

# “INDIAN GAL” ICON

(WESTPAC 1969)

By Jim Hughes

The HS-6 Indian Gal Icon depicted at the right was created and used during HS-6's 1969 WESTPAC Cruise. How it came about and why is a story few if any know. There are some who may remember the icon and many who have never seen it and could not care less. As political correctness became a concern many years back, I'm sure the squadron namesake and related icons became its victim. With the reunion coming up, and for those who remember, I would like to share the story of the '69 West Pac Indian Gal.



I reported to HS-6 after completing HS-10, in Sept of 1968 coming under Skipper Bill Reed and just in time to be part of the early preparations for the 1969 Wet Pac Cruise.

At this point let me add a piece of relevant information leading toward this particular “Indian Gal” story. CDR Bill Reed's wife was named Tut; and Skipper Reed relayed how he and Tut had a daily ritual where after he arrived home they shared a glass of wine and talked over the day's events at the squadron. Tut, he intimated, provided him advice and was his sounding board.

Back to the story at hand... it was during this time several of us nugget JO's began hearing stories of the Big Mother escapades and became familiar with the Indian Mother". Several of us thought it would be a neat idea to Indian Gal made for the '69 cruise and have it applied to WWII. This, we knew, was going to be good. On the how this idea could lose. That this was a JO plan in the approached Skipper Reed to get his go-ahead, leaving him to let us move forward.



Gal everyone called “Big have a template of the old the aircraft like the nose art of surface we could not see works was no secret. I him with sketches and asking

In short order, several things happened. WO Frank Strong and AFCM Abbott informed me separately I better not be planning to deface the paint schemes or it would be me, not the troops cleaning the “crap” off the aircraft post-cruise. Oops! This was followed shortly after by Skipper Reed hinting Big Mother's “boobs” were not passing the Tut filter at their afternoon wine bar.

We kind of gave up on the idea but there seemed enough interest and support for us to come up with something instead of nothing. So we pressed on! I remember it was discussed instead of paint that an easily removable decal on the pilot's side windows would be a good option and good location. Testing potential materials proved there was an easily removable decal film base available, but what to put on it was the problem. How does one find a “suitable” Indian Gal?!?

Looking through periodicals for a “suitable Indian Gal” model I found a Raquel Welch candidate. And Carl Lasala's wife, Suzi, offered to use that picture and render a pen and ink draft which Tut, I mean, Skipper



Reed easily approved; so we went to press on the decals eventually placing them on the aft-most cockpit side windows (seen below) for the deployment. Suzi was gracious to spend the time doing this and wanted no credit but I prevailed on her to use her “SL” initials and so she placed them on the skirt hem design.



Eventually a straight arrow was also added to the paint scheme and removed at cruise end. I'm not sure how the arrows made it but I was “removal” exempt.

