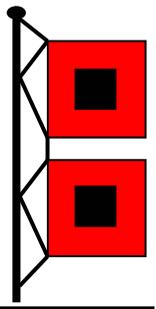


HURRICANE HUNTERS NEWSLETTER



Publisher E.R. Eaton

Volume No. 12

Issue No. 3

Fall 2017

From the President's Desk

It is that time of year when the Holiday Season is upon us. I want to take this time to wish each and every one of you a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year. May all your wishes and resolutions come true and GOD hold you in the palm of HIS hand surrounded by HIS grace.

Our 2018 reunion will again be held at the Doubletree on the St. Johns River in Jacksonville, Florida. The dates are Thursday, September 27, 2018 thru Sunday, September 30, 2018. Early check in will be September 25 and 26, 2018. As usual if you want to extend your stay a couple of days that is acceptable.

It is a sad day when economics raises it's ugly head into our ranks. We have 185 members on our roster, with 29 of them being exempt as widows of former hunters. Our revenue is slowly shrinking and our costs are going up 1-to-2 percent every year. Which leads me to this:

When I first started to attend the reunions, we had 130+ attending. In 2017 we had 19 booked rooms at the hotel for our reunion. I know there are some circumstances which are beyond our control, but lack of attendance shouldn't be one of them. When we negotiate a contract for the hotel and all their services, the price depends on the number of guaranteed attendees. As all the members that have attended in the last two years know, the hotel has given us a lot of free stuff, including such as free parking, hospitality room and all of it's services, and discount meals and room rates. How can I go to the hotel and ask for these discounts with only 19 guests??? The hotel has wedding parties that are larger. WE as a group are going to have to find some way to increase attendance, but I don't see that happening, which led to this:

The Officers and Board of Directors made a decision

to dissolve the Organization in 2020. The year 2020 will be the last year of the Hurricane Hunters Reunions, unless we can find some way to get our attendance up above 50 members attending. There have been many ideas tossed around and many implemented, but to no avail. If anyone has a sure fire idea as of how to get to this threshold , please let the Officers and Board know.

I know it will be a terrible loss for me personally and a lot of others because we always looked forward to attending these reunions. For some, it was the vacation of the year when we met so many of our friends and had such a wonderful time.

This isn't meant to discourage the membership to stop coming to the reunions in the ensuing three years. It is a great opportunity to renew our efforts to save this great organization.

I am looking forward to 2018 and beyond. I will renew my efforts to grow this wonderful membership. I am working on seeing if we can get the members of VW-2 and VW-11 and VW-13 to all come together as one great big organization. Those members all attended the same schools as we did and all went to the same flight schools and all flew those long flights. There is a lot we have in common, and we all know some people in those squadrons. If anyone has any objections, please let me know. In my Masonic Lodge, one of the members is the ex-CO of the Air Force 53rd Weather Squadron based in Biloxi Mississippi, and I have asked him if he thinks it would be a good idea to invite them to our reunions. He has promised to look into it and get back. He personally thinks it a good idea, so there is hope there.

Fair Winds and Following Seas

Ennis R. Eaton
President
US Navy Hurricane Hunters

TAPS

It is with a heavy heart that I report the passing of the following:

LCDR Donald A. Gilliamsen, August 11, 2017. LCDR Gilliamsen was the PPC of Crew 6 in 1965-67. He was instrumental in Operation Deep Freeze. For his services in Operation Deep Freeze, Gilliamsen Park is named in his honor. He flew in the Korean War, served in New Zealand, Iceland, Antarctica, and Newfoundland.

LCDR Alfred N. White, October 12, 2017. LCDR White enlisted as a able bodied seaman in 1944 and rose through the ranks to Chief in 1958. He was commissioned an Ensign in 1958 and retired as LCDR in 1970. He flew in VW-4 and VW-2. He was a CICO in both squadrons.

Evelyn Goff, May 21, 2017. Evelyn was the wife of LCDR Peter Goff who was our XO and Vice President of this organization, Hurricane Hunters, Inc.

Jo Ann May, July 2017. Jo Ann was the long time companion to Chief Bill Reynolds.

Now, The Rest Of The Story...

Editors Note: Fellow Hunter Mike Wadel sent a letter to the editor, which was published in the Summer 2014 edition of the Hurricane Hunters Newsletter, in which he described how his cousin, Al Herren a USMC Radioman, assisted a Navy Hurricane Hunter PBY4Y2 running low on fuel to reach landfall and land safely. What follows is another letter from Wadel sent to our president E.R. Eaton in which he describes his and his cousin's efforts to locate and communicate with any remaining air crewmembers from that PBY4Y2 and glean additional information about that fateful flight.

