

ATKRON 12 NEWSLETTER

VA-12

PUBLISHED BY THE
VA-12 REUNION ASSOCIATION

ALL ARE WELCOME TO VISIT **THE WORLD FAMOUS FLYING UBANGIS** AT OUR WEBSITE WWW.VA12.COM



Volume XI, Issue 3 December 2012

F6F Hellcat

VBF-4 in 1945



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UBANGI?

UBETCHA!

REUNION PHOTOS

Here are some pictures taken at the Reunion, I have tried to get at least one shot of each Ubangi in attendance as I forgot to do a whole group shot. Someone, please remind me next time!



Some of our 1966 WestPac guys. Rich Forristall, Jerry Schwartz, Eric Harvie, Bill Heck, Ed Fennell, BJ Smith, Skipper Jerry Barnett, Paul Englert, Joe Kyle, John MacBain, and Ed Thomas



Jerry Sunada 84-86



Robert Smith 61-63 and Johnny Miller 82-86



1970 Shang Med Cruise sailors Wayne Scarbrough, Barry Wheeler, Gary Venema, Crd James McBride, Frank Giaccone, Chief Rod Dunlap, and Joe Cassel



Ed Lewitz 61-65, Joe McFadden 55-58, Gary Hall 66-69, and Al Scott 66-67



Gary Hall 66-69 and JD Rogers 66-68

2012 VA-12 REUNION

Reunion Recap

By all accounts this years Reunion was a huge success.

The outcome was in no small part the results of the continued efforts of some specific dedicated helpers like Frank and Robbi Giaccone, Eric Harvie, John Larch, Johnny Miller, Terry and Joan Nies and Ed Thomas. Of course getting the event to happen is only half of the deal, the other half is all of the folks that showed up. A special thanks to our old skipper Gerry Barnett and his lovely wife Doni for coming all the way from Texas. Also in attendance was Lynn Card, Joe and Carol Cassel, Bill and Faith Doody, Rod and Sara Dunlap, Paul Englert and Jane Salz, Ed and Nancy Fennell, Rich and Rhonda Forristall, Bill and Lynn Heck, George Hinds and Carol Hagenau, Gary and Susie, Robert Hurt, Joe and Kathy Kyle, Ed Lewitz and Linda Rusch, John and Cyndi MacBain, James and Barbara McBride, Joe McFadden, James Renfroe, JD and Sandy Rogers, Wayne and Brenda Scarborough, Jerry Schwartz, Al Scott, Barry Smith, Bob Smith, Gerry Sunada, Gary and Kae Venema, Barry and Sharon Wheeler, Harmon and Denease Winborn, and Marty and Nancy McCormick. Marty your blessing before the banquet was especially meaningful, thanks again.

Others Comments

We had a fun time and I can only say it is really great to be with guys that when they say "Been there, Done that" and are still proud of it, you know exactly what they mean.

Marty McCormick 54-56

We had a wonderful time. Going aboard the ship was fascinating for me. I know it could have brought back some bad memories for some, as for me it was enlightening. I can't imagine being in the middle of the sea on this enormous piece of steel. I hope someone has a picture of the banquet. We didn't get any with everyone in it. As a matter of fact we didn't even get a pix of us, so maybe someone else did. Had a great time, can't wait for the next one.

Harmon 66-68 and Denease Winborn

What a wonderful time I had with old friends. I look forward to the next one. Thank you Joe and everyone else that helped put it together. If anyone has a copy of the disk that we all enjoyed so much, I

love a copy of it.

Al Scott 66-67

Joe, just a short note to make sure you know how much Doni and I really enjoyed the reunion. Sure had fun listening to all the stories. Kind of makes me mad at myself for not attending sooner. Who knows what the future brings but right now we certainly intend to be at the next one in Titusville. See you soon I hope.

