



VP-68 Hawk's Nest

35 Year Reunion

On the weekend of 4 - 6 November 2005 the VP-68 Alumni Association held it's 35 Year Reunion at the Colony South Hotel and Conference Center in Clinton, MD. Eighty-six Blackhawks and guests gathered for a weekend of renewed friendships, laughter and plenty of sea-stories. Just when you thought you heard 'em all, a new story



came up that had us all laughing to tears.

The reunion committee did a fantastic job of setting up, running and tearing down the Blackhawk Ready Room, the social focal point for the weekend. From about 1600 on Friday until wee hours of Sunday, the Ready Room was full of Blackhawks. The Colony South rolled out the red carpet for us and the accommodations and service were excellent.



Carrie Blazek chairs the Memorabilia Committee and filled the Ready Room with original items belonging to VP-68. The Ready Room contained everything from the large Blackhawk logo from the hanger walls to awards, photos, plaques, trophies and even the C.O. suggestion box. If any of you have any VP-68 items or photographs that you want to preserve and display forever contact Carrie at mcblaze@erols.com about donating it to the Alumni Association.



Along with the static displays of memorabilia, a continuous power point presentation (here enjoyed by John & Hedy McDermott) ran all weekend with hundreds of photos from VP-68's history. Everything from official events to squadron picnics and deployments were represented and all that viewed them complimented the slide show.



As in all events, behind the scenes work is rarely recognized. Here Maintenance Control, i.e. Joe Odenthal, performs some in-flight work on the 35mm slide projector. A twist of the screwdriver, a sip of beer, a twist, a sip and so on and he got it working too!!

Many of the attendees also brought their own photo albums and memorabilia for display and here, Rex Lake and Elsie enjoy one of the many albums on display. The Alumni Association is considering producing a CD that will be eventually for sale that contains photos and possibly videos covering the history of VP-68. More on that in the future.



On Saturday afternoon, Kathy Wright led 3 carloads of Blackhawks to the Washington Navy Yard and visited the Navy Museum plus toured the display ship USS Barry. If you are ever in the DC area it is a must-see for Navy veterans.



Saturday evening, we all gathered in the Maryland-Marlboro Room for the dinner-dance. Music was provided by DJ Jack Ladd who ran us from mellow during dinner to tearing up the dance floor till midnight. Jack also did our reunion in 2000.

Here, Randy and Crystal Sharp adjust each other's name tag. Don Peeling tried to get out of dancing by wearing a neck collar but Frank Furney offered to adjust or remove it!!! Actually, Don had some surgery so we let him get out of it...made for some good laughs though! After the cocktail hour we settled down to an outstanding dinner. Again, the Colony South did an outstanding job on the dinners on both taste and presentation.



We were very honored to have as our guest speaker Dr. Sarandis (Randy) Papadopoulos, Ph.D., Historian - Contemporary History Branch at the Naval Historical Center. Randy presented us with a riveting talk about the events of September 11, 2001 and how they changed the world history. He enlightened us on the involvement of every branch of the service and their interaction in piecing together the events and our response to the same. Under the sponsorship of the Historian of the

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Office of the Secretary of Defense, Randy has authored the book "Pentagon 9/11: Anatomy of the Response" which is scheduled to be published this coming September 2006 on the 5th anniversary of the attack.

Our MC for the evening was Carrie Blazek who here along with Kathy Wright presents Dr. Papadopoulos with a VP-68



Alumni Association Certificate of Appreciation. Kathy, as a YNCS drilling reservist, worked with Randy at the Naval Historical Center. She will be glad to expound on the topic at future Blackhawk gatherings.

For the reunion, we are very grateful to have two Alumni members donate unbelievable gifts to be raffled off to help the Association offset our costs.

First, Dan Smith built us a detailed model of the P-3C for the raffle.

This picture does not do justice to the delicate precision given to each detail. You need a magnifying glass to see the tiniest decal and rivet.



