

How “Warthog” stayed the A-10 Nickname

The A-10 was/is officially christened the “Thunderbolt II” – named after the iconic World War II fighter the P-47 Thunderbolt. The P-47, though, because it was large, tough, and could drop bombs and strafe as well as fight in air-to-air combat soon became the “Jug” to its pilots. Along those same perceptions, the A-10 became the “Warthog” to its pilots.

But USAF “leadership” did not take kindly to the Warthog tag. USAF “leadership” wanted nicer, more “correct” names for the airplanes. For example, the USAF conducted seven “name the F-111” contests. Each time the name “Aardvark” won, and the results were discarded. The F-111 never did get an “official” name. So “Warthog” was not liked.

Ergo, USAF “leadership” formerly banned the name “Warthog” for the A-10. “Warthog” or just “Hog” could not be used on any publication, checklist, or document concerning the A-10. At Davis-Monthan AFB, the home of all basic A-10 training, a huge sign on one of the buildings said, “Welcome to Warthog Country.” That was sandblasted away. The A-10 was going to be the Thunderbolt II and nothing else!

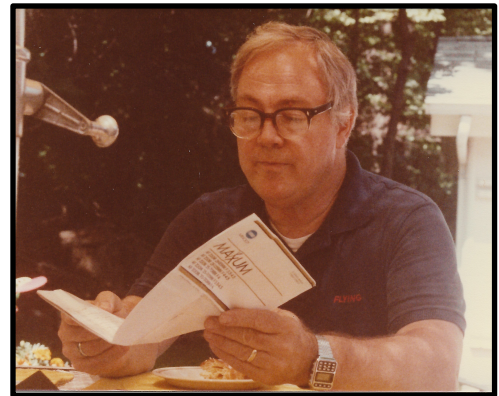
Then Fairchild, the A-10 manufacturer, commissioned Keith Ferris to do an A-10 painting to be donated to the USAF art collection. Keith was well known to the USAF and had done more than several beautiful paintings of USAF aircraft. He had painted a 75’ mural of a B-17 raid for the US Aviation Museum and was known for perfection.

Keith came out to Nellis AFB to get ideas for the A-10 painting. He hung around the 66th Fighter Weapons Squadron, the new A-10 Fighter Weapons School, and picked the brains of the school’s cadre. Then, using his status with the USAF, he got rides in an A-37 to chase and photograph Weapons School A-10s on training missions.

Keith took his photos and ideas back to his home and studio in Morris Plains, New Jersey. There he sketched ideas, trying different angles and different scenarios. Finally, he came up with an idea and put it into a painting.

So, finally, here’s Keith, sitting at his easel, staring at the finished painting. Keith’s wife, Peggy, walked by and asked what he was doing. Keith told her he just didn’t know what to name the painting. Peggy looked at it and, in a blink of an eye, said “It’s a Warthog at Work.”

Jump forward in time and picture this: Fairchild representatives with Keith presenting an original Keith Ferris painting to the USAF Chief of Staff to be hung in the USAF art collection. The CSAF graciously accepted the painting, thanking both Fairchild and Keith. The name on the painting? Yup! “Warthog at Work”





That made it official acceptance of the A-10 as the Warthog. USAF “leadership” lost, and it’s been the Warthog ever since.

So, for all Hog drivers – past and present – when you get together to imbibe and tell stories, always pause, rise, and drink a toast to Peg Ferris. Without her, the Warthog name would be a short blurb in history. Keith may have done the painting, but Peg saved the day.



The story is true. I’ve know Keith and Peg for many years, and my wife and I have visited their home in Morris Plains. Keith and Peg told us the story while we were sitting around a fire in their back yard.

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