Jerry 66-67 and Doni Barnett

On the tour day of our recent reunion I stood on the shore next to my old friend Terry "Stubby" Nies under the warm South Carolina sun. As Terry's wife Joan prepared to take our picture together I couldn't help but gaze over our shoulder at the valiant aircraft carrier, destroyer and submarine that lie there waiting for us to board. It was as if time had gone back to when these vessels were at the top of the line. The prime of our fighting forces.

For the next three hours we searched high and low for signs of those sailors that fought so tirelessly. We read about their accounts of the kamikaze bombers and the sea to air close quarters fighting. On and on it went. I'm sure that many thought that they would not see another day. At times I thought that I could almost hear them speak. I frequently stopped and listened closely for just a single word or even a sigh from the decks below. I couldn't help but become thankful for the many Dads that did not return. Those that had given their all for us.

The day ended with our traditional reunion dinner and I found myself at the dinner table looking across another sea of memories. I looked closely at all of the Dads that were in the room and I once again found myself thankful. Thankful that you are still around to be part of your children's and families lives and thankful that you are still part of this shipmate's life.

Bless all of you and here's to another great reunion.

BJ Smith 66-69

2014/15 REUNION

One of the anticipated events at each Reunion is the selection of the location for the next one. This year the attendees nominated several good spots and the field was narrowed to San Diego, CA and Central FL (most like Cocoa Beach) If you did not attend the reunion and you are a dues paying member of the Association your ballot is enclosed. Please return it to me with your 2013 dues. Also, if

you are so inclined please offer your opinions regarding the continuation of our Printed or Digital Newsletter on the back of your ballot.

DUES

Over the past few years a number of people have asked me where they stand as far as paid up dues. This year I am including a statement for everyone. Your individual statement indicates your name and future dates. If there is an amount in future dates, that is the amount of credit you have going forward. If there is no amount that means you have no 2013 dues credit and you should send me a check. **DO NOT MAKE CHECKS OUT TO VA12.** My credit union will not accept them. Sorry. If you do not get a statement that means no dues are expected.

WAR DUTY

Here is a story about the hand of God watching over you.

Phil was from a very poor family living in a rural area. His family lost 4 children to disease and accident, and his father died 4 months before Phil was born. The remaining small family of mother and two boys eventually ended up in Chicago. Somehow a year after graduating high school he wrangled a scholarship to a university and began studying architecture. This was a very difficult course of study for him but by early in his junior year he started to get the hang of it, his grades improved and he was learning the skills needed.

This was December 1941, and on the 7th of that month the US found themselves in a world war. So a week later Phil went and enlisted in the US Coast Guard. He was 22 years old.

There came a point early in the war effort in 1942 when the military commanders decided there was a need for weather-men, aerographers mates as they were known in the Navy and Coast Guard, or meteorologists as we call them today. Phil volunteered for this duty and got a lot of intensive training crammed into his head in a short time. (Haven't all veterans felt that way?) In Phil's case, he was able to handle the intensive study and hard work, having been so recently involved to the same level of effort in his architecture studies. The need for weathermen was so great, and he had excelled at it, that it was not long before successful graduates got a duty assignment and advancement

in rank. Phil was bumped up to Chief Aerographers Mate in very short order after receiving his orders. He'd only been in the Coast Guard a few short months by then.

Orders? The US Weather Bureau, acting in concert with the War Department, assigned him to serve aboard Coast Guard cutters that were assisting war relief convoy trips across the North Atlantic to England. This was a huge step into Harm's Way but he was one of many getting the same assignment. Convoys would typically form in New York, Boston or Halifax Nova Scotia. Each convoy group would have a cutter or other vessel dedicated to weather reporting duty. The selection of vessels changed as the war progressed, and the weather men found themselves serving on a motley collection of cutters, buoy tenders, frigates, decrepit cargo vessels, and ocean-going wrecks of all manner and description, steaming under US, Canadian, and UK registry.

Here is where the hand of God reached out for him.