Many hours of work were also spent on the inside and cockpit details. The lucky winner of the model was Nick Schaus and the envy of all of us who offered to take it off of his hands for him! Thank you Dan!

The second donation was made by Morgan Wilbur, Art Editor for Naval Aviation News. Many of you are familiar with Morgan's paintings, one of which was used for our Alumni



Association Lithograph (see Ship's Store). For this painting, Morgan did an acrylic of a view from behind the P-3 at altitude with contrails.

Again, you have to see it in person and up close to see the detail and precision...and to think it was done with a brush!!! The lucky winner of the painting was Paul Monaghan. Paul has made a very generous suggestion for the painting...details of which are to follow in the near future.

Morgan, as always, you outdid yourself...Thank you.

Shown present and accounted for at the reunion were five Command Master Chiefs Stanfield, Abbott, Peeling, Blazek and LeNard who helped execute the Plan of the Day and lent their managerial assistance to the Reunion Committee.



They conferred with the attending Commanding Officers Miller, Fisher, Perkins, Kirley, Hinchliffe, Estes (VP-662), Gaffney and Murdoch to set in plans the longevity and success of the VP-68 Alumni Association and the preservation of the memory of Patrol



Squadron Six Eight (VP-68) forever.



Unable to gather all of the attending Blackhawks at one time for a group photo, we were lucky to capture a few.

We had run of the Colony South all weekend with many of the attendees staying through the entire weekend. After midnight we vacated the ballroom and retreated to the Ready Room where old times were relived and the sea-stories all abounded until the wee hours.



We soared with the eagles and we hooted with the owls.....once again!

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Final note: As the Reunion Committee Chairman, I could not have been surrounded by a more competent committee. I was up in Pittsburgh, they were down near DC and I only needed to call or e-mail them and the job got done. When you see them, please make sure you thank Carrie Blazek, Becky Connick, Dick Fickling, Lew Johnson, Jacque LaValle, Joe Odenthal, Ed Stanfield and Kathy Wright for a great time.

Parting thought: Many attendees mentioned that at our ages we shouldn't wait 5 years between reunions. Please give it some thought and pass your suggestions to our Association Secretary Kathy Wright at wright_kathleen@bah.com (article by Jim Rozycki)

Spring Fling • 06 May 2006

The date is set, mark your calendars, we will once again be at the Beach House, NAS Patuxent River, MD – Saturday, May 06, 2006. Come early and enjoy the sun, fun and burgers, the activities start at 1100. For paid members, food and sodas are free...guests and non-members is a minimal cost of \$5/person. **NOTE:** if you DO NOT have a current base sticker and/or ID card for access, you cannot get onto the base.

Contact Jacque LaValle by phone at 301-862-3912 home, or 301-342-0829 work or jacque.lavalle@verizon.net **no later than Monday 01 May 06** if you plan to attend and to get your name on the list at the base gate. Jacque could also use a few folks to help shop and run the event.

From the Secretary

I hope everyone had a wonderful and safe Christmas and during the holidays you didn't buy, eat or drink too much (yeah, sure). Now on to peaceful and quiet 2006.

I am starting something new for upcoming newsletters. If you have a notable event or milestone that you wish to share with your former squadron mates please forward your information to Rex Lake, Lew Johnson or myself. Rex and Lew will be my 'roving squadron reporters' to ferret out interesting information for the newsletters. These items can be serious or light in nature as you can see with the following reports. Below are the email addresses to send any articles/news briefs you want to submit:

Rex Lake - REX_LAKE@prodigy.net
Lew Johnson - ljohnson1@cablespeed.com
Kathy Wright - wright_kathleen@bah.com

Fair Winds and Following Seas

George Kurtz - George passed away January 21, 2006 after suffering a heart attack at age 58. George was a former flight engineer in VP-68 with Crew 4 from 1980-1983 and a Life Member of the VP-68 Alumni Association. The funeral services were held at the Maryland Veterans Cemetery in Crownsville, MD, on Friday, January 27, 2006. Several members of the squadron were able to attend the viewing and funeral. George is survived by his wife Karen and his ten year old daughter Feodora.

