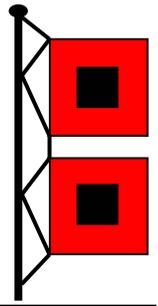


# HURRICANE HUNTERS NEWSLETTER



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## Tropical Reflections

Tranquil, yet tense, the first rays of the sun form a vermilion and gold border on the eastern edge of the Florida night sky. In the glare of floodlights and an incessant growl from the generators that produce them languishes an aviation apparition that belies belief at first look. The graceful lines of the Lockheed "Super Constellation" are assaulted by apparent growths both above and below the fuselage that beg the question, "Can it possibly fly like that?"

Fly indeed! On countless missions over many years and hundreds of thousands of hours she soared and struggled. On this morning she was being prepared for her entrusted mission to provide the information that could mean the difference between life and death for many of the citizens who had paid for her in their taxes. She too, would be the chrysalis that surrounded, protected and transported those who flew her in harm's way. And in harm's way she would fly this day. South and east to the tropics, to those parts of God's ocean that spawned the storm that the Caribe and Mayan Indians called the tool of the evil God Juracan, today's hurricane.

In those awkward appearing appendages above and below the long slender wings were the electronic "eyes" that peered over tens of thousands of square miles with each sweep of her powerful radars housed therein. Their enormous appetite for electrical energy was supplied by the roaring engines churning the air outside and heating the air within to near and above the 100 degree mark.

The crew, in contradiction, both loved and hated this vehicle that really was not a machine but was like a ship, itself possessing a life and personality that exhibited both likes and dislikes for individuals and crews. On the flight line, remarks on her behavior were muttered in half-tones and over the shoulder in deference to her personality.

The crew's confidence was entrusted to her knowing that each and every time she carried her precious cargo into the maelstrom she would surely deliver them safe home again. She did too! Even the time when battered, assaulted and fatally flawed by the ravages of the storm she struggled from the storm and crawled through the sky to deposit her wards to fly again in her sisters. For her, flying days were over. Her frame was twisted and her vital organs strained beyond repair. The charges that flew her demanded the ultimate and she gave it. Like fickle lovers, these charges of hers sometimes treated her badly, even cruelly. All this she forgave.

Inevitably, she aged. Was it fair that while she aged the swains that flew her remained young? She was like a lover whose face is forever changing and yet remains the same. She could sense it was over. On the flight line a younger more slender flying maiden appeared. Finally, the day arrived, and with it a new crew, one not known to her. Strangers! They did all the familiar things of pre-flight, but somehow it was different. None of the chatter of "...a really big storm..." the eagerness of nights in Barbados. Instead it was a clinical litany of inventory and removal of this and that. A minimal flight crew. One almost uncaring, aloof and businesslike. The realization struck with a suddenness! This was it! Retirement! She had been replaced. With head high she answered the commands of power and direction. She would not skulk from this place, this place of honor. She was coaxed down the taxiway toward the runway and her last departure from this existence of hers.

But!..What was this? They were there, those charges of hers. Arrayed in salute for hundreds of feet along the taxiway. To honor her. They had not forgotten! The new maiden might rule this couch, but she would have to earn this homage that "Connie" had garnered over the years. Perhaps this last flight just might not be so bad!

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A non-profit Florida corporation

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## From The President's Desk

It has been an enlightening eight months for your President. What with the change-over from the previous leadership and realizing the enormity of the task in some respects and also to putting together a reunion for this year. Many of the chores have been made much smoother by the capable assistance of people like John Dillingham, Ray Hennessey, Paul Tilson and frequent tutelage from Bob Fitzimmons.

We have been bringing the roster up to date and reinserting names that have fallen from the files in an effort to be all-inclusive. The winter Newsletter had it's share of 'challenges.' Not the least of which was a corrupt file of addresses that I sent to Paul Tilson. This resulted in a second-mailing to ensure that everyone on the list got a copy. Dues dates were also suspect in many cases and we're endeavoring to bring all these up to date. Please note the addition of an "historical" article in the issue. We'd like to have members

submit articles that relate back to their association with the squadron(s). "History ain't nothin'...if you don't know it." Don't worry about grammatical or journalistic abilities. Just let 'em rip as in sea stories that begin "Now, this is no...."