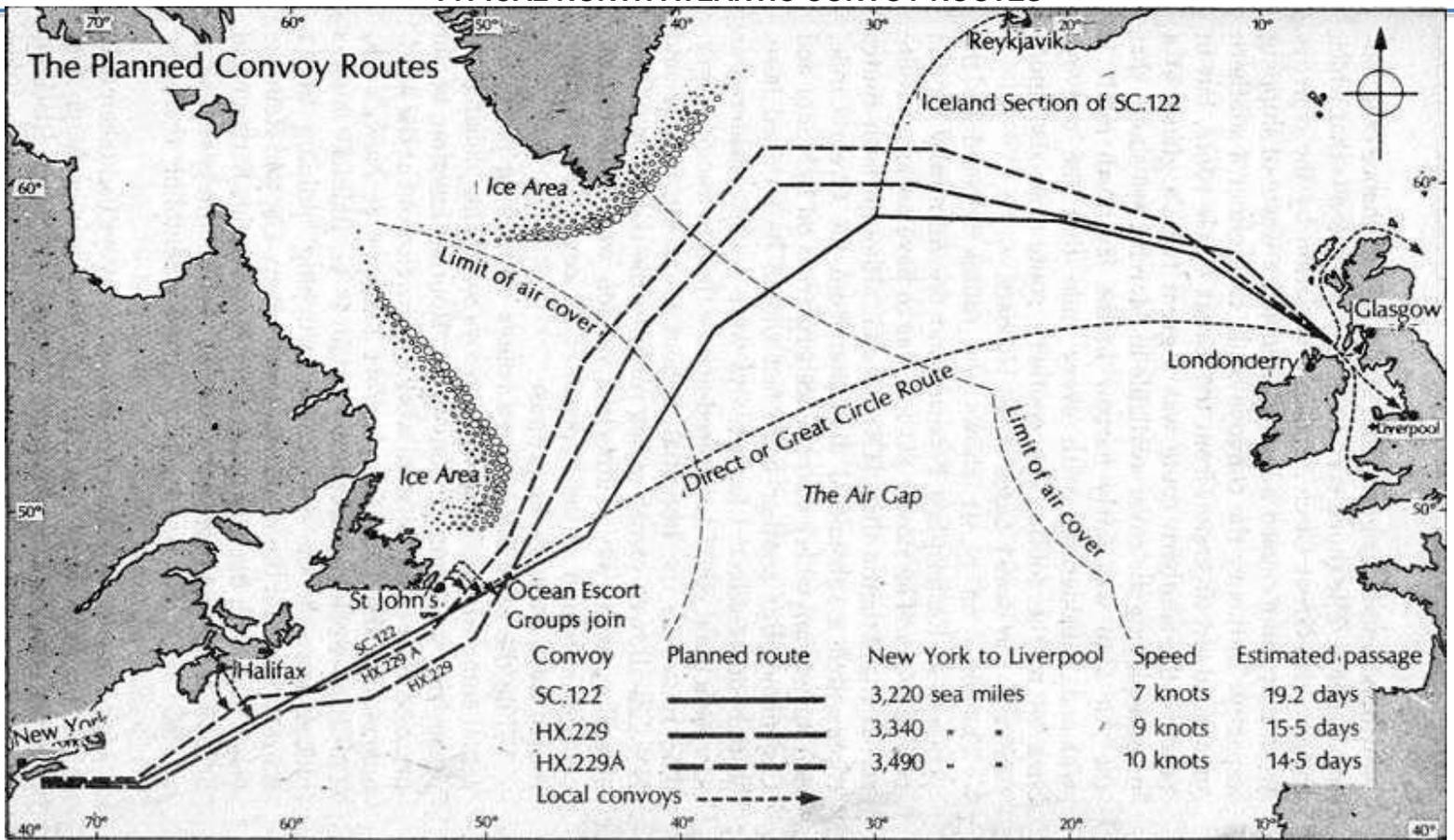
It turns out that the vessels serving on convoy weather duty would run with the convoy only to a certain point in the North Atlantic, and then depart the assembled flotilla of cargo ships (which didn't stop or even slow down on their trip to Liverpool) and steam to an assigned spot in the ocean nearby the route. The cutter would then turn to an Indianapolis racetrack pattern, for a certain number of weeks. Some weather vessels would steam to positions at sea along typical aircraft routes, where they usually did not have protection. No matter the assigned ocean spot, they would measure, sample, and send up weather balloons to make the most accurate weather forecast they could supply, and then broadcast the report **over the open airwaves – in plane English and un-encrypted.**

