

History and Biography

Modern History

The Kilrathi War

The Border Worlds Conflict

The Megacarrier Program

Biographies

Second Lieutenant Lance Casey

Any discussion of Lance Casey's life (at least at this early point in his career) must begin with his father. Major Michael Casey began his career when he was assigned to the TCS Tiger's Claw after it lost more than half its fighters in the legendary battle ironically dubbed Custer's Carnival. An ROTC-trained pilot, Mike Casey served adequately but with little inspiration for two years. He would probably have been rotated out to shore duty, except that in late 2647 he received news that his wife and 15-month-old daughter had been killed in a Kilrathi terror raid on their undefended home planet. After the funeral, Casey's kill ratio showed an almost immediate jump to about twice its former levels, and from there it kept climbing. Casey never disobeyed orders or took overtly suicidal chances, he just became extremely good at killing cats. Both in and out of battle, he cultivated a dispassionate, emotionless demeanor that soon earned him a new call sign — "Iceman." By the time the Iceman's next scheduled rotation came around, nobody on board the Tiger's Claw was inclined to argue when he requested to remain at his current assignment, and there he stayed for seven years, becoming one of the top aces on the Tiger's Claw's already legendary flight roster.

In 2655, shortly after the Firekka engagement, Casey took some long-delayed shore leave. While on vacation, he met Kylie Richards, a waitress. A few months later, Casey hastily arranged a one-week emergency leave during which the two were married. Six weeks later, Michael Casey was killed in the ambush that destroyed the Tiger's Claw. Six months after his parents' marriage, Lance Casey was born.

Lance Casey's academic career was undistinguished. His only extracurricular activities were sports, none of which he starred in. He seldom got into trouble, but his teachers described him as "unmotivated," and "directionless." After high school he took a couple years off, living at home and doing menial jobs for spending money. During his final year of eligibility, he applied to the Space Force Academy. If not for the special dispensations granted to the orphan children of aces, he would not have been accepted.

During his academy years, however, Casey found himself. He proved to be a natural pilot and the pleasure he found in his new calling gave him the motivation to firm up his grades. He did not, however, become a model officer cadet. Along with his new confidence and motivation came a new brashness, and he accumulated a truly exceptional collection of demerits.

Upon graduation, in a misjudgement on a scale only a military bureaucracy is capable of, Casey was assigned to a milk run — shuttling ambassadors and other high-powered diplomats around the Confed in ultra-fast, luxurious transports. His performance in the cockpit was exemplary, but the assignment left him entirely too much leisure for mischief between missions. He narrowly avoided career-ending charges several times.

Unbeknownst to Casey, however, his career was being quietly monitored by his father's former commander and best friend, Senator James Taggart, a man with almost godlike influence in the Space Forces. It was due to Taggart that Casey was rotated off diplomatic duty and on to the new megacarrier TCS *Midway*. Taggart hoped that in the discipline of an active duty and (hopefully in due time) elite fighter squadron Casey would at find the last key piece to the ongoing puzzle of his purpose in life.

Commodore Christopher "Maverick" Blair

Chris Blair is the most decorated fighter pilot in Confed history, the 11th greatest ace of the Kilrathi conflict*, holder of the all time record for Kilrathi ace kills, and universally hailed as the “Savior of the Confederation.”

He wanted to be a crop duster.

Born to subsistence farmers on a remote colony world, Blair’s father died in a farm-equipment accident when he was young, and his mother went off-world to find work. She later remarried, leaving Christopher to be raised by his maternal grandparents. A serious, studious child, Blair applied himself diligently to his studies. He conceived his ambition to become a pilot about the time he entered high school. Since extracurricular activities were necessary for an academy appointment, he took up wrestling. Applying himself to the sport with his usual tenacity, by his senior year he was able to qualify as all-sector and take planetary champion in his weight class (which sounds more impressive than it was, given the population of his planet). His home system was allowed one at-large Space Force Academy appointee every three years. Between his athletic achievements and a straight-A GPA, Blair was able to secure his place in the 2650 plebe class.

