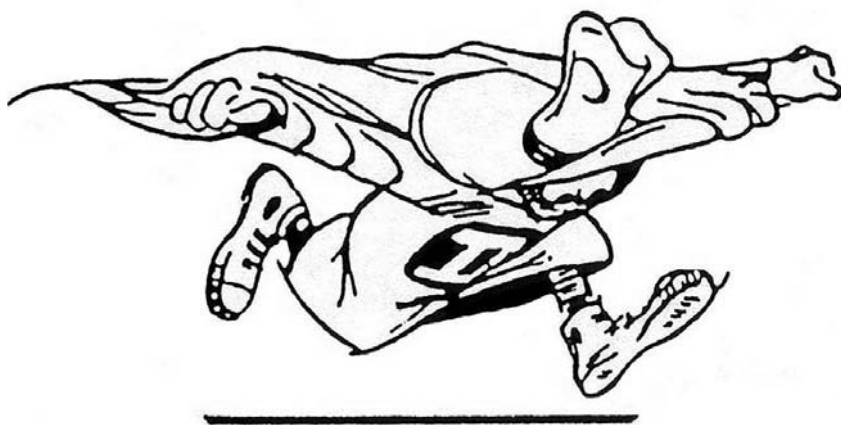




Origins of the "Spook"

By Unknown

As any researcher of the McDonnell *Phantom II* will tell you, you cannot tell the story of the *Phantom II* without some mention of the "Spook." This character has become almost as enduring as the *Phantom II* itself. Spook's image is pervasive throughout the *Phantom* community appearing at one time or another on almost everything associated with the *Phantom*. From manuals to aircraft tail feathers, from unit patches to coffee mugs, Spook is there.

Spook was created in 1962 by MCAIR Technical Artist Anthony "Tony" Wong. "I was a technical illustrator on structural repair and service manuals and handbooks - doing drawings and schematics - and my supervisor asked two of us in Product Support-Technical Illustrations to draw a figure for use on a shoulder patch," Tony said.

The result was the creation of what would become the symbolic spirit of the F-4 *Phantom II*. This then nameless little figure swiftly and silently stole the hearts and imaginations of almost everyone who ever had an association with the aircraft.

Born splayfooted, the little guy's original costume consisted of oversized sneakers, a tall, wide-brimmed hat, flowing black cape, and a gown (of sorts) with a bold "II"

emblem. Faceless, he only had two large eyes to give him a "mysterious mien."

His likeness soon appeared on shoulder patches and in publications, but he was still nameless. The name "Spook" is believed to have emerged as a handle for the character between February and September 1963 with the delivery of 27 Navy F-4Bs to the USAF's 12th Tactical Fighter Wing at MacDill AFB, Fla. An alternative that has been put forward is the possibility that the 4453rd Combat Crew Training Wing formed in 1964 at MacDill should be given the credit for the naming. Regardless of who named this little caricature "Spook," the name has stuck and another legend was born.

Tony goes on to explain, "Most shoulder patch figures used in the services at that time were animal types, much like the ones the Walt Disney artists drew for Air Force, Navy and Marine squadrons during World War II. My one and only attempt was the secretive little figure for the *Phantom II*, with hat, cape, and sneakers just as they are today. My reason for the sneakers? Well, this spook, as he is now called, moves swiftly - but quietly."

