

NAME THAT PLANE

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DOUGLAS AD SKYRAIDER, AD-4, AD-5, AD-6

Designed during World War II but put in service too late for that conflict, the Douglas AD Skyraiders was to make its mark in both Korea and Vietnam. An excellent airplane from the outset, the Skyraider was known for two amazing abilities. One was the huge load of bombs, rockets and other armament it could carry, and the other admirable feature was the amount of battle damage it could sustain and return its pilots to their bases. Operated from U.S. Navy Carriers, and by Air Force from land bases, the airplane was used month after month and year after year to attack ground targets. In production for twelve years, not only for single pilot but after the AD-1 through AD-4 models had proven the versatility of the Skyraiders, went through a major redesign of this new version (the AD-5) allowed a second seat in a side-by-side layout in the cockpits. The new cockpit area was quite different from the earlier models in appearance as the AD-5 lost their fighter type bubble canopy. The new AD-5 also had the ability to be converted in the field to many different purposes, such as ambulance configurations, troop carrier, freight hauler and others. The AD-5 was a very successful development of the types.

In 1956, My Marine Reserve Squadron (VMF-351) based at Navy Atlanta air base, retired the venerable F-4U Vought Corsair and received our first Douglas AD-4 Skyraider. Powered by the three thousand horsepower Wright 3350 engine. This aircraft proved to be a good honest, easy to fly dive bomber with outstanding landing characteristics in addition to being a very comfortable airplane.

The Skyraider was not without some glitches. One that happened several times with me. On climb out using normal power settings the normally smooth running 3350 began popping and back firing and getting worse, suddenly the engine quit running but wind milling. Instruments showed normal, adjusting the throttle, mags and mixture to starting position, the engine started running normally and I returned to Navy Atlanta. Several months later flying a Navy Admiral to Birmingham, Ala. In the AD-5 about 8500 ft. and the engine started popping and back firing and finally quit. The Admiral looked over at me and said "are we having a problem, Son?" I responded that I hoped not" as we glided earthward. A starting procedure resulted in a normal engine operation with no more engine problems the rest of the flight. Never was able to find out the problem. I flew the airplane for the next 5 years without this particular problem occurring again.

BALDO PATTON