

# OOPS !

As told by Chuck Huber, (former AT, AQ, PT, USN; plank owner in VAH-1)

Prior to the establishment of the Radar Bomb Scoring (RBS) units there were actual drops of "shapes," replicating the nuclear weapon which would be carried by A3Ds of the late 50s. The standard bombing technique was a low, tree top/ocean deck approach (to avoid radar), then maximum power vertical ascent to loft the bomb, maximum power roll/retreat (to avoid blast effects). The bomb was released many miles away from the target and lofted up from the A3D before gravity brought it down. This intricate AN/ASB1 system had at its heart a CP-66 analog computer, using inputs of airspeed, altitude, slant range, etc. to compute the release point. This was 'state of the art' at the time, grown out of the Norden Bombsight of WWII (the CP-66 was built at Indianapolis, IN - "Kelly's snatch patch).

To actually test the system concrete multi-ton "shapes" were loaded in the bombbays, and flew out of NAS Jacksonville to an anchored WWII ship off the outer banks of N. Carolina and Virginia. Small spotter aircraft would be circling the target and observe the "splash," maintaining radio contact with the A3D bombardier/navigator. The splashes were analyzed and crews were graded on their accuracy.

On one occasion the observers did not see a splash and concluded a "direct hit" on the abandoned ship, with much radio traffic congratulating the crew and ready room back at JAX NAS. That evening the CP-66 computer technician, an enlisted AQ2, analyzed the computer and discovered that one mechanical analog arm (slant range) was disconnected throughout the flight. He computed that the concrete "shape" had descended more than 40 miles from the target.

The next day the Newport News newspaper had a story of a meteorite that had destroyed a garage and dug a 20 foot hole in a Norfolk suburb; thankfully no injuries.