Blair’s original ambitions were to serve out his six-year academy obligation, then take his accumulated combat pay and flight training back home, where he’d continue a personal (and hopefully profitable) air war against the virulent insectoid pests of his home world.

At the academy, Blair achieved his usual level of quiet competence. His GPA dropped from an A to a B in his freshman year, and never dropped again after that. His flight instructors praised his analytical, by-the-book precision in space. He was originally given the callsign “Maverick” as an ironic reference to his by-the-book approach.

Upon graduation, he was posted to the *Tiger’s Claw*. Almost 15 years old, the *Claw* was by no means the cutting edge of Confed military tech, but its roster of fighter pilots, under the command of Major James Taggart, was legendary. Even the Kilrathi viewed the *Claw* (with its totamistic, feline name) with an almost superstitious dread and hatred.

Even among this illustrious crew, however, Blair rapidly distinguished himself. Quiet and unassuming between missions, he rose rapidly through the ranks based entirely on his flying prowess, during some of the heaviest fighting of that period of the war. Among numerous other achievements, it was during his first year aboard the *Tiger’s Claw* that he first earned the enmity of the Kilrathi Crown Prince, Thrakath.

Blair’s rising star fell rapidly, however, when he *Tiger’s Claw*, on a raid against the Kilrathi sector headquarters at K’Tithrak Mang, was attacked and destroyed by Kilrathi fighters equipped with their newly-invented cloaking device. Only a handful of pilots out on patrol survived the attack on the Midway, and of these pilots only Christopher Blair saw the Kilrathi cloaks in use. However, his “black box” flight recorder malfunctioned, and his stories of “disappearing” Kilrathi fighters were dismissed as an excuse to cover for his own cowardly retreat. Although his court-martial could not muster sufficient evidence for a conviction, his fleet commander, Admiral Tolwyn, fervently believed that Blair was a coward, and pulled strings to see that he was posted as far from the front lines as possible.

At this point in his career, there was absolutely nothing to prevent Blair from continuing with his original plans and returning home after his six year Academy obligation was over, but Blair’s characteristic tenacity asserted himself in the form of a colossal stubbornness. He refused to resign from the Space Forces until his name was cleared. Perhaps he wouldn’t have been so adamant if not for the publication in 2657 of the “nonfiction” book *A Trecherous Hero* by Janet Williamson, a sensationalist exposé of his supposed “betrayal” of the *Tiger’s Claw* that remained on the bestseller lists for almost a year. Blair remained assigned to the remote and desolate Caernavon station for 10 years, branded throughout Confed as “The Coward of K’Tithrak Mang.”

In 2666 the war finally came to Caernavon. Almost by accident Blair saved the carrier TCS *Concordia* from a Kilrathi strike force. With the wounded *Concordia* chronically short on pilots, they were forced to make the maximum use of Blair’s talents. About the same time the Kilrathi started deploying cloaked fighters on the front lines, confirming Blair’s long-contested report. Between this new evidence and his contributions to the Caernavon operation, his reputation was cleared at long last, his rank was restored (with back pay) and he was officially reassigned to the *Concordia*. The commander of the *Concordia*’s fighter squadron was Colonel Jeanette “Angel” Devereaux, a fellow survivor of the *Tiger’s Claw*, and she and Blair formed a romantic relationship.

Over the next four years, Blair flew as few pilots had flown before. At the time he was in his early 30s, at the height of both skill and experience, and he had something to prove. Hardened by experience, he was now willing to take chances, bend the rules and butt heads with the brass when he felt it was needed. During those four years time he averaged over 400 confirmed kills per year. Early in that period he achieved two important personal vindications — a key role in the final downfall of K'Tithrak Mang, and the capture of Prince Thrakath (though Thrakath later engineered an escape back to Kilrathi space).