Former Navigator, Dale Eggers hosted a dinner recently to kick-off the Hurricane Season.. Dale had been invited by a Jacksonville TV Meteorologist (Mike Buresh, (CBS, Jax) to assist in a hurricane special. He kindly invited me to participate with him. At the dinner were a number of "Hunters" some who hadn't been to a reunion in awhile. We hope as a result, some/all of these folks will join us at Daytona Beach this year. Be sure and get your reservations in early for the reunion. Judging by phone and e-mail reaction there will be a good gathering. If all goes well I think you all will enjoy our guest speaker this year. We have recently received word that our brethren "Hunters" the Air force's 53<sup>rd</sup> Weather Reconnaissance Squadron will provide a dinner speaker for our banquet and that the famed "Hans Brinker Silver Skate Award" will be in attendance.

Warm Regards,

**Ray Boylan**

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## Past Hunter Remembered

We recently received a note from the widow of one of our earliest "Hunters." Pauline Ryner, who prefers to be called "Polly," shared a few thoughts of her husband, Evan Ryner.

Ryner became a civilian pilot in 1938 and joined the Navy in 1942 earning his Navy "Wings of Gold" during World War Two. Polly recalls that during his tenure, Evan flew "...just about everything the Navy had." from Howards to his last aircraft, the F-9F Cougar.

In 1947 he earned his degree in Meteorology from the Naval Post-Graduate School in Miami and flew the P4Y2 "Privateer" during his days in Meteorological Squadron Three.

Polly included a picture of the Meteorology Class of 1947 at Miami posing in front of the "P4Y2 aircraft. The roster of the class identifies a number of officers who went on to distinguished careers in the Naval Weather Service.

Polly attended the reunion last year but will forego this years gathering. She still manages to drive cross-country annually from her home in Virginia Beach to visit "...what's left of her family" in

Indiana and she remains active with Association of Naval Aviation as well as the Retired Officers Wive's group.

We are fortunate indeed to have faithful members like Polly to keep our past alive. Come back soon Polly!

## Daytona Beach Reunion

By now everyone should have received their information packet for the gathering at the La Playa Inn & Resort on the ocean in Daytona Beach.. The hotel has worked very diligently to arrange a pleasant package for us from a comfortable and convenient “Ready-Room” to a grand Banquet replete with music and amenities. If you haven’t yet received your packet, contact one of the officers and we’ll see that it gets to you. You can also download the information on the web-site at [www.geocities.com/pentagon/bunker/3630](http://www.geocities.com/pentagon/bunker/3630)

If you know a former “Hunter” who hasn’t been contacted we would hope you would either contact them yourself or let us know and we’ll take care of it.

Part of the weekend activities will be our general membership meeting on Saturday morning where a number of important issues need to be addressed. Financial reports will be available and By-Law initiatives worked on. Put on your thinking-caps for a site for the next reunion.

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### *How We Did It*

If it weren’t for the anticipation of what the rest of the day promised or threatened, the piercing alarm clock would have been ripe for launching across the room against the concrete brick wall. As it was, the morning hour shortly past midnight was still warm and a shawl of humidity hung in the room at least as heavy as it did in the surrounding deeply wooded tropical hills of eastern Puerto Rico. With few words and seemingly even less energy, a dozen aviators dressed as clones in green Nomex flight suits shuffled into the “ready bus” which was not really a bus at all but a beat-up step-in delivery van that wheezed it’s way up the hill to the BOQ and barracks and plummeted head-long down on well-worn brakes to the operations area and the pre-flight briefing that would take us almost 3,000miles over the open ocean expanse.

So started what seems to have been hundreds of missions from as many often remote, sometimes comfortable, always intriguing tropical islands and coasts from Dakar in Senegal westward through the aquamarine Caribbean to the sandy beaches of Tampico in Mexico. We would sometimes search for and other times cautiously intercept the tropical

storms of the northeast trade winds. In the days before good satellites, the aircraft and their crew would toil indolently across the ocean most often in vain search of the storms, but ever the sentinel. With the advent of the satellite we now had the luxury of waiting for areas that looked promising and flying directly there.

On this day we were already committed. An earlier flight had found an area that showed promise. Growling, growing thunderstorms seemed to lock hands and start an almost hemispheric ring-around-the-rosey. Now with fresh reports from a Liberian freighter hammering it’s way through torrential rains and a freshening northwest wind 800 miles east of us, we knew we had one! The northwest wind was the telling-point. Any wind from the west in the tropic oceans in summer is like a fever to a sick man. No good news!

