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.

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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.

Glover was a freshman Cal Poly wrestler, competing with then team-captain Chuck Liddell (BUS ’95) (see page 14). “Chuck was an intimidating 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 un-