If you wish, contributions may be made to the Feodora Kurtz Education Fund -- M&T Bank -- Attention: Cindi -- 576 Ritchie Highway -- Severna Park, MD 21146.

Lloyd "Ben" Spencer - Ben flew in the P-2's and was in VP-68 as the squadron transitioned to the P-3's. Due to his rate he could not fly in the P-3's so he left the squadron. He lived in Taneytown, MD. His dad, Ben Sr., played ball for the Washington Senators and his son Jim played for the New York Yankees. Ben died peacefully in his sleep, January 6, 2006, one day after his 81st birthday. He is survived by his wife Helen.

Change of Address ????

Please get in touch with me if you move or change email addresses, it is the only way we can keep track of you. Send your information to me by email

wright_kathleen@bah.com

or snail mail –

4773 W. Braddock Road, Apt 204, Alexandria, VA 22311.

On The Mend

George Frey - George Frey, former intelligence officer in VP-68, (and husband of Nancy Frey) is on the mend after open-heart surgery. George went to the National Naval Medical Center Bethesda for a doctor's appointment on January 19th and the doc's decided he needed to be checked in right away. On January 30th George had double bypass heart surgery and is now on the mend. Nothing like a little rework and repair on the old body. Hope the rest of 2006 goes better than the first month! Get well soon!

People in the News

Rear Admiral Jeff Lemmons, our last Commanding Officer, graces the cover of the February edition of Naval Reserve Association News. This month's feature article is an interview with RDML Jeffrey A. Lemmons, Commander, Naval Air Force Reserve; Vice Commander, Naval Air Forces. Well Done Skipper! We are really proud of you.



Here is a link to the Naval Reserve Association:

<http://www.navy-reserve.org/14a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1>
The Naval Reserve Association has provided us a copy of their interview with RDML Lemmons for posting. As a by-product of reducing the interview file for easier transport, the pictures became "fuzzy" there is nothing wrong with your PC (or RDML Lemmons). Here is our VP-68 Alumni Association site:

http://www.vpnavy.org/vp68/adobe/lemmons_31jan2006.pdf

John Teixeira, who was a pilot in VP-68, has a millionaire in his family. His son just signed a very lucrative contract with the Texas Rangers. His son, Mark Teixeira, a very talented first baseman for the Texas Rangers, signed a \$15.4 million contract January 17, 2006. So all you baseball fans watch for John's son playing for the Rangers this season!

AFCM Charlie Brown would like to hear from you! Becky Connick has been in contact with Charlie's wife, Opal. Mrs. Brown mentioned that Charlie would be delighted in hearing from former Blackhawk's. Below is his address, so please drop him a card.

AFCM Charlie Brown
19591 Oak Forest Drive
Fort Myers, FL 33912

Some Interesting Articles To Read

Navy Establishes Trial Warrant-Officer-to-Pilot Program
--NNS060125-08.
http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=22072

Naval Air Force Reserve Awarded Two Navy Safety Awards
--NNS060125-07.
http://www.news.navy.mil/search/display.asp?story_id=22068

VP-68 Ships Store

Dan Smith, former Blackhawk and current US Coast Guard Auxiliary flotilla commander, has taken over responsibility for the VP-68 Ship's Store. If you would like to order anything please contact Dan at the following: dan@sailrite.com
Items include:

"The Planes We Flew" lithograph @ \$35
(Morgan Wilbur painting)
"The Sky Is Reserved" VHS video @ \$10
filmed in the 70's during VP-68 annual acdutra
P-3C & P2-V rubber stamps @ \$5
VP-68 ball caps @ \$10 (contact Dan for colors)
Contact Dan for other items available.

Treasurer's Notebook

Time to renew your membership if you are an annual member, **check the mail label and if there is an "M-05" next to your name, your dues are due!** Failure to renew by the end of March 2006 means this is your last newsletter and you will be dropped from our membership roster. Notices were sent out. Please take a moment and mail your check to the association.

