Mach 2.25) @ 40,000 ft.

Service Ceiling: 62,250 ft.

Range: 1,100 miles

