



VPB-111/VP-21 VAGABOND NEWS

www.vp-21navy.org

John G. Esposito, Editor

SPRING, 2017 Edition

A MESSAGE FROM THE LEFT SEAT:

The 2017 VPB-111/VP-21 Veterans Association reunion is history – and certainly one for the history books. Carter’s idea to combine our reunion with the MPA Symposium (a great organization, by the way) was pure genius. We were able to take advantage of all the MPA events including presentations, award ceremonies, lunch provided by Boeing, a tour of a P-8, cocktail parties and the grand dinner attended by 400 people. Carter’s idea was such a good one, we’re going to use it again for our next reunion (more about that in a moment). Of course, the best part of the reunion, as always, was the opportunity it afforded for us to just spend quality time with old friends.

One of the highlights of the week was the Heritage Presentation given by our own Ed LaFontaine and Merrill Churchill. They discussed their experiences in VPB-111 in the Pacific during WWII and received a well-deserved standing ovation for their very interesting presentation. Jim Mattson filmed the whole thing and I’ll see that a copy is available for showing at our next reunion. Another speaker was Louis Conter, a survivor of the USS Arizona who went on to become a pilot and also survived two shoot-downs during the war. He was one of this year’s Hall of Honor recipients.

Carter and Jim had also set up a number of Association events for our enjoyment. One highlight was the trip to Saint Augustine. It was a lot of fun and made us all want to return for a longer visit. Most of us got together for two great dinners –especially the one at Whitey’s Fish Camp, a well-known local restaurant. The well-appointed Ready Room also gave us lots of opportunity to simply spend time with old friends.

The hotel couldn’t have been better. The facilities were outstanding and were surpassed only by the quality of the staff. They couldn’t have been more cordial and helpful. The complimentary breakfasts were great.

During our business meeting, the following occurred:

1. The Two Bell Ceremony honored the fifty one of our shipmates who have passed since our 2015 reunion.
2. Jim Mattson agreed to take on the task of Editor of our newsletter upon the retirement of John Esposito who has been performing those duties for the past nineteen years. There is no way that I can adequately express my appreciation, and the appreciation of our entire organization, for his years of service. I’ll simply say “thank you, John.” You’ve been one of the driving forces of the Association.
3. The decision was made to hold our next reunion in Brunswick. But it won’t happen until 2020. As I mentioned above, this year’s reunion was especially enjoyable and productive because we were able to piggy-back on to the MPA Symposium. Last year (2016) a group of local folks decided to hold a NASB reunion. Although they weren’t too great with planning, they still managed to get 225 people to attend and everyone had a great time. This was so successful, they’ve decided to do it again every two years. It’s too late for us to jump on the band wagon

for the 2018 reunion (it takes about two years to line up hotels and events, etc.) so we'll join them in 2020. Besides, the Brunswick Naval Museum and Memorial Gardens (BNM&MG) is partnering with them which will ensure more efficient planning and a bigger turnout. And, by 2020, the Museum will be in a much better shape.

4. During the meeting we enjoyed an outstanding presentation by CDR Kirt "Whiskers" Wlaschin, Officer-in-Charge of the P-8 Quick Reaction Capability team in Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing 11. Whiskers walked us through several aspects of the transition from the legacy P3 and EP3 into the future force of P8s and Triton, highlighting what personnel are facing today as well as giving us a sense of some of the technology that is being considered to increase the mission awareness of the aircrew. We are honored that Whiskers has taken the time to learn about VP-21, "The Ready Squadron", and is working to instill the same culture and a sense of heritage into his team, and look forward to hearing what they are able to accomplish in the future.
5. I ended the business meeting by giving a slide presentation of the current Brunswick Landing (the former NASB). I showed pictures of new buildings and old buildings with new purposes. I ended with three slides of the Museum. The first showed the outside of the Chapel the way it is today with the entry at the opposite end from the altar. The second showed the artist's concept of the new front of the Museum where the altar used to be, and the third showed a floor plan of the prospective Museum. That's when I announced that because of the outstanding support that the BNM&MG has received from the VPB-111/VP-21 Veterans Association over the past few years, the Museum Board voted to name the former "Fellowship Hall" the VPB-111/VP-21 Veterans Association Room (AKA the Blackjack Ready Room). I thought of suggesting the "Spade Stockade" but I figured that would be a little much. I immediately received generous contributions for the Museum from Ed LaFontaine, Gene Forgit, Bill Reiner and Carter Nute. Actually, the contribution wasn't from Carter. We had just given out three door prizes - two books from the very generous Rick Campbell, the author of several very successful Navy oriented novels, and a hundred dollars in lieu of a comped room. Barbara Nute won the \$100 drawing. Carter immediately suggested that she contribute her winnings to the Museum. So - thank you Ed, Gene, Bill and Barbara. In addition, the attendees unanimously voted to make a very generous contribution to the Museum from our Association. I want to thank all of you who have become members of the Museum and contributed to its success. And I enjoin those of you who have not yet done so to support this worthy cause. Long after our Association is gone, the Museum will still be here, keeping alive the story of our squadron.