Make checks payable to **VP-68 Alumni Association**

and send it to: VP-68 Alumni Association
2414 Rolling Farms Road
Glenshaw, PA 15116

Consider converting to a Life Membership and never have to write us another check. Annual dues are \$10, Life Memberships are \$100 unless you are over 75 and then it is only \$25. Life Members receive a distinctive pin showing you are a Life Member. Contact Jim Rozycki at rozyckijim@aol.com

Election Year 2006

The VP-68 Alumni Association by-laws require we hold elections every two years. This year at the Fall Muster (Nov 2006) we will be conducting elections for the Association Officers. Positions that will be open for nominations are President, Vice-President and Treasurer. Please consider running for one of the offices or to chair one of our committees.

If you nominate somebody, we need in writing a letter from them that they are willing to run for office and have their name on the ballots. If you are willing to run for office, please contact the Association Secretary Kathy Wright and submit your name to wright_kathleen@bah.com

President's Corner

I am remiss at providing some comments about our wonderful 35th reunion. A personal thanks and well done to the Anniversary Reunion Committee. Without all their hard work this could not have happened. Carrie Blazek, Becky Connick, Dick Fickling, Lew Johnson, Jacque LaValle, Joe Odenthal, Jim Rozycki, Ed Stanfield, and Kathy Wright. did an outstanding job. I especially want to thank Kathy for being so generous in having our committee meetings at her apartment.

We had about 80 or so folks attend including "significant others". Eight former Skippers were in attendance and five former Command Master Chiefs and lots of Shipmates with their better half. The Ready Room was filled with memorabilia, and tons of pictures. Carrie was the MC and was never at a loss for words. A special thanks to our Guest Speaker; Dr. Randy Papadopolulos, Ph. D. We had a great 50-50 raffle and super door prize given. We appreciate the donations of these wonderful items. Pulling an event together like this was no easy task. The Reunion Committee deserves a "Hearty well done". Hopefully we can all share friendships at the 40th reunion. We will gladly take any volunteers, but need to get started very soon. I hope everyone is having a good New Year and I hope to see everybody at the Annual Spring Fling at Pax in May.

Why A Reunion?

I saw this on my VW-1 alumni web site and thought it perfect for our 35th reunion (or for any other).

The Reunion by Rachel First

Together at the appointed place, the old warriors come. Where they meet is not important anymore. They meet and that's enough for now. Greetings echo across a lobby. Hands reach out and arms draw buddies close. Embraces, that as young men they were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to accept so lovingly. But now they have reached a greater understanding of life and love. The shells holding their souls are weaker now, but hearts and minds grow vigorous remembering. On a table someone spreads old photographs, a test of recollection. Friendly laughter echoes at shocks of hair gone gray or white, or merely gone. The rugged, slender bodies lost forever. Yet they no longer need to prove their strength. Some are now sustained by one of "medicine miracles" and even in this fact they manage to find humor. The women, all

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those that waited, all those who loved them have watched the changes take place. Now they observe and listen, and smile at each other, as glad to be together as the men. Talk turns to war and planes and foreign lands. Stories are told and told again. Weaving the threadbare fabric of the past, amending one more time the banner of their youth. They hear vibrations, feel the shutter of metal as engines whine and whirl, and planes come to life. These birds with fractured wings can be seen beyond the mist of clouds, and they are in the air again, chasing the wind, feeling the exhilaration of flight close to the heavens. Dead comrades, hearing their names spoken, wanting to share in this time, if only in spirit, move silently among them. Their presence is felt and smiles appear beneath misty eyes. Each in his own way, may wonder who will be absent another year. The room grows quiet for a time. Suddenly an ember flames to life. Another memory burns. The talk may turn to other wars and other men. So, this how it goes. The past is so much present. In their ceremonies, the allegiances, the speeches and the prayers, one cannot but help but to hear the deep eternal love of country they will forever share.

