

ALL HANDS

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'Top Gun' Tomcat

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TOP GUN

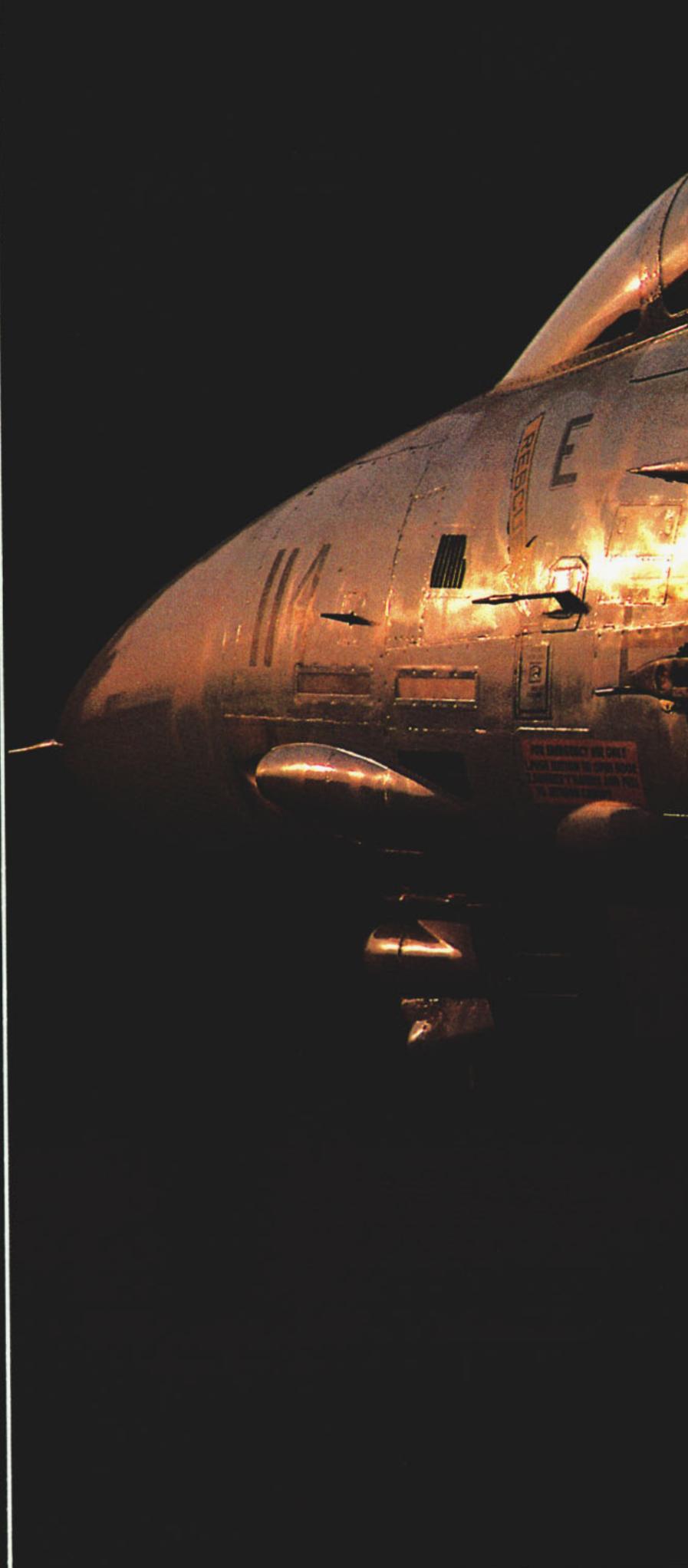
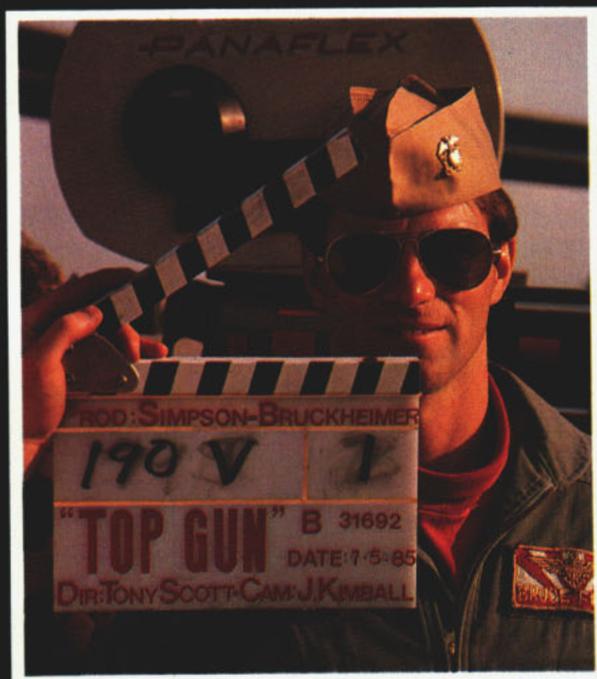
'It's not just a job...' it's a movie!

