

VP-44 Winter 2005 Newsletter II

SUN N FUN LAKELAND, FL AIR SHOW REUNION

All members of VP-44. Some of us are trying to get together in Fla. for the Sun N Fun air show and have a mini Reunion. We are taking a poll to see how many of you would be interested in joining us. Then we can block some rooms at a local or near-by hotel. Please let me know if you are interested and pass the word along. The show is from April 4 to the 10, 2006.

Please contact Frank Romeo at 410 879-7422 or email FRANKP51F@AOL.COM If you are interested.

DEDICATION OF LARGE PLAQUE IN FREDERICKSBURG, TX

Update from Ray Beck:

Regarding the posting of the large plaque - Due to the reunion cruise in June 2006 and Reunion 2007, many cannot travel to Fredericksburg, TX for another plaque dedication. I have discussed this with Andy Serrell and he thought it was a good idea - to go ahead and order the larger plaque and have it placed on the memorial wall. I will get pictures of it after it is posted and those 44 personnel who desire to visit Fredericksburg will be able to view the new larger plaque. Please place a note to this effect in your next update email for feedback on this idea before I contact Marty Katerli to have the plaque manufactured. I plan on changing the wording to begin "*Officers and Men*" and to use the real VP-44 PBY photo provided by Richard Watson. I also plan to place a note of appreciation at the bottom of the plaque for the support & donation given by the Inn on Barons Creek and their staff. Ray can be reached at: chief_beck@yahoo.com

JUNE 2006 CRUISE

We have almost 30 people going on the cruise June 3-8 and there is still time to make your reservations, go to our home page www.vp44goldenpelicans.com and check it out.

PELICAN SHOP

We have plenty of VP-44 merchandise available in all sizes and most of the time I get it shipped out the next day. http://www.vp44goldenpelicans.com/pelican_shop2.htm

REUNION NOTICE

I need your help if you know of any sites that we can post our reunion information. I have about eight sites so far and looking for more, send the information to me and I will check and see if its one I have. So far I've found Vetfriends.com, Navy Memorial Foundation, Retired Enlisted Association, Military Reunion Center, Ben Meyers, Military.com, VPNAVY.

REUNION INFORMATION 2007

I have the contract signed for the 2007 reunion here in Indianapolis June 7-9 at the Embassy Suites Downtown. If you go to:

www.indianapolisdowntown.embassysuites.com

You can look around the hotel and get information about the place. The hotel is right in the middle of everything and I'm sure you'll enjoy the weekend. Keep your eye on the home page for further updates. Please keep in mind I have 20 rooms for Thursday and 50 rooms reserved for both Friday and Saturday nights. I can kick these numbers up or down so let me know if your planning on attending so I can get a rough count.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

I currently have 350 email addresses in our database and looking for more, if you have to forward this on to somebody please let me know and I will add them. I also have to delete a small number of bad email addresses every time I send out a update, so please let me know when you change your email address. As always if you do not want to get these updates let me know and I will delete you from the data base.

MESSAGE FROM OUR ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT

Good friends and veterans of Patrol Squadron 44

As the days grow shorter (and colder) I sit at my desk and reflect on the real meaning of this gathering of old friends. I ask myself, What purpose does this serve? What gain can come out of such an organization? Those of you who have attended one or more of the reunions since 2001 know the answer to these questions. There is something about the re-kindling of old friendships. There are special relationships that have never faded although many years have passed. A true friend is forever.

As the years pass we learn more and more about the truly valuable things in life. We treasure friendships and the special moments of many years ago. Whether you were aircrew or a "ground pounder" you have memories of time spent in VP-44. They were not always "happy times" but those years when we were pressed together for a common cause are years that helped form us, mature us and make us self-sufficient.

It is wonderful to remember those moments with the men you knew during your time in VP-44. Your version may not agree with the other guys but it is fun testing your memory.

Our Texas reunion is six months behind us and the 2007 Indianapolis reunion is over a year away. I am asking that you take some time, between now and when we gather again, to find another VP-44 vet that you may wish to talk with or see again. Over the past few years I have made it a point to try to find men who were good friends during my time in VP-44. The internet has made it easier. Veterans organizations and just plain word of mouth have all helped to put me in touch with guys I haven't seen in over 43 years. When I did get face to face with these men I was amazed at how the years melted away and the friendship was re-kindled.

We don't have to wait for the "Official" reunion in Indianapolis, we can hold mini reunions with men who live within driving distance. I would like to encourage all the retirees who live in Florida to try and gather more often. There are quite a few of you on the address list. If you need some help I would be happy to oblige, supplying email addresses or snail mail where I have the information.

There is a cruise organized for the spring and Frank Romeo is putting together a mini-reunion near Tampa in April. If you would like to join one of these gatherings or if you want to start your own I encourage you to try.

As Chairman of the 2007 reunion, Gene Toffolo is a good focal point for information on events happening within the squadron friends. Gene should also be the man who gathers information on friends you have found, let him know who you are in touch with so he can add them to the list. Sadly, Gene is also the recipient of information on our losses when we suffer them.

I will sign off with a wish that you all have a happy, healthy and prosperous new year. Now get busy looking for old squadron mates!

Ralph L. Cook

Ralph can be emailed at blusgtar@ptd.net