Finally, it is time to leave. Much too soon to set aside this little piece of yesterday, but the past cannot be held too long for it is fragile. They say, "Farewell---see you next year, God willing." Each keeps a little of the others with him forever.

Organization & Purpose

The VP-68 Alumni Association was chartered in 1998 in the state of Maryland for the sole purpose of uniting in a central organization all former members of Navy Patrol Squadron 68 (VP-68), it's parent and supporting Navy squadrons, and those interested in preserving the name and history of Navy Patrol Squadron 68 (VP-68).

The Alumni Association shall conduct programs to perpetuate the memory of Navy Patrol Squadron 68 (VP-68) and to provide social and recreational activities for its membership. Life & Regular Membership includes: voting privileges; quarterly "Hawks Nest" newsletter; attendance at annual events; reunions and other functions.

Privacy Statement: The VP-68 Alumni Association holds membership information confidential and does not sell, disburse or distribute this information and uses it solely for Association purposes.

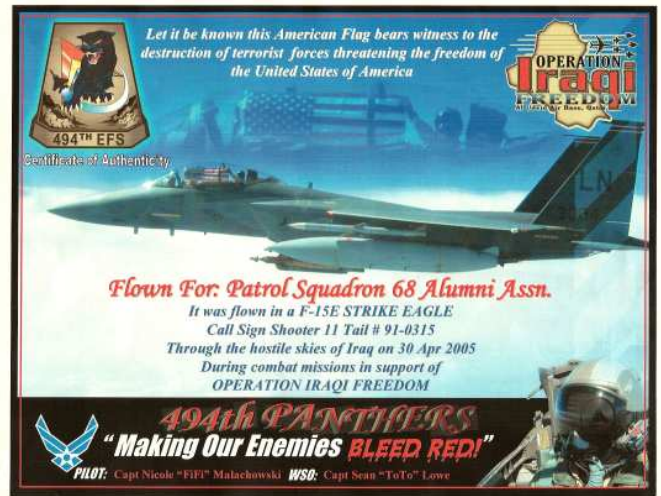
Alumni Association Web Page

We currently are updating the web page and will have it up to date very shortly. If you have any news or information concerning the Alumni Association please send it to Kathy Wright at wright_kathleen@bah.com.

Greetings from Qatar

VP-68 was remembered and honored last year at the Al Udeid Air Base in Doha, Qatar. Wally Fonville (CAC 9 IFT) was working there for ITT Systems Division in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Wally purchased an American flag and had it flown in a combat mission over the skies of Iraq in an F-15E Strike Eagle on 30 Apr 2005.

Below is the Certificate presented to Wally to be given to VP-68 along with the flag and is now a permanent part of our Squadron memorabilia. Thank you Wally for thinking of us.



Calling all Blackhawks !

Membership Committee

The VP-68 Alumni Association currently has 163 paid members consisting of the following:

- 109 Life Members
- 50 Regular Members
- 3 Honorary Life Members
- 1 Honorary Associate Members

We also have 75 Blackhawks who were former active members but have not renewed their membership recently. In order to keep the Alumni Association active and viable for many years to come we are asking all of you to contact fellow Blackhawks that you know and tell them about us. We have discovered that many former Blackhawks do not even know we exist.

To help organize the membership effort the Membership Committee, under the direction of Dick Perkins vp68co@yahoo.com, asks that you send any names and info to him at the above e-mail address.

Membership applications may be downloaded from our website.

Association Officers

- President **Lou Abbott**
louabbott1@verizon.net
- Vice-President **Kellie Gofus**
surchica@yahoo.com
- Secretary **Kathy Wright**
wright_kathleen@bah.com
- Treasurer **Jim Rozycki**
rozyckijim@aol.com
- Historian **Ed Stanfield**
edstanfield@mris.com

**HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL AT THE SPRING FLING
06 MAY 06 • NAS PAX RIVER**

VP 68 Alumni Association
2414 Rolling Farms Road
Glenshaw, PA 15116