When the Concordia was destroyed and Admiral Tolwyn had Blair reassigned to the dilapidated TCS *Victory*, Blair assumed it was because of a lingering grudge, but Tolwyn's real plans were far subtler than that. He actually saw the unassuming *Victory*, and Blair in particular, as central figures in his elaborate scheme to destroy Kilrah with the new, top-secret "Behemoth" project. When the Behemoth project was betrayed by a Kilrathi deep-cover operative, Blair was again approached to take the lead on an alternative plan, to deliver the Temblor bomb to Kilrah. At the same time, he learned that Angel had been captured by the Kilrathi and executed while preparing for the Tremblor project.

The Tremblor operation made Blair the Confed's greatest war hero, but he was characteristically uncomfortable in the spotlight. He married and returned home to, at last, attempt to become a farmer. However his marriage ended badly and his farm never showed a profit. (He has never remarried.) He was on the verge of bankruptcy when Admiral Tolwyn recalled him to active duty to fly in the Border Worlds conflict.

During this action Blair, together with several of his wartime comrades, transferred their allegiance from Confed to the Border Worlds, when they came to believe that the entire conflict was being engineered by the elite Black Lance Confed flying unit. It was directly due to the actions of Blair and his cabal of defectors that the Black Lance conspiracy, and Tolwyn's part in it, was revealed to the Confed senate. Once again, Blair had come through apparent disgrace to be hailed as a hero.

Blair spent the next few years as a flight instructor at the academy, until he was approached by James Taggart, now chairman of the Confed Senate's Armed Forces Committee, to return to active duty as chief military liaison for Confed's new "megacARRIER" program. For administrative reasons, Blair transferred his commission from the Space Force to the Navy, where he was promoted to the rank of Commodore. Blair's current ambitions are to see the first active-duty megacARRIER, the TCS *Midway*, through it's shakedown cruise, then begin an active semi-retirement consisting of some research, some teaching, and the occasional low-key public appearance.

**Blair's kill ranking is higher than it sounds, because of the time during which he flew. Most of the top aces of the three-decade Kilrathi Conflict flew during its bloody early years, when defensive technology on both sides was minimal, and the Kilrathi were far more inclined to all-out suicide assaults than they would become in the later years of the war. Blair and Maj. Todd "Maniac" Marshall are the only aces in the war's top 40 to enlist after Custer's Carnival, making Blair and Marshall far and away the top aces of their generation.*

Major Todd "Maniac"

Maniac has been described as "a legend in his own mind," but in his case the reality doesn't lag far behind the fantasy. Now in the twilight of his active-duty career, Marshall is seen as a living example of those uncontrollable, larger-than-life figures that sometimes stride across the pages of military history. The modern descendent of Von Richtofen, Patton, Yaeger ... and Custer.

Marshall's father, Arnold "Boomer" Marshall, was a star college athlete who was drafted into the Marine corps during the early days of the war, where he served as a platoon leader, attaining the rank of Captain. When a debilitating wound to the shoulder ended both his military career and his hopes for professional sports, Marshall became the assistant coach of a minor-league football team. The youngest of four sons, Todd grew up in an environment that can most charitably be called "intensely competitive." If he made straight "A"s in school, it was not because of academic motivation, but because "B"s were regarded as failure in the Marshall household, and failure was not tolerated. His size, speed and domestic influences also conspired to make him a solid first stringer in all school sports. Marshall's attitudes and accomplishments greatly impressed academy recruiters, and he was accepted on an athletic scholarship.

Many who have reviewed Marshall's academy record are amazed at how little it echoes his flamboyant "Maniac" persona. His grades are good, and his disciplinary record is largely clean (other than a couple of demerits for

borderline insubordination, and an occasional reference to undue boastfulness in a faculty evaluation). In the cockpit, however, he rapidly earned his callsign. His high-risk, seat-of-the-pants flying style came far closer to washing him out of the academy than his grades or conduct ever did. Only the fact that his marksmanship and simulator scores were the highest in his class allowed him to graduate with his wings.