The reports were of tremendous value to the convoy commanders as well as the constant stream of aircraft flying routes via Newfoundland, Greenland, and Iceland to the UK.

The Hand of God? The German U-Boats were apparently reluctant to attack the vessels serving on this duty, because they would lose the free weather reports! All the Germans had to do was ensure at least one member of the crew could read English usually from the Morse Code broadcasts. They needed to know the forecasts as desperately as the Allies.

This cycle of duty would end when the next convoy was headed through the sea lanes and another weather-duty cutter was in place to take over. They

TYPICAL NORTH ATLANTIC CONVOY ROUTES



They would rejoin this passing convoy and follow them. Typically, their relief convoy was headed to Liverpool England although there were occasions when they joined a returning convoy going right back to the same port they had left weeks before.

By the time the war was over, Phil had made a total of 17 convoy crossings in this manner, each crossing including a spell at the racetrack for several weeks until relieved. Halifax to the racetrack, to Liverpool. Liverpool to the racetrack to Boston. And of course variations as circumstances arose. He became very familiar with the grey, dark, cold city of Liverpool and it's "Cast Iron Shore".

When the war ended, he decided to forego his earlier university education in architecture, and keep on with his hard-won meteorological training. He eventually became an employee of the US Weather Bureau.

Phil married in 1950 and had two children. Like many veterans, he spoke of this war-time experience only rarely, and when he did it was usually the same light-hearted story about the English prisoner. He had found himself in Boston, between convoy trips, and was called upon to travel to Philadelphia, pick up a prisoner, and return with

would be handed over to the British for transport back to the UK for court martial for some serious offense. During the trip the young man began to wonder if he would be allowed to write a letter to his mother back home in the UK. He said he had to tell her about the unbelievable and weird American customs, including that of drinking their tea cold, over ice. Phil passed away in 2010 at the age of 90. He was preceded in death by one son and his spouse. I am the remaining son.

John Larch 76-79

TREASURY REPORT

Previous Balance	\$2727.82
Dues/Reunion fees/interest	2720.90
SUB TOTAL	\$5448.72
Banquet	2126.49
Lanyards	168.97
CPO Lunch	525.00
Yorktown Museum	754.00
Attendee Gifts	742.55
Stamps	115.18
Envelopes/Lables	22.25
Printing *	155.27
CURRENT EXPENSES	4609.71
NEW BALANCE	\$839.01

VA-12 SHIP'S STORE

The Ships Store will remain open until Dec 31, 2012. Please make any orders today if you need it before Christmas <http://www.co-store.com/VA-12>

NEWSLETTER

Seems like the Newsletter itself often is a topic. There was some discussing at the reunion about the future of the newsletter. I am kind of old school when it comes to reading this kind of information. I like to have it in my hand, to feel it, to get it in the mail with all of that anticipation looming. But with the potential of raising printing and postage cost, is it time for us to consider an online newsletter? The Printing Company that I have used these last 10 years is up for sale. A couple of different things could happen. 1. The business will not be sold and it will continue operating. 2. It could be sold and the new owners will not increase our cost. Or 3. It is sold and the new people will charge us more. My feeling is for us to keep printing and mailing our newsletter until #3 happens, and then to reevaluate the cost at that time. Some of you that I talked to about this at the reunion suggested that we just go digital online and let those that want to print it at home do so at their convenience. This is also an option for those that have computers and internet access. Several subscribers do not currently have this option, and I hate to leave them out. The other factor in this discussion is our dues. I have felt from the outset that you should get something for your dues, and that something has been the newsletter. Others feel that dues are too low and that the Association should charge dues with or without a printed newsletter. I guess I'd like to know how others feel.