Mr. Eaton,

When my cousin Al Herren learned of my service as an air crewman performing hurricane reconnaissance in "This Man's Navy", it stirred in him an old memory of a 1948 Hurricane Hunter adventure. He

played a peripheral role as a USMC Radio Operator in CW radio (Morse Code) in contact with a radioman on board a US Navy PB4Y2 Privateer in distress. It was running out of fuel, preparing to ditch in the Atlantic - not sure of being able to reach a landing field.

Al provided a sketch of the story to me and I submitted it for publication in the *Hurricane Hunters Newsletter*. The story was published in Volume No. 9, Issue No. 2, Summer 2014, recalled his impressions of the flight and ended with the hope that he or I could identify and possibly meet with an air crewman from the flight if any still survive.

After the story was published, it did come to the attention of a surviving air crewman, Roy Killian, who had been Aerologist/Navigator on the flight. Roy then exchanged letters with Al in which he identified the entire crew, and provided vivid descriptions of the August 31, 1948, flight and of the typical hurricane reconnaissance experience.

Roy's letters confirmed that the Privateer was indeed short of fuel. As he reported after the flight, the crew jettisoned all possible gear, including radar equipment, in an effort to stretch the last precious gallons of gasoline. They even threw overboard their flight bags with dress clothes, uniforms and wallets.

They barely made it to the Elizabeth City, North Carolina, US Coast Guard runway, which was "all lit up" at dusk, not yet totally dark - landed straight in, downwind, engines sputtering, touched down "far and fast," blew out a tire with hard braking, and ran off the end of the runway as the engines died of fuel starvation.

Roy identified H. H. Ferrier as a chief radioman who exchanged Morse Code messages with Al on the flight. Roy also indicated that may have been the only flight he shared with Ferrier.

Al was eventually able to track down Ferrier, but has had only limited success in establishing any exchange of communications - had one brief telephone chat, but no exchange of correspondence. It turns out that H. H. Ferrier is Harry Hackett Ferrier, retired Commander, USN.

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Now, The Rest Of The Story...

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His military life was full of adventure, even before the 1948 PB4Y2 flight. Harry, with the connivance of his mother, falsified his birth records and enlisted in the US Navy right after his 16th birthday.

At age 17, Harry was a Radioman and Tail Gunner aboard a Grumman TBF-1 Avenger as a part of Torpedo Squadron 8, in the Battle of Midway. His plane took off from Midway Atoll on June 4, 1942, and headed into battle with the "undefeated Japanese Imperial Navy." His plane took 67 bullet hits and nine 20mm shell hits. It was pretty badly shot up - the pilot had to maneuver using stabilizer trim and navigate by observing sun angles to make it back to Midway. Harry's wounds included a head wound from Japanese machine gun fire. Another crew member (turret gunner, I think) was killed in that encounter. Harry lives in Oak Harbor, WA at this writing, and has earned awards including Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, Air Medal (3), and several unit citations and campaign medals.

The 1948 PB4Y2 hurricane flight may have been a bit anticlimactic for him, considering his earlier WW2 experiences. Al reported that both Roy and Harry were clear headed, gracious and helpful old gents at the time of this discovery in 2014. He has made no effort to reach other possibly surviving crew members from the 1948 PB4Y2 flight, but all nine were identified by Roy Killian in one of his letters.

Al and I both agree that the odds against identifying Roy and Harry, and they all still being alive, then further locating and communicating with them after 67 years must be astronomical. It has been a very rewarding and satisfying experience. Since then it has come to my attention that Harry Ferrier passed away on April 26, 2016. And now you know the rest of the story, again . . .

I tell you all of this because you need to know that Roy Killian has told me he is coming to the business meeting this year, which I assume will be on Saturday morning, September 30, 2017, at 1000 hours EDT, somewhere inside the Jacksonville Double Tree Riverfront Hotel.

I asked him if he had paid the registration fee yet and he said that he was only going to the business meeting and not to any of the social activities, . . .

I took that to mean that he felt he did not have to pay the registration fee (sounds reasonable).

At this point I was wondering why a 90-something year old man would drive over 400 miles only to attend a boring business meeting.

And then I realized that his daughter lives in Jacksonville.

Voila, two birds with one stone!

Since we met, errr, discovered each other in 2014, he always calls me right before the annual meeting to inquire as to whether I am going to the meeting or not, and I always reply in the same manner; but this year I beat him to the draw and asked him first; and he said "Yes, I'll meet you there."

Man, did he suck me right in or what, or did I do that to myself?

The important thing here is that Roy is not only a member of "The Greatest Generation" but will probably be the oldest Hunter in attendance at the meeting and the only Hunter that is a member of that Generation.

Thank you very much.

Mike Wadel

Editors Note: For reasons unknown, neither Wadel nor Killian made it to the reunion business meeting.

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Newsletter is published three times annually. Association dues are \$25.00 annually payable on January 1st or thereafter.

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Hurricane Hunters' 2017 Reunion Candid Pictures