Story and photos by PH2 Michael D.P. Flynn

Hollywood enlisted into the Navy last summer when Paramount Pictures began production of its \$13.5 million action-based film, "Top Gun."

The film stars Tom Cruise of "Risky Business" and highlights the training that his character, Pete "Maverick" Mitchell, receives at the Naval Fighter Weapons School at NAS Miramar, San Diego. The

Several "real life" Navy people got to appear in "Top Gun," but the true star of the show was the F-14 Tomcat.





LT FRED BEASCOM
3146

Top Gun

movie's title comes from the nickname given graduates of the five-week program who go on to become the Navy's "top guns."

Filming for "Top Gun" took place aboard the aircraft carriers USS *Ranger* (CV 61) and USS *Enterprise* (CVN 65). Portions of the film also were shot at: NAS North Island's Officers' Club; NAS Miramar; Naval Weapons Center, China Lake; and the Pacific Missile Test Center, Pt. Mugu.

Released earlier this summer, with the premier to coincide with celebrations of the 75th Anniversary of naval aviation, "Top Gun" is directed by Tony Scott, who also directed "The Hunter," and co-stars Kelly McGillis of "Witness," Anthony Edwards of "Revenge of the Nerds," Michael Ironside of NBC's "V," Val Kilmer of "Top Secret" and Tom Skerritt of "Alien."

Navy ships and bases in California served as backdrops for many of the movie's scenes, and several squadrons and individuals also were involved in the actual filming.

Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 1's Search and Rescue (SAR) Swim School at NAS North Island gave assistance to the shooting crew when the movie's script called for parachute jumping and water rescue scenes. Senior Chief Parachute Rigger James L. Kauber met with director Scott and discussed what support the school might provide.

"I asked them to tell me what they needed," Kauber said. "It was perfect. Their shooting script fell right in line with what we teach here at the school."