Joe Kyle 66-68

BYTES VERSUS PAGES: Should we continue to print a paper Newsletter, or create an electronic version?

It is becoming easier than ever to create, save, and store popular media like newspapers, books, and magazines in digital format and then read them on any computer and even many smart phones. The VA-12 Reunion Association wonders if we should follow along in this trend

by making this periodical newsletter available via a link to a website where it would be maintained in a secure archive.

In this case, reading the newsletter would involve the reader calling up a computer browser and going the VA12.com website where the newsletter can be found and viewed. This could be from your home computer, notepad, or any small system that can operate an internet browser. Additionally, this on-line version does not require paper, ink, expensive printing procedures, and the mailing costs of envelopes and postage. Costs would drop precipitously. If this is the only way we publish the VA-12 Newsletter, then those without internet browser access, or without a computer at all, would be unable to view it. How many of you would like to see us continue with the mailed paper version of the VA-12 Newsletter? It is highly likely that as printing costs go up we would have to increase the annual VA-12 Reunion Association dues by a small amount, to cover those increased costs. P.S. I'm sure that you all remember the ALL HANDS magazine of the U.S. Navy. The magazine had been published since 1922 under and was printed on paper. It was shifted to an all-electronic digital magazine, available only on computer. It continued this way for several months before being discontinued entirely in December 2011.

John Larch 76-79

NEW MEMBERS

Here are the names of our newest members joining our ranks since the last newsletter.

Gerry Barnett	65-67
Michael Bedenbaugh	82-84
James Brown	71-74
Joe Cassel	69-70
Marty Hill	76-80
Al Scott	66-67
Gerry Sunada	84-85

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MORE REUNION PHOTOS



John Larch 76-80 with the USS Yorktown in the background



George Hinds 56-59 Carol Hagenau with Faith Doody and Bill 55-58



Joe McFadden 55-58 and Jim "Calhoun" Renfroe 55-57



Al Scott 66-67, Marty McCormick 54-56 & Nancy McCormick



JD Rogers 66-68, Rich Forristall 66-69, Jim McBride 69-72 and Lynn Card



Robert Hurt 84-86



Joan and Terry Nies 67-70



Harmon 66-67 and Denease Winborn



Lynn and Pig Heck 66-69



Kathy and Joe Kyle 66-68

**ON THE COVER
GRUMMAN F6F HELLCAT**

At the time VBF-4 was established, new squadrons were typically training on the F6F Hellcat and early versions of the F4U-1 Corsair. The F6F was itself a replacement for the F4F Wildcat.

	F4F Wildcat	F6F Hellcat
Engine	(1) Pratt & Whitney R1830-76	(1) Pratt & Whitney R2800
Power	1,200 HP	2,000 HP
Max Weight	8,762 Lbs	15,415 Lbs
Max Speed	320 MPH	380 MPH
Max Altitude	34,000 Ft.	37,300 Ft.
Combat Radius	721 Miles	945 Miles
Rate of Climb	2,200 Ft/Min	3,500 Ft/Min



VBF-4 AND THE F6F:

The Pacific Theatre of World War 2 was still active when VBF-4 was initially established at NAS Alameda on May 12, 1945. The squadron received a compliment of aircraft on May 23, 1945 at NAS Watsonville. This included a mix of types, some being the F6F Hellcat, others were the F4U-1 and FG-1 Corsair, and a few SNJ Trainers.