



# VPB-111/VP-21 VAGABOND NEWS

[www.vp-21navy.org](http://www.vp-21navy.org)

**James L. Mattson, Editor**

**WINTER 2021 EDITION**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE LEFT SEAT:

My Fellow Black Jacks,

With this newsletter you'll find all the relevant information necessary to make an informed decision regarding the upcoming reunion. Please read it carefully and comply with the directions, especially regarding cutoff dates. If, after reading it you still have questions, please feel free to contact me at 207-725-6522 or by email at [blocke21@comcast.net](mailto:blocke21@comcast.net). I hope you all can make it.

As usual, we've lost contact with a couple of our Black Jack family. If anyone knows the current location (or status) of George Kile of Marshall, IL or Judith Ramsden of Clinton, CT, please let me know.

In our last newsletter, I informed you that I have received permission to display any and all books written by our squadron writers in the Black Jack Ready Room. So far, I have received four such books from two of our writers. I know there are others. If you'll provide me with copies (preferably hard copy), I'll ensure that you get well-earned recognition. Also, if any of you have any suitable artifacts relating to our squadron lying around, and would like to see them displayed, please let me know. Please, don't send anything until we have discussed it. If you can send pictures of the items by email, that would be great.

Remember, when making a purchase from Amazon, sign in to Amazon Smile ([Smile.Amazon.com](http://Smile.Amazon.com)) and select the Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum. Amazon will make a contribution to the Museum at no cost to you.

In the last few newsletters, we asked for volunteers to act as backups for each of our Directors. Dave "Bones" Hobart has agreed to cover me as maintainer of the Master Roster and act as our Historian. Shealy Wigham has agreed to cover Carter Nute – Storekeeper. And, Jim Jabbusch may sign up for one of the other backup positions-to be determined. Thanks Dave, Jim and Shealy! Dick Herbein is already the backup for Jim Mattson – Editor. We still need continuity to cover Dan Dwyer – On-Line Coordinator; Herm "Smitty" Schmidt – Webmaster; and Leland "Tiny" Ledford – Treasurer. If any of you have special skills that would make you a great candidate for any of those open backup positions, please let me know. As I've said before, these 'collateral duties' typically take no more than a few hours each month. So please, consider stepping up to be of service to your shipmates.

Fly safely and stay well. Hope to see you in September.  
Bill

## A MESSAGE FROM THE STOREKEEPER:

Plans are in work for your VPB-111/VP-21 Association Storekeeper to have an in-person shopping experience during our scheduled September 2021 Reunion in Maine. I will set up shop in our hotel "Ready Room" with an assortment of Association memorabilia treasures. However, if you want to beat the rush please visit our VPB-111/VP-21 Website at [www.vp-21navy.org](http://www.vp-21navy.org) and click on the Small Stores tool bar to bring up full color photos and instructions on how to place a mail order. You will most certainly find an item to place on your "Preflight Check-List" to ensure you are prepared for Reunion festivities. Any questions, contact Storekeeper, Carter Nute, at (352) 256-8875 or by E-mail at [ccnute@cox.net](mailto:ccnute@cox.net). We look forward to seeing you in Maine for Reunion 2021!

## DONATIONS RECEIVED:

The following persons have generously contributed to the Association fund. Their contributions are greatly appreciated.

- ✎ Wesley S. Bean
- ✎ Richard R. Cattrysse
- ✎ Gerald W. Connolly Sr,
- ✎ Raymond H. Gaus

**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 we inform you of the passing of the following shipmates:

- ✎ Bernard P. Doran, 7 March 2020, Lakeland, FL, AD3, VP-21 1950-1953
- ✎ Kenneth R. Egan, 30 January 2021, Marshfield, MA, AX-2, VP-21 1962-1966
- ✎ David L. Potter, 9 January 2021, New Carlisle, OH, ADR1, VP-21 1962-1965
- ✎ Holmes Rolston "JR" Hansel Jr., 4 August 2020, Virginia Beach, VA, AT2, VP-21 1966-1969
- ✎ Ed Sruba, June 2021, Grand Rapids, MI, VPB-111 1943-1945

**NOTE:** Available obituaries are posted on the Association website under Biographies/Profiles, <http://www.vp-21navy.org/biographies/>

## FOUND:

Occasionally, we 'find' some of our missing shipmates. Regrettably, we did not "find" anybody this past quarter. Please keep scanning the horizon.

**NOTE:** Lost and Found information is also posted on the Association website under Lost&Found, <http://www.vp-21navy.org/id122.htm>

**VPB-111/VP-21 VETERANS ASSOCIATION  
2021 REUNION BRUNSWICK REGISTRATION FORM  
15-19 SEPTEMBER 2021**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

# IN PARTY: \_\_\_\_\_

NAMETAG PREFERENCES: Name(s), **Logo choice-circled from below**, and Dates in the squadron.

example: Jim Mattson, Brenda Mattson {Logo circled} 65-68



# STAYING AT RESIDENCE INN: \_\_\_\_\_

REGISTRATION FEE: \$25 EACH FOR MEMBER AND EACH SIGNIFICANT ONE OTHER X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$10 FOR EACH ADDITIONAL GUEST X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

THREE HOUR RIVER BOAT TRIP: \$38 X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: If the 3-hour trip is already booked up and not available when my registration form is processed, I would like to take the following option:

\_\_\_\_\_ A. Take a 1-hour boat trip and receive a rebate of \$8 for each reservation

\_\_\_\_\_ B. Decline to take either boat trip and receive a rebate of \$38 for each reservation.