It was only after they were posted to the *Tiger's Claw* that Maniac's rivalry with Blair began to intensify. In the academy Maniac had always been the brilliant (if erratic) star, and Blair had faded into the background. In combat, however, the advantages of Blair's no-nonsense efficiency exerted himself, and Maniac found himself challenged in the only benchmark that really mattered — the killboard.

Like Blair, Maniac faced an early disgrace. He accidentally destroyed a Confed ship, resulting in the deaths of 16 people. Although he was cleared of any charges in the incident, it shattered his self-created illusion of invincibility, and he entered a long depression that culminated in a full nervous breakdown. He was hospitalized for several months, which is how he survived the destruction of the *Tiger's Claw*.

In a more civilized war he might have been medically discharged and sent home, but Confed could not afford to discard pilots of Marshall's caliber, even if they were damaged. Upon discharge from the hospital, Marshall was assigned to a test pilot unit, a role at which he excelled. It was during his time as a test pilot that this swaggering, wise-cracking Maniac persona fully emerged.

The need for top fighter pilots at the front remained chronic, and eventually Marshall returned to combat. He showed no sign of his former instability. His flying was more confident and tactically innovative than it had been as a rookie. The legend of the Maniac began to grow. His most spectacular exploit came while leading a wing of light fighters on a routine patrol in Deneb sector. Unexpectedly, they came upon two heavy Kilrathi battleships. With no torpedo bombers available, Maniac's whole strike fleet was completely vulnerable to a surprise strike from the cap ships, except that Maniac, through dazzling piloting alone, actually managed to maneuver the two ships into a fatal collision with one another. To this day tacticians still study the tapes of the mission and argue whether the feat was sheer brilliance or sheer dumb luck. With the Maniac, however, the dividing line between the two is never completely clear.

Over the last decade of the war, Marshall flew constantly, rotating between combat tours and test pilot postings. Eventually Tolwyn had him assigned him to the *Tiger's Claw*, an assignment which, like Blair, he originally saw as a punishment. Marshall flew with Blair on the mission to Kilrah, and was the last escort fighter destroyed on the mission, on the very edge of Kilrah's atmosphere. He ejected and was taken prisoner by the Kilrathi, and was interrogated viciously on board a dreadnaught for several hours, until in the aftermath of the homeworld's destruction he was ordered to be given medical treatment in preparation for release.

After the war he resumed his pattern of alternating combat tours and test piloting, but the emphasis shifted towards testings — Maniac had little patience with peacetime patrol duties. When the Border Worlds conflict erupted, Marshall approached Admiral Tolwyn personally to request another chance at a combat tour. After that conflict he resumed the only adult life he'd ever known. He did manage over the course of several years to add several dozen Kilrathi to his lifetime kill total, thanks to increasingly fractious pirates, smugglers and rebels within the shards of the old empire.

Maniac's attitude towards command responsibility is mercurial to the point of being schizophrenic. He often complains loud and long about less-senior pilots getting promoted over him, but he also has been known to resist or even outright refuse any career-building assignments that threaten to take him out of the cockpit. Accepting the posting to the *Midway* as a personal favor to Senator Taggart, Maniac is at last contemplating the possibility of a career change, possibly retiring from active duty to become a consultant and test pilot for a civilian defense contractor. He's also making plans for his memoirs, working title, *Me: The Life and Battles of "Maniac" Marshall*. He has been married twice — the relationships lasting, respectively, three years and 22 days. He has no children.

Master Chief Petty Officer Rachel Coriolis

CPO Rachel Coriolis is the most decorated enlisted female in the Confed Navy, and generally regarded as one of the top five naval engineers on active duty (the other four are all flag-rank officers).

