FLYING HIGH AGAIN

VICTOR GLOVER IS DRIVEN ABOVE THE LIMIT

BY SCOTT ROARK

STRAPPED INTO THE COCKPIT of his F-18 Hornet, Lieutenant **Victor Glover (GENE '99)** studies the controls as the scorching Mojave sun glints off his crash helmet visor, reflecting the open runway before him. The desert horizon simmers as clearance is given.

You can almost hear Kenny Loggins beneath the roar of the jet's thrusters as Glover accelerates down the runway, soaring into the oven-baked air at supersonic speeds, tilting his jet fighter as he blasts through barren canyons, above dry open plains and into the blue.

It's another typical day on the job for Glover, a fighter and test pilot for the U.S. Navy's Air Test and Evaluation Squadron THREE ONE (VX-31), stationed at the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station in California. Glover is no stranger to the danger zone – his routine flights over the California desert pale to the 24 combat missions he flew over Iraq.

His first combat mission, flown at night, was extremely memorable. "I was soaring over a country I had never been in, looking down on the moving map in my jet," recalls Glover. He could see the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and Babylon near Al Hillah. Fires were burning across the dark landscape and tracer rounds were lighting up the night sky. The mission was concluded with a nighttime landing on an aircraft carrier, "which is always exciting," Glover said.

continued on page 20…

Victor Glover at China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station

(L) Glover piloting his F-18 high over Iraq (R) Glover in the cockpit

It's been a remarkable journey for Glover, who came to Cal Poly as a first-generation minority student. "I always knew I would go to college – it was paying for it that was a challenge," he said.

Glover grew up in Pomona and Ontario. His father was a police officer, his mother was a bookkeeper.

"My mother and father are my idols because they managed to get me to adulthood alive and healthy," Glover said. "Now that I have kids of my own, I realize how amazing that is – especially from their perspective. My parents had it rough."

A former MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science and Achievement) student in elementary school, Glover's PSAT scores earned him the distinction of a National Achievement Scholar – and the full-ride academic offers started pouring in, mostly from East Coast schools. Another offer came from USC.

'I ALWAYS TELL KIDS 'ENGINEERING IS A GREAT PREPARATION FOR ANYTHING' – IT PAYS COUNTLESS DIVIDENDS IN THE END'

"My Dad said 'Let's check out one more school' since I wanted to stay in California," said Glover. They visited Cal Poly and met wrestling coach Lennis Cowell, who offered Glover a wrestling scholarship. Both knew that Cal Poly had an excellent engineering program and they made the decision on the spot.

Glover was a freshman Cal Poly wrestler, competing with then team-captain **Chuck Liddell (BUS '95)** (see page 14). "Chuck was an intimating guy even back then," Glover said laughing.

Engineering was a natural choice for Glover, since math and numbers always came easy. He would go on interactive field trips to Harvey Mudd College while growing up. An elementary school teacher told Glover that he was going to be an engineer someday. "I thought he meant driving trains. So I thought 'cool!'" Glover said with a smile.

Glover cites his Cal Poly engineering degree and athletic experience as fundamental for what he does today. One of the requirements for flight training as a Naval test pilot is an undergraduate degree in engineering, math or science. Athletics taught him the value of teamwork and camaraderie.

Another passion for Glover is diversity in higher education. While at Cal Poly, he played an instrumental role in the creation of a Retention and Outreach Center, a support system for minority students. Glover served on the Coalition for Diversity and acted as a spokesperson to get the center funded through the Associated Students Inc.

The Retention and Outreach Center has evolved into the present-day Partners Program, which assists many minority students through formal partnerships with select high schools. "The students banded together and worked really hard to make that center a reality," said Glover. "That year was very busy and emotional – but I'm proud of what we did. I feel like we left the campus a better place."

He also met his wife, **Dionna Glover (CFD)**, while at Cal Poly. They keep busy with their four daughters, Genesis, Maya, Joia and Corinne.

What's next for Glover? Setting his sights skyward and beyond. He is in the running for the Astronaut Candidate Program, potentially following in the footsteps of other Cal Poly alums, such as **Greg Chamitoff (EE '84)** (see page 7).

Other more down-to-earth ambitions include living overseas and learning a new language. Perhaps work in the Multicultural Engineering Program at Cal Poly and teach someday. "I love working with students," said Glover.

In the meantime, a lot of flying is slated for Glover's future. "My Cal Poly engineering education is directly responsible for the opportunities that I have today," he said. "I always tell kids 'engineering is a great preparation for anything' – it pays countless dividends in the end." □