The bottom line is that we had a really fun reunion, thanks to Carter and Jim. And also to Barbara and Brenda who were perfect hostesses. Thank you all.

I hope to see all of you in Brunswick in 2020.

Fly safely,

Bill

DONATIONS RECEIVED:

The following persons have generously contributed to our organization's fund. Their contributions are greatly appreciated.

Charles F. Brinegar, William B. OConnell, Joseph E. Sheehan, Raymond H. Gaus, Wesley S. Bean, The Hubner Family in Memory of their father Ltjg Henry H. Hubner VPB-111 Copilot on Doc's Delight, Arthur G. Polstein, Howard D. {Bones} Hobart, Barry A. Post

PLEASE NOTE: The VPB-111/VP-21 Veterans Association charges no dues. Our operations are totally supported by the generous contributions of our membership and by the sale of our squadron products.

The association comes under section 501(C) 19, of the Internal Revenue Code as a “Not for Profit” organization. As such, contributions are legitimate tax deductions. Please make your contribution checks payable to the “VPB-111/VP-21 Veterans Association” and forward them to the Treasurer, Leland Ledford, at 127 Pete St., Waterloo, SC, 29384-4647.

TAPS:

It is with deep regret that I inform you of the passing of our following shipmates:

- Edward G. Parsons passed away on 19 January, 2016. He was an AO3 in VP-21 in 1954.
- Ralph E. McRoberts, VPB-111, '43-'45, passed away 13 March, 2005.
- LT Dick Nilson passed away.
- Robert S. “Bob” Waldron, AOCS, VP-21, '51-'53 passed away on 29 August, 2008. He served as an aviation ordnance man during WWII, Korea and Vietnam, retiring as a Sr. Chief after 24 years of service. He received many medals of commendation for his service in war zones and elsewhere.
- Robert Bruce “Bob” Hall passed away on 1 December, 2013.
- Norman L. Pember, LCDR, VP-21, '66-'68, passed away on 10 October, 2015.
- Captain Robert L. Latta passed away on 21 January, 2017. He was CO from '68-'69 when the squadron was disestablished.
- Robert Dublin passed away on 24 January, 2017. He was a LT in VP-21 from '67-'69.
- Delno “Ditto” C. Jennings passed away on 4 November, 2016.
- Clifford Norman Kevern passed away on 12 October, 2008,
- Merlyn D. Muntz passed away on 25 April, 2010.
- Karl H. Wiegand passed away on 21 December, 2016.
- Fred Junker passed away on 1 December, 2016. He was an AD in VP-21 in the early 50's and served for 20 years as a navigator and aircraft mechanic. He served in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars.
- Glenn Harkleroad passed away 30 January, 2017.
- Jimmie Dickson Oyler passed away on 11 January, 2017.
- Thomas F. Fogarty passed away on 12 January, 2016. He was an ADR2 in the squadron from '67-'69.

VPB-111/VP-21 VETERANS ASSOCIATION
255 Mere Point Rd.
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Spring, 2016
VPB-111/VP-21 VETERANS ASSOCIATION

A non-profit, fraternal, and historical association devoted to the reestablishment of contact with shipmates of the past, to strengthen the camaraderie among its members, to record and preserve the memories and incidents of the Association, to preserve the memory of departed shipmates, and to promote the comfort and welfare of its members and survivors. No dues are assessed!

Directors:

- *Dwyer, Dan, Online Coordinator, Director, #6 Sarah Liberty Lane, Scarborough, ME 04074*
- *Esposito John G., Editor/Director, 862 Central Ave., Southampton, PA 18966*
- *La Fontaine, Edward, Museum Director, 161 Jackson Dr., Frankfort, KY 40601*
- *Locke, William Chairman, 255 Mere Point Rd., Brunswick, ME 04011*
- *Novay , Ron, Director, 7775 Lake Hardeman Rd., Saulsburry, TN 38067*
- *Nute, Carter, Storekeeper/Director, 7605 NW 50th ST., Gainesville, FL 32653-1137*
- *Ledford, Leland, Treasurer/Director, 127 Pete St., Waterloo, SC 29384-4647*
- *Schuster, Fred, Dir/Historian/Director, 2713Cabin Creek Rd., Edwardsville, IL,62025*
- *Schmidt, Herman, Webmaster/Director,3404 Red Tailed Hawk Dr., Port Saint Lucie, FL34952*
- *Webb, Richard, Director, 219 Montoya Dr., Lady Lake, FL 32159-8642*

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