

RENDERING HONORS

By Tom Kelley '63

Inspection Tour - In June of 1963, President of the United States John F. Kennedy conducted a comprehensive inspection tour of military capabilities at west-coast bases.

Navy Presentation - The Navy worked up a major demonstration of assets located in the San Diego area. On the appointed day, the President and his entourage began viewing an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise while on board the USS Hornet, CVS-12. Later, he transferred to the USS Kitty Hawk, CVA-63, for the 'air power' portion of the presentation.

The Kitty Hawk had recently returned from a seven-month deployment to the Far East (West-Pac). Its Air Group had debarked and dispersed to their home stations; the Carrier Group Commander and his staff had moved to facilities ashore. We were, essentially, an empty hulk (extensive maintenance work was underway on many of the ship's systems).

Perfect. Static displays could be set up in the cavernous hangar bays; the Air Group's berthing areas were available for all the temporary personnel involved in the air show. Accordingly, on 'the day', with many units of the First Fleet involved, the exercise / demonstration began, at sea, off San Diego.

Arrival Honors - As the ASW exercise neared its completion, higher-ranking military and civilians began transferring from the Hornet to the Kitty Hawk. For obvious safety reasons, only a single important personage would be transferred at one time in one helicopter, and so, it required a number of flights to bring all concerned aboard. As each came aboard, honors were rendered appropriate to the person's rank. In addition to 'Side-Boys' (honor guard), Ruffles and Flourishes are played and the title of the persons command, not his name or rank, is announced over the 1-MC, the general announcing system. Further, that person's flag is hoisted at the ship's yard arm.

Rendering Honors - Returning to the arrival of 'Brass' aboard the Kitty Hawk, the first to be ferried across was the 'Commander, Naval Air Force, Pacific Fleet', a Rear-Admiral. The arrival announcement was passed as: "Naval Air Force, Pacific, arriving". His two-star flag was hoisted. Following this, Commander, First Fleet, a Vice-Admiral, came on board. Honors included the announcement, "First Fleet, arriving". The previously raised two-star flag was lowered, and a three-star flag was hoisted in its place. Next was the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). That announcement was, "United States Navy, arriving". Ultimately, President Kennedy came aboard. In addition to the presidential flag replacing that of the CNO's four-star flag, the announcement made was: "UNITED STATES, arriving."