Coriolis was born on a Navy base, the middle child and only girl in a family of five. Her father was a Navy MP and career enlisted man, her mother was a nightclub singer (and, before her marriage, a showgirl). From earliest

childhood Rachel only wanted to do one thing — take starships and fighters apart, then fix them, and make them go faster. In school she excelled in science and math, though her other grades were unspectacular. She went to college and earned a degree in Mechanical Engineering. She took Naval ROTC and did well, but dropped out in her Junior year rather than accept a commission. Rachel inherited one thing from her father — a healthy contempt for officers, especially those who “don’t know their place.”

She rose rapidly through the ranks. Although the *Midway* was no plum assignment, she was the youngest flight deck Chief on Confed carrier at the time she took the assignment. During the final days of the war, aboard the *Midway*, she met and fell in love with Christopher Blair. Immediately after the war they were married.

After the war, however, she found herself completely unsuited to rural civilian life. A messy break up ensued and she re-enlisted. During her brief retirement she had resumed her education, and over the next several years she earned two post-graduate degrees while continuing to run Navy ships (Rachel has no doubt whatsoever who *really* runs any Navy ship she happens to be on, and her first name isn’t “Captain”). She began to publish regularly in engineering journals. She turned down several offers of instant Commissions to ranks as high as Captain.

Occasionally (largely due to Naval regulations about continuous combat tours) she could be lured away onto a research project for awhile, but she was always happiest with a busy flight deck firmly in her grasp. She entered the *Midway* development team late in the process, under the explicit promise that she could take over when the ship launched. Her time aboard the *Midway* has allowed her to put aside any lingering bitterness towards her ex-husband, and forge a strong, mature friendship with Blair.

Captain Eugene Wilford

Captain Wilford is a proud man. Proud to be a Naval Officer, and proud to be a colonial.

Wilford’s parents were on the first ship of settlers to land on their newly-opened Border World colony, and Eugene Wilford was the first child born on its soil. He grew up in a home 500 miles from the nearest neighbor, but passed his college entrance exams with flying colors. At that time the Border Worlds were beginning to think about the necessary for some kind of Joint Planetary Defense Force to protect against spaceborne criminals, terrorists or even Kilrathi saboteurs (the Kilrathi war was at its hottest at this point) and Wilford, at the urging of his parents and other colonial leaders back home, pursued ROTC training.

As a Border World colonist, Wilford was not technically a Confed citizen but (largely to advance the training of Wilford and a few others like him) the Border Worlds negotiated an agreement with the Confed military to conduct officer training programs. Thus, Wilford was commissioned as an active-duty Confed Naval officer. As the Kilrathi War dragged on into its third decade, what was originally intended as a four-year training tour became well over twice that length. Wilford was rapidly promoted to Captain, where he distinguished himself in both staff and command assignments.

When the war ended. Wilford was at last able to return home, to take up the long-delayed work of building a small but functional defensive fleet to make up the Border Worlds Navy. In light of his wartime experience, he was instantly made a Rear Admiral in charge of fleet operations.

When the Black Lance conflict began, Wilford was given the impossible task of organizing the small and technologically backwards Border Worlds navy to withstand the massive Confed forces which were (as the Border Worlders saw it) massing to sweep through their Union and bring them by force under Confed domination. The Border Worlds forces acquitted themselves with surprising distinction in that conflict, and (although the actions of conspirators more interested in prolonging conflict than in actual conquest must also be taken into account) it was largely due to Wilford’s efforts that the Border Worlds was able to hold off the Confed long enough for the Black Lance conspiracy to be brought to light, and a bilateral peace accord reached.

After the Black Lance affair, Confed and the Border Worlds moved aggressively to re-cement their damaged relationship. One of the diplomatic tools employed was a compact increasing military exchange and cooperation between the two governments, including provision for the transfer of officers of all ranks between the militaries of each. So it became possible for the Confed’s Senator Taggart, on the recommendation of Commodore Blair, to invite Wilford to transfer his commission to the TCN and become the commander of Confed’s first-ever megacarryer. The move also required Wilford to resume his last-held Confed rank of captain (under the terms of the Border Worlds military exchange program, he remains a rear admiral in the Border Worlds Naval Reserve), but

Wilford considered that a small price to pay, given the prestige of his new assignment, plus the sheer pleasure of commanding from the bridge once again.

