

Tony Thompson Update

VC-8 seems like several lifetimes ago. I left the squadron in '75 and went to VT-27 in Corpus Christi as a flight instructor. In addition to often working 6-7 days a week, the highlights of my time there were good times spent on the beach, playing for the CC Navy Rugby side, and surviving an engine failure while on a maint. check flight. I left the Navy in late '78 and began flying for a commuter airline out of Philadelphia. At the same time, I was able to get a slot in VR-52 flying the DC-6 out of NAS Willow Grove. Remarried in 1980 to Dorothy (a Flight Attendant of course). I retired from the Naval Reserve in '88, and found myself with enough free time to seriously take up golf again. I briefly owned another sail boat, but that turned into a down payment on a house, so the only boats that I have now are a collection of antique toy pond boats. Through the oddities of the airline industry with deregulation etc. I ended up flying for PanAm for 4 years until the end of that great airline. Dorothy and I were both put out of work by this development and supported ourselves with my artwork for three years; I then had the opportunity to get in on the startup of Atlas Air, a cargo operation operating 747's. We probably had the most experienced group of pilots that ever existed, as they hired TWA, Eastern and Pan Am pilots that were on the street. I was able to upgrade to Capt. in a short time and circled the globe more times than I can remember while the airline continued to expand in size. My career in aviation came to an end in 2000 after being diagnosed with a brain tumor. This was probably a good thing as the demands of flying thru 10 time zones a day and never getting a good night's sleep were slowly killing me. Ten years followed during which I had a surgery every year for many and various body parts. I do not miss flying; I don't miss wondering if this 900,000 lb a/c will really fly or if we can stop on the runway in Manaus; what I miss is the great people that I flew with and being in the neat places that the job took me to. I think I flew around 17,000 hours and visited 75 countries; some of which I was not thrilled to be in. The last thing I feel like doing is packing a bag and going to the airport. When Dorothy and I are not traveling, my days are spent playing golf, painting and restoring antiques; all rudely interrupted by the demands of the house and yard. We are planning to take a trip to AZ and UT in September to visit many Nat'l Parks; Hilton Head in Oct.; The art business has changed dramatically, so the only two galleries that I am working with are on Long Island and the Maritime Gallery at Mystic Seaport. I consider myself to be very fortunate to have been able to have two careers that I wanted since early childhood. Good luck, safe flying to all, and take time to remember the shipmates who are no longer with us. Tony