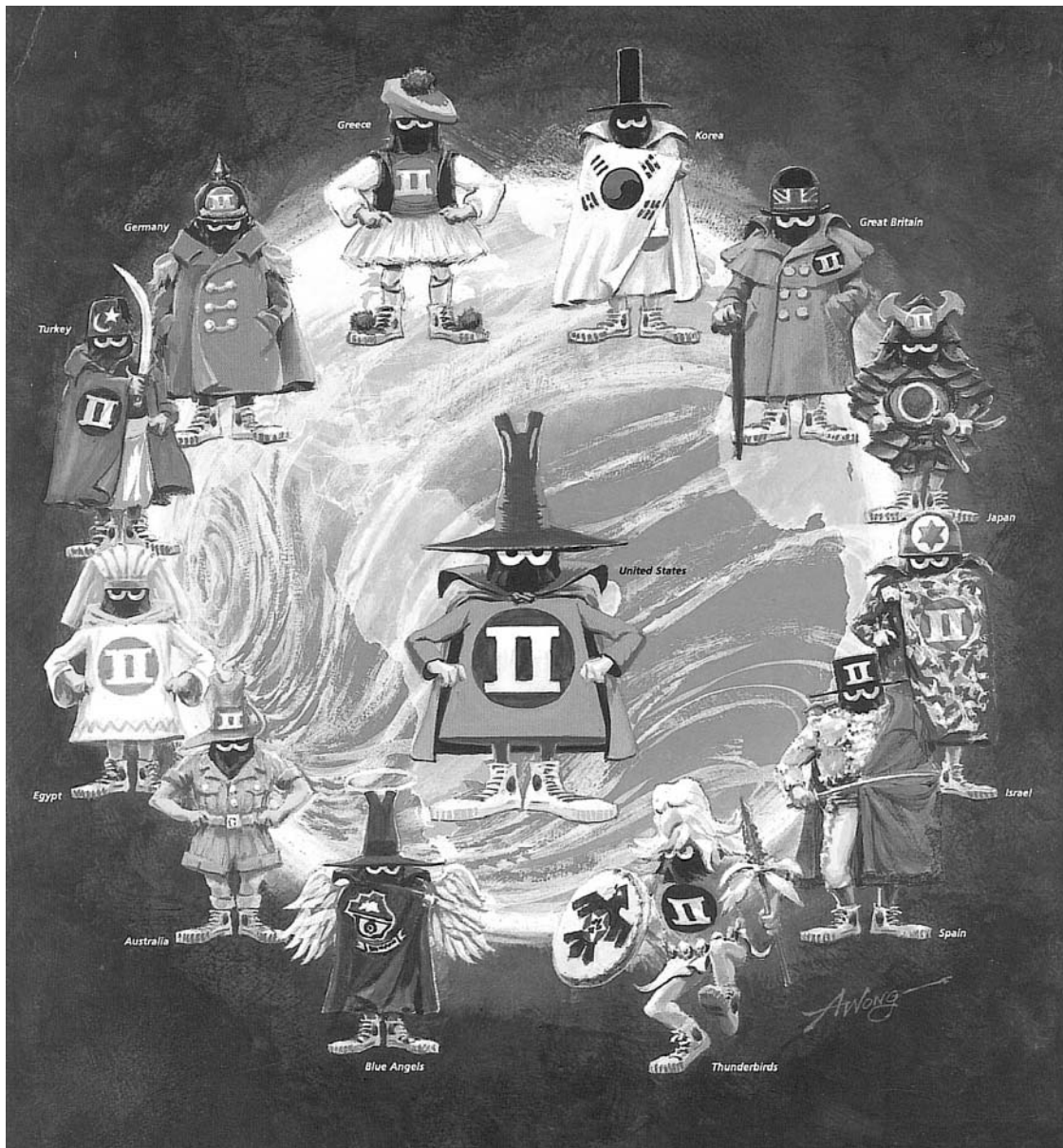
A quiet man himself, Tony recalls his own youth and a swift move. He was born in 1934 to Chinese parents (Tony's father was an American citizen, therefore, Tony was born a citizen of the U.S.), who were teachers in Hong Kong. Sensing inevitable danger, Tony's father sent his six-year-old son to live with relatives in Hawaii in July 1940.

"Yes, I remember December 7, 1941, very clearly" Tony said. (All of the Wong family survived the war and have since reunited.) After high school, Tony made it to San Francisco and then to St. Louis. Tony was graduated with a BS in English and philosophy from St. Louis University and joined McDonnell Aircraft Company in 1956.

As a versatile artist, Tony made sure Spook would be versatile, also. For a 46-year-old, Spook has accomplished incredible missions and feats of bravery. An international jet setter, Spook has been an unofficial mascot for every country in which the F-4 served. He became the



Anthony Wong working at his desk on several "Spook" creations. (Photo from the Paul Minert collection)



Collage of Spook renditions, some by Tony Wong, others by unknown artists, showing the wide variety of applications that "Spook" has been used in.

squadron patch symbol for many organizations in the three U.S. military services using the F-4. But Spook wasn't sewn into patches only; he also appears on neckties and T-shirts. He rides high on the tail section of British *Phantoms*, adorns coffee mugs, is pictured on playing cards, and is cast in plaster - to mention only a few types of his appearances. An ambassador of goodwill, Spook has lectured (via posters) on FOD and security. Spook is always working: as an inspector, movie cameraman, or maintainer. In fact, he probably has held

just about every job required in building, maintaining, and flying a *Phantom II*.

After 46 years, with many more to go before retirement, Spook is still being drawn by "artists."

Happy birthday to you, *Phantom II*

Happy birthday to you, too, Spook.
Wherever you are.