The flight out was quiet, uneventful, even boring. Banter ran the gamut of high-spirited sports talk to musings such as “...maybe if we stay out long enough we’ll have to land in Barbados instead of going back to Puerto Rico...” That was always a welcome happenstance to crew members who would rather spend their crew-rest at the Blue Caribbean or the Fort Charles Hilton Hotels rather than the austere barracks or BOQ at the Naval Station. Although, to refer to it as “crew-rest” in Barbados was the ultimate in contradiction!

Before long CICO intoned over the intercom “...radar showing spiral bands-dead ahead-two hundred miles. CICO was one of the elements of the crew which was comprised of CICO (Combat Information Center Officer), FLIGHT, the pilots, flight engineer and navigator and; METRO. The flight meteorologist and his crew of meteorological technicians. The atmosphere became a bit more charged with CICO’s announcement. The spiral bands detected by the radar were not clouds but the raindrops within the clouds forming curved avenues of energy into the center of what appeared to look like a black hole in a George Lucas thriller. This would be a thriller of it’s own. Soon, following an intercom briefing between the teams on just how to approach the storm CICO says, with some edge in his voice, “...Spiral bands disappear-four zero miles ahead...” He and we knew that the bands didn’t just disappear. The rain was becoming so heavy that the

*See How We Did It on Page Four*

## ***How We Did It***

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radar energy beam couldn't penetrate into the maelstrom. We were in for some rough flying. We had been flying at just under 1,000 feet with the base of lowest clouds just above us. Now closer to the heart of the storm the clouds were literally ripped apart even as they formed and were dipping closer to the surface of the ocean. The ocean for it's part reached for the shards of clouds with sea waves growing and crashing one on another in a seascape of pandemonium as the screaming winds, now over 80 miles per hour, sent sinews of spray from one crest to another. Now the litany of sound on the intercom becomes more intense, the easy aloofness of an hour ago now long gone. Crisp, hard-bitten syllables delivered in a staccatos each team element delivered it's information on the storm and how the ever-changing flight was progressing. The rain had long-since prevented any visibility for FLIGHT through the windscreen. The aircraft hurtling toward the "eye" at 180 miles per hour made each rain drop sound like a rock caroming off the plexiglass. CICO for the moment was FLIGHT's eyes. But now, even CICO's electronic eyes were being darkened by the absolute enveloping curtain of rain that surrounded us. Finally, "...METRO, this is CICO. I can no longer see the "eye." You have the CONN..."Now METRO from his position at a bubble window along the side of the aircraft had to guide the plane from the appearance of the raging sea now just 700 feet below. They must stay low enough to be below the clouds but high enough not to encounter the mountainous sixty foot waves below now being pummeled along by winds in excess of 100 miles per hour.

The cacophony of sound surrounding the aircraft is deafening. METRO strains to give FLIGHT the precise direction to fly the aircraft so that the wind on the surface is directly on the left wing, ensuring, in that way that the nose of the aircraft would be pointing directly toward the "eye." The horizontal shear of the winds tears at the fuselage and it feels as if they are hurtling headlong down a rock-strewn hillside. The noise and turbulence seems now to fill every moment and is growing in intensity when, as if propelled into another dimension, the noise

abruptly ended, and we hear the engines again. A bright, garish light fills the aircraft and everyone reacts almost in recoil – it is the sun! A silence has dominated the intercom in the past few moments. Then, softly, in awe, METRO says "...Crew, we're in the "eye."



## **Cachet Envelopes Still Available**

Walt Walter still has some of the "First Day of Issue" cachet envelopes from the 2005 Reunion available. A US postage stamp depicting the plane flown by the squadron superimposed over a hurricane with hurricane flags in the upper left corner and naval aviator wings in the upper right with a title across the bottom of the stamp "1945 • U.S. Navy HURRICANE HUNTERS • 2005" "60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY."

The postmark reads: "HURRICANE HUNTERS REUNION STATION • OCTOBER 14, 2005 • PENSACOLA, FL 32508."

You can order these stamped and cancelled cachet envelopes for \$10 each, including postage, from Walt at: P.O. Box-39, Flat Rock, NC 28731.