He is married and has four children, the oldest of which will be entering the Confed Naval Academy (as a Border Worlds exchange cadet) in a matter of months.

Commander Patricia Drake

Known to her subordinates universally simply as "The CAG," Patricia Drake is the ranking Space Force officer onboard the TCS *Midway*. As the ship's Commander Air Group she manages all TCSF affairs on the midway with a firm hand and a no-nonsense, by-the-book attitude.

A Space Force brat from birth, her father, mother and sister are all pilots. When she was passed over for an Academy appointment (the slot she was competing for went to the Nephew of the Sector Governor) she disdained an SFROTC scholarship and enlisted, serving four years as a shuttle gunner before entering OCS and then Flight School. She graduated flight school only three months before the destruction of Kilrah, but did manage to see some action, both during the final days of the war and in cleanup operations after the surrender. Her combat tour took place on the carrier TCS Petrov, where she flew under the unlikely callsign "Bluebell." She now considers this callsign the one dark secret of an otherwise unblemished career.

Her postwar experience has run the gamut of peacetime military service: staff duty at fleet headquarters, company commander of a basic training unit, flight control officer at a major space port, and flight school instructor. She was selected for her slot on the TCS *Midway* based on her reputation as a top-notch training officer. She is considered a practically certain candidate for a General's stars, once the current crop of wartime-era top brass thins out a bit. She is married (her husband is a civilian architect) and has a four-year-old daughter.

Colonel Jacob "Hawk" Manley

A tough veteran commander, Hawk is the commander of the Black Widows, the *Midway's* senior combat squadron. His trademark is the large bowie knife he keeps on his person as often as is legally possible.

Jacob Manley grew up a street child on an economically depressed industrial world of Mylon 2. His mother abandoned him as an infant, leaving him to be raised by an alcoholic, unemployed father. Although every day of his childhood was a struggle for survival, Manley always knew that he had the potential to get out. He studied hard in school and earned good grades, and immediately after graduation he enlisted in the Space Force as a communications tech. It did not take long, however, until his superiors noticed his dedication and determination, and pegged him as officer material. In rapid order he moved on to OCS. While he was in flight school, the Kilrathi proton-bombed Mylon 2. Although he had no great sentimental attachment to his homeworld, its wanton destruction hardened Manley. He decided that if actions like Mylon 2 were what it took to win a war, he could be just as cold as the Kilrathi commanders who wiped out his friends and family.

Hawk flew for the last few years of the Kilrathi war. He didn't spend much time on the front lines, but he did manage to earn his five-kill Ace ribbon and a citation for bravery defending earth after the false peace of 2668. After the war, Hawk became an instructor at the TCSF flight school. He rapidly became known for his harsh standards of excellence. During a training exercise in an asteroid field, a trainee was killed undertaking a dangerous maneuver under Hawk's orders. Hawk was formally reprimanded for negligence, and dismissed from his flight school post. Although he was not (contrary to some rumors) drummed out of the service, he felt his career was effectively over and tendered his resignation from the Space Force.

He wandered aimlessly for awhile, finally landing in the Border Worlds, where he was offered a commission in their new planetary defense navy. Hawk rose rapidly in his new service, and distinguished himself during the Black Lance affair. He was, at last, regarded as the skilled career officer and hero he had always been meant to be.

When his Border Worlds CO, Rear Admiral Wilford, became Captain Wilford of the TCN, he brought Hawk along with him for the express purpose of becoming the top man on the *Midway's* flight roster. Leading the Black Widows, Hawk has proved to be a tough but popular squadron commander, although his barely-concealed distaste for his senior pilot, Maniac, does produce a palpable tension in the unit. He has never been married.

First Lieutenant (acting) Jean "Stiletto" Talvert