

George E. Van Hagen and the Grey Goose.

This is my record of the Grey Goose story, when my plane was hit by one of those big fellas, during a flight out of U.S. Navy airbase, Creeds Virginia in 1945. At the time I was a member of US Navy Squadron VF27. Our airfield was supposed to be the shortest landing strip the Navy had in service. Just right for Navy pilots getting ready to land on a Carrier. The problem was, it was surrounded by the Dismal Swamp, with alligators waiting at both ends. But that wasn't our major hazard, which were the birds. They came in all sizes- Gulls, Pelicans, Pigeons, Geese, etc. It was not a problem if you were in clear sky, so they could see you but if it was cloudy you had a problem.

One day I was flying through the area and into a large billowing Cumulus cloud, when I met one of the big feathery fellows. It was a granddaddy Grey Goose and we. collided. I had Goose feathers, blood, guts and bone all over my wind shield. My prop was knocked off balance and my plane began to shake. I knew I had to get down quick. "May Day, May Day," I called Creed's Base, "This is Navy 5/2, I have an emergency. I've been hit by a Goose.

I was hanging out of the cockpit in order to see ahead, the windshield was useless. Well, I got down okay and was greeted by a fire truck and ambulance. They towed the plane away and took me to "SickBay" for examination. I had a -cut on my nose, other than that, I was pronounced fit and ready for flight tomorrow.

The next day when I reported to the flight line for My plane assignment, I was greeted by a group of mechanics who had various comments to make. They then pointed to My new plane and gave me the "Thumbs Up". When I got to My plane and climbed up on the wing (The F6F Hellcat was a big hunk of flying machine, powered by a Pratt & Whitney R-2800 engine. It could make 400 knots or better and carried

Six, 50 caliber machine guns in the wings plus rockets or Bombs when you needed them. It was a beautiful fighting tool, and proved to be the Navy's TOP GUN, in WWII. As I came to the cockpit, I noticed something special.

The mechanics had taken it upon themselves to paint a victory flag beneath my cockpit window.

It was white, with a picture of a "Grey Goose", symbolizing, my first air victory.

A picture attached, was taken a few days later, after the Grey Goose incident and shows a small scratch on my nose, the result of my air-adventure.

"Keep 'em Flying" / George E. Van Hagen