ONE HOUR TRIP RATHER THAN 3 HOUR TRIP: \$30 X \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Reminder Notes and Deadlines** (See the separate Additional VPB-111/VP-21 Reunion information Sheet for more details):

1. **Reunion Registration Payment:** Make check out to the VPB-111/VP-21 Veterans Association and send to Leland Ledford, 127 Pete Street, Waterloo, SC 29384-4647 by 1 June 2021.
2. **Hotel reservations:** Make your own hotel reservations by 30 June 2021. Contact the Residence Inn at 207-443-9741. Be sure to mention the Navy Reunion.
3. **Reunion Clambake:** Sign up by 10 September for the Reunion Clambake and any other desired NASB events by logging on to the Museum web site at <https://bnamuseum.org/>. Sign up before 31 July and save \$5 per person on the registration fee.

## ADDITIONAL VPB-111/VP-21 BRUNSWICK REUNION INFORMATION

Fellow Black Jacks,

This is a special addition to the newsletter dealing with the upcoming 2021 reunion. Please read it carefully because it contains information that will certainly influence your decision making.

**HOTEL:** We'll be staying at the Residence Inn at 139 Richardson Street, Bath, ME 04530. The phone number is 207-443-9741. The special rate will be \$176 (plus tax) for the King Studio. Please make your own reservations. When you do, be sure to say that you're with the Navy Reunion. If there are any problems, ask to speak to Ms. Kathy Domingo. Check-in will be Wednesday 15 September and check-out will be Sunday 19 September. If you desire to arrive earlier or depart later, the same rate will be honored for three days on either/both ends. Reservations must be made by 30 June 2021 to ensure the preferred rate or even a room. Please get your reservation in on time (you can always cancel later if you change your mind about attending).

**REGISTRATION FEE:** The \$25 per person fee (up to two) will cover such things as complimentary wine, beer, soda and snacks in the meeting room, the reunion souvenir, the memory book, and administrative expenses. A \$10 fee is required for each additional person in your party. Since we will be piggybacking on the NASB/Museum Reunion, you will also have to sign up with them. Go to <https://bnamuseum.org/>. The Museum web site Reunion page is in the process of being developed. If it is not ready when you try, wait a few days and try again.

### **EVENTS: Wednesday 15 September:**

Check in begins at the Residence Inn. A Ready Room will be provided. Beer and wine will be available, hard liquor is on you. Meet and greet in the Inn's Lounge. Complimentary food is provided by the Inn (because of COVID, this service is in limbo but it is expected to be up and operating by September).

**Thursday 16 September** – Three hour river boat tour on the Maine Maritime Museum craft. Wine, beer and snacks are available for purchase. The Maritime Museum is giving us a membership rate of \$38 per person. The boat only holds 60 so, if more want to participate, you will have a choice of joining an earlier one hour cruise for \$30. Because of COVID, the boat currently is restricted to 25 passengers. It is expected that this restriction will be loosened up by September. A guided tour of the Museum is included in either case. Bring your cameras. Dinner that night is on your own. The tickets are good for two days of touring the Museum- not the boat trip.

**Friday 17 September** – Tour of the Brunswick Naval Aviation Museum, especially the Black Jack Ready Room, followed by our Memorial Service and a short business meeting. Formal portraits for the Memory book will be taken during this visit. If you own any Navy memorabilia (especially as related to the squadron) that you would like to contribute to the Museum, bring it along. Dinner is on your own. I suggest Joshua's Tavern in Brunswick - great food, service, and atmosphere.

**Saturday 18 September** – Reunion dinner under the tent at the Museum. Cooks Lobster and Ale House will cater. Lobster bake with all the fixings. For those who do not want lobster, there will be other choices. Sign up on the Museum Reunion site - the link is <https://bnamuseum.org/>. We will have our own reserved tables.

**Wednesday 15 September** – Saturday 18 September – Plenty of time to socialize with old friends.

**Sunday 19 September** – Departure.

**TRANSPORTATION:** The least expensive bus we could get would cost us between \$625 and \$700 per bus per day (we'd need two) and vans would cost \$200 each per day (we'd need five). So - - - since most of us will have cars (either our own or rentals), I'm going with driving ourselves car pool style and saving the money.

Reservation Deadlines:

- Hotel Reservations must be made by 30 June 2021.
- NASB Reunion reservations must be made by 10 September. Save \$5 per person by signing up by 31 July.
- Squadron Reunion reservations must be made by 1 June 2021.