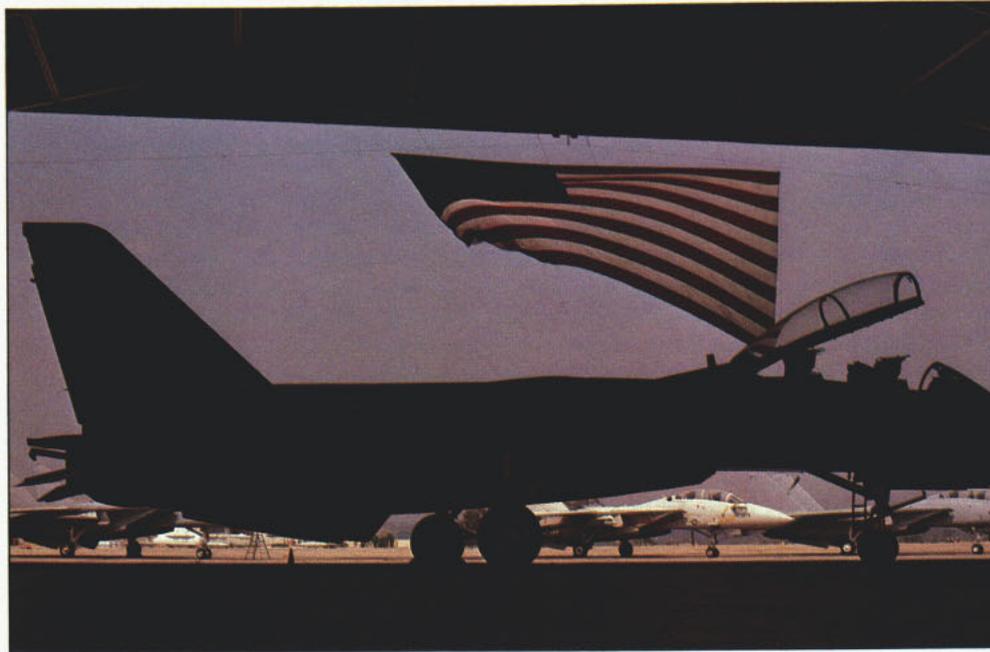
In addition to training Cruise and co-star Edwards in water survival, Kauber's crew provided technical assistance to Scott during the filming of open ocean rescue scenes.

"As it turned out, it was a good thing we were on the scene," Kauber said. Scott had selected the Coast Guard to do the helicopter rescue scenes. But, as Kauber pointed out, "He hadn't taken into account some of the differences between the Navy's SAR training and the Coast Guard's training.

The scene called for the pilot and the co-pilot to be hoisted, together, into the helo. The Coast Guard doesn't train for that sort of operation. "As the scene was shot and reshot, it became obvious that the Coast Guard swimmer was getting tired," Kauber said. "The swimmer finally told the director, 'I can't do it anymore. I gotta rest.'"

In the movies—more so than just about anywhere else—time is money. When Kauber told Scott that two-man hoists were a routine part of the Navy's SAR training, Scott put Kauber into the Coast Guard suit and finished shooting the scene.

If none of his scenes get cut, Kauber will appear three times in the film; once



as a Coast Guard swimmer, and again as a substitute for Cruise in a life raft. But the third and best moment in his film work came when Kauber and his brother, Mark, an aviation ordnanceman 1st class and instructor at the Basic Underwater Demolition School for Seals (BUDS/SEALS), got to strut their stuff high above San Diego's skyline. Mark was

outfitted in a Soviet pilot's uniform. The brothers did a free fall together during a parachute drop.

"It was all our scene, Kauber said as he recalled the thrill. "We set it up, then jumped together when we were signaled."

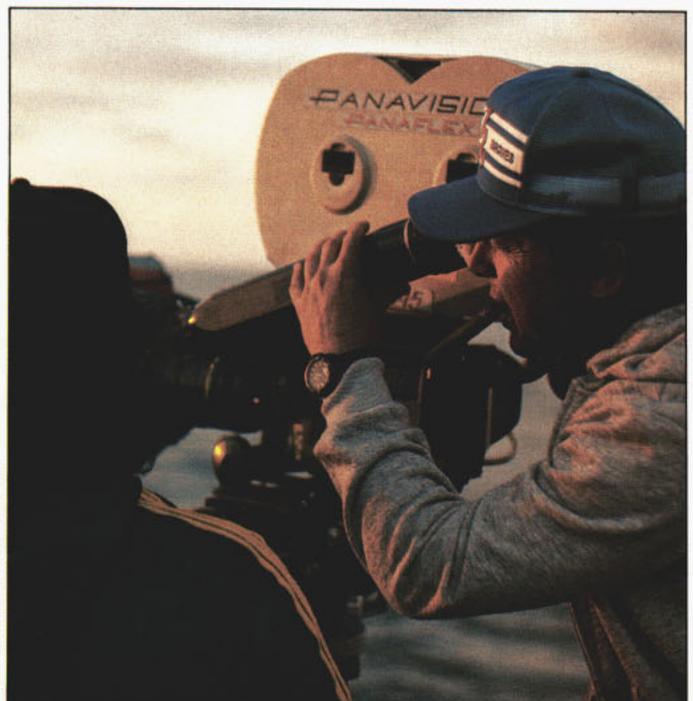
Lt.Cmdr. Richard J. "Warlock" Bradley, executive officer of Fighter Squadron 213, enjoyed a temporary pro-

