

Navy League of the U.S. | Imperial Valley Council December 2019 Speaker Biography

CAPTAIN DAN PEDERSON, USN (Ret.)

First “Skipper of the Navy’s TOPGUN Fighter School

On March 3, 1969 the United States Navy established an elite school for the top one percent of its pilots. Its purpose was to teach the lost art of aerial combat and to insure that the handful of men who graduated were the best fighter pilots in the world. They succeeded.

Today, the Navy calls it Fighter Weapons School. The flyers call it...

It was in 1968 after heavy aircraft losses over North Vietnam that the Chief of Naval Operations sought to have research conducted

to determine the cause. The Navy’s conclusions, published in the “Ault Report” determined that the problem stemmed from inadequate aircrew training in air combat maneuvering, and recommended the establishment of an advanced fighter weapons school.

Our April speaker, Captain Dan Pederson, United States Navy (retired), was the first Officer in Charge of TOPGUN. Captain Pederson led the initial formation of the graduate course which has survived 45 years while attaining international fame and respect as the acknowledged very “Best in Fighter Weaponry.”

As a Naval Aviator, and combat veteran, Captain Pederson accumulated 6100 flight hours in 31 aircraft types and survived 1014 arrested carrier landings.

He served as the Commanding Officer of the aircraft carrier USS RANGER CV-61, the super tanker USS Wichita AOR-1, Carrier Air Wing 15 deployed aboard the USS Coral Sea CV-43, Fighter Squadron 143 onboard the USS Enterprise CVN-65, and also served as the Deputy Commander for Operations in the US Pacific Fleet.

Captain Pederson has extensive experience in flight testing, aircraft maintenance, logistics and aircraft performance analysis.

He co-authored the book *Scream of Eagles* with author, Robert Wilcox, which recounts the formation of TOPGUN. He has recently authored a new book, *TOPGUN: An American Story*, released in March 2019.

Following Captain Pederson’s naval service, he went on serve as the Western Region Operations Manager for Comptek Research, a high tech software and systems integration firm before becoming the Director of Business Alliances and Industry Relations for Pacific Telesis-PacTel Spectrum Services. He is now the principal of Yankee Development Company, LLC in the creation of a private destination resorts in Colorado.

Captain Pederson holds a B.A. in Political Science from the University of Rhode Island, and is a graduate of the Naval War College, and holds Aviation Safety Post Graduate Certification, USC at USNPGS, Monterey, California.

Captain Pederson and his wife, Mary Beth are the parents of six children.