NOTE: Because we are participating in the NASB Reunion events, all attendees MUST register for both the NASB and the VPB-111/VP-21 reunions. The NASB registration fee will be \$15 per person until 31 July. After that the fee will be \$20 per person. Most of the fee will go to cover the cost of the tent. The squadron registration fee is noted above.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at my home phone (207-725-6522), my cell (207-522-5139), or at my email address [blocke21@comcast.net](mailto:blocke21@comcast.net).

Fly safely, Bill

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR:

This account of “As I Remember It” is courtesy of Jim Stark. The full article appeared in a Florida Writer’s Conference short story contest and received honorable mention. A copy is available on the Association website. Jim has also written a marvelous book, *Two Turning, Two Burning: Memoir of a Naval Aviator*. It is available from Smile.Amazon.com for \$15.95.

### “Yellow Blood”

I was a newly designated naval aviator and had just checked into VP-21 in January 1964 when we received immediate orders to deploy a detachment to Key West, to fly patrols around Cuba. U.S. and Soviet relations were still bellicose, and tensions were high after the Cuban Missile Crisis 18 months earlier. I was assigned to the XO’s crew but CDR John Orrill, did not fly often because of other squadron responsibilities. So, his co-pilot, Lt Phil Black, acted as PPC on many flights. As the third pilot, I moved up to the co-pilot seat.

The Key West operation was serious business. Briefings were “spooky.” We were told that “If something “catastrophic” happens head for open water. Do not crash on Cuban soil. Patrolling aircraft would receive “Yellow Blood” messages transmitted every five minutes. Meaningless for the most part, hearing “Yellow Blood, Yellow Blood, Tango-India-Mike-Sierra” might mean nothing. But, every day, three new code groups did mean something: Your plane’s navigation is screwed up; or, there is an unidentified target in the area; or, there is an enemy aircraft in the area and you appear to be under attack! Our first couple of patrols were routine, spending 12 to 14 hours photographing the decks of cargo ships. About 6 hours into our third patrol, the PPC took a break and I slid into the left seat as pilot in command. The PPC had no sooner dozed off in the after station, when we came upon three Soviet destroyers and six Soviet PT boats.

My wet-behind-the-ears inexperience saw this as an opportunity for heroism, so, with visions of air medals dancing in my head, I told the crew to get ready to take some momentous photographs. I descended to masthead height and we flew so close we could see the open-mouthed expressions on Soviet sailors. I had made four passes all the while imagining what I would say to President Kennedy when he invited us to the White House to offer his congratulations.

The maneuvers had awakened the PPC who charged into the cockpit wanting to know what the hell was going on. Despite my excited explanation of our heroic discovery, the PPC asked, “Did you send an alert to Key West intelligence? Did you report the sighting in encrypted language to squadron communications? DIDN’T YOU EVEN THINK TO WAKE ME UP?” Err, no sir. I guess I didn’t.” Just then the radio operator came over the intercom, “Flight, Radio, we just got a Yellow Blood message, Kilo-Yankee-Alpha-Gulf which means that we’re under attack by enemy aircraft!” Sure enough, we saw 3 Soviet MiG-21 fighters, about five thousand feet above us.

We were less than a thousand feet above the water and with no time to switch seats, I fired up the jets and immediately rolled the airplane onto its port wing and dove for the deck. I thought if the MiGs pounced, they were not going to get below us. It felt like a lifetime but may have only been minutes until the cavalry arrived. Two Air Force F-4, Phantom jets came screaming past us from the opposite direction. No more than a blur, they disappeared briefly. They reappeared, joining up on each wing. The pilot on our starboard side, looked over and gave us a smart salute. His gesture said it all, “The playing field had just been leveled.”

The MiGs never left their perch. I’d like to think it was my rapid escape that caused them to hesitate, but most likely, it was the arrival of those Phantoms that convinced them to stand down. The Phantoms escorted us back to Key West. The PPC covered for me at the debriefing, claiming the discovery of the Soviet ships and photo taking happened so quickly we didn’t have a chance to report the sighting before the MIGs appeared. We didn’t get any Air Medals or invited to the White House, but we did have a good story to tell at the O’ Club that night.

“As I Remember It” inputs for the next issue should reach me by mid-June at [jmattson1@cox.net](mailto:jmattson1@cox.net).

**VPB-111/VP-21 VETERANS ASSOCIATION**  
**255 Mere Point Rd.**  
**Brunswick, ME 04011**

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**January - March 2021**  
**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*
- *La Fontaine, Edward, Museum Director, 405 Wilkinson Blvd. - #818, Frankfort, KY 40601*
- *Ledford, Leland, Treasurer/Director, 127 Pete St., Waterloo, SC 29384-4647*
- *Locke, William, Chairman, 255 Mere Point Rd., Brunswick, ME 04011*
- *Mattson, James, Newsletter Editor/Director, 12427 Wendell Holmes Rd., Herndon, VA 20171*
- *Novay, Ron, Director, 7775 Lake Hardeman Rd., Saulsburry, TN 38067*
- *Nute, Carter, Storekeeper/Director, 7605 NW 50th ST., Gainesville, FL 32653-1137*
- *Schmidt, Herman, Webmaster/Director, 3404 Red Tailed Hawk Dr., Port Saint Lucie, FL 34952*
- *(Vacant) Historian/Director*

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