Flying Black Ponies: The Navy's Close Air Support Squadron in Vietnam

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The tragic, the comic, the terrifying, the poignant are all part of the story of the Black Pony pilots who distinguished themselves in the Mekong Delta during the Vietnam War. Flying their turboprop Broncos "down and dirty, low and slow," they killed more of the enemy and saved more allied lives with close-air support than all the other naval squadrons combined during the three years they saw action. Author Kit Lavell was part of this squadron of "black sheep" given a chance to make something of themselves flying these dangerous missions. The U.S. Navy's only land-based attack squadron, Light Attack Squadron Four (VAL-4) flew support missions for the counter insurgency forces, SEALs, and allied units in borrowed, propeller-driven OV-10s. For fixed-wing aircraft they were dangerous, unorthodox missions, a fact readers quickly come to appreciate.

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