motion when he played the role of an admiral aboard *Enterprise*. According to

Navy experience, manpower and logistical support enabled the Hollywood people to concentrate on the business end of the camera.



Photo by PH1 Harold J. Gerwien



Bradley, in his scene he congratulates Cruise for downing two Soviet MiGs. Bradley joked that the MiGs might not be the only thing that gets shot down. "I could end up on the cutting room floor."

Pilots from Fighter Squadrons 11, 124 and 211 will appear in the backgrounds of certain scenes in the film. They said they had to audition for the parts. "We

volunteered to be in the film, but it was the people from Paramount who made the final selection," said Lt.j.g. Bruce Fecht. "I guess they wanted to look us over first."

Hollywood has spotlighted the Navy in several recent films. "Winds of War," a TV mini-series, and "Final Countdown," a major theatrical release, were

both based on naval themes. Then there was the film, "Taps," in which Tom Cruise appeared as a military cadet. Now, with the Navy added to Cruise's repertoire of cinematic masterpieces, and considering the excitement involved in filming "Top Gun," it can be said that Tom Cruise's film career is "Not just a job . . . It's an adventure." □

Navy saves sinking star

Navy search and rescue instructors saved the life of movie actor Tom Cruise during the filming of "Top Gun."

Ironically, the rescue came during the shooting of a sequence that depicts Cruise as a Navy F-14 fighter pilot rescuing his radar intercept officer after their plane has crashed into the ocean.

In the scene, an articulated dummy (a mannequin built to accurately represent a human form) was put in place of co-star Anthony Edwards. Outfitted in flight gear and a parachute, the dummy was deliberately sunk below Cruise's life raft.

A major problem faced by all downed pilots is a possibility that their parachutes might fill with water and pull them under the ocean's surface. That is precisely what happened to the dummy in the rescue scene. Cruise, when he tried to pull up the dummy, became entangled in the parachute's lines.

While underwater photographers filmed the action from below, the movie company's safety divers recognized the danger Cruise was in. They immediately surfaced and yelled for help. The Navy came to the rescue, with Aviation Electronics Technician 1st Class John Buttler and Aviation Ordnanceman 2nd Class Daryl Silva responding to the call.

Buttler piloted their motorized raft to the scene, and Silva grabbed Cruise, who was being pulled farther under water by the chute. After shutting off their raft's motor, Buttler helped Silva pull Cruise to the surface.

"John and I were partially submerged, holding onto Cruise," Silva said. "Somehow—we managed to pull him up a little farther."

When Cruise's head broke the surface, Silva dove under to disentangle the parachute lines. "I dug my knees in just under the raft's tube, holding Cruise with all the strength in my arms," Buttler said.

"At this point, Cruise was unconscious, his body was limp," Silva recalled. "The parachute lines had been wrapped around his wrist and the big aviator's watch he had on."

After Cruise was freed, the dummy and its flight gear quickly sank right to the bottom.

Cruise recovered in the life raft and

continued filming as SAR swimmers stayed nearby.

Silva is a SAR instructor from the HC-1 Search and Rescue Swim School at NAS North Island. Buttler has since transferred from HC-1 to HSL-31. Several SAR instructors worked as advisors to "Top Gun's" director Tony Scott and provided technical assistance during the shooting of the open ocean sequences. □

Flynn is assigned to FltAVComPac, San Diego.

Navy safety divers work to position a parachute during filming of a rescue scene, a scene that eventually required a real rescue.

