

# VC-12 VOICE

Volume 4 Issue 3

May 2002

## Special Points of Interest

- *Reminisce with Ed Seykowski about going back to Newport in our cover story.*
- *WELCOME MAT on page two lists one newly found squadronmate. Hopefully someone will recognize his name and get in touch with him.*
- *It's not too late to get the newsletter on line. See the details on page two and sign up now.*
- *An important question and answer is on page three. Don't miss it.*
- *MAIL CALL tells about a cruise up the Mississippi River. See page three.*
- *Are you an "Old Geezer"? I hope so! See if you meet the requirements on page four.*
- *A moving speech by John McCain is on page four. It will stir your patriotic spirit.*
- *Let us hear from you with new stories. Everyone enjoys the letters and stories written by YOU.*

## GOING BACK HOME!

I hope to see many of you at our September 2002 Reunion! The thought of going to Newport, Rhode Island for our 2002 VC-12/VAW-12 Reunion gives me the warm feeling of "going back home". It's interesting that after 50 years (1959-1962), I can only remember the good things about being a sailor stationed in VAW-12 at NAS Quonset Point, RI.

Gathering at the E Club for "happy hour" with my squadron mates...the open bay enlisted barracks with the crowded TV room... also the station galley's "gourmet" food ...my flight locker off the Parloft...the "Poopy Suits"... the inspections on the tarmac ...the station pool's "Dilbert Dunker"...night vision & pressure chamber... squadron lectures in the Station Theater...the WF2 "Willy Fud" classrooms when we updated to WF2's. I close my eyes and can still visualize the APS20 & APS80 radar image of Cape Cod, Block Island, Long Island, Martha's Vineyard, and Narragansett Bay. One late afternoon we declared an emergency because of AD5W engine problems and diverted to Charlestown Airfield before we got our feet wet. I can't forget Flight Physicals and the Dentist, Station Chapel, and the "civilian clothes locker" outside the gate. Sailing the base yacht club 14 footers in the bay. But most of all, I really look forward to seeing my old squadron mates.

"Liberty" was a whole different adventure: chasing the "Red Island Hens" (local girls) brings back fond memories...riding "the bus" back and forth to Providence always

proved to be an escapade... missing the last bus on weekends and getting a cot for a couple dollars in the "Y Gym"... the Bay Bridge... invasion of the horseshoe crabs on the seaplane ramps...quaint New England restaurants...the New London ferry to Long Island...weekend trips to Boston...the Newport Jazz Festival. The local families that I met through dating the girls at the "Y Servicemen's Club"; they took me in and treated me like family.

I'm looking forward to visiting the NAS Quonset Point Aviation Museum and sneaking a quick base tour to find out if some of the old buildings are still standing. I hope the USS Saratoga will someday be there as a tourist attraction (I have heard that it is pretty run down with many changes under civilian control). I understand the "O Club" is still functioning but a lot of the other buildings are gone.

I'm looking forward to "going back home" 19-22 of September. Please come and join the rest of your shipmates.

Ed Seykowski, CWO4 USNR Ret.  
(AT2 in VAW-12)  
VC-12/VAW-12 Chairman

**VC-12/VAW-12 &  
SISTER SQUADRONS  
2002 REUNION  
SEPTEMBER 19-22  
ROYAL PLAZA HOTEL  
NEWPORT, RI**

## WELCOME MAT



The following shipmate was just located. Welcome aboard. If we missed anyone, please accept our apology. Let us know and you'll be listed in the next issue. We want to urge you to become a contributing member of the group and hope to see you at the 2002 Reunion in Newport.

Paul "Duke" Hunneyman  
(1947-49) ATR2  
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Rochester, MN 55901  
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pehusa@aol.com

**NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS**  
Don Marshall  
donmarshall@bluelight.com

### FINANCIAL REPORT

Balance after 02/02 issue  
**Minus \$50.25**  
Funds received since 02/02 issue  
**\$305.00**  
Total available for 05/02 issue  
**\$254.75**  
Expended for 05/02 issue  
**\$170.09**  
Balance for 08/021 issue  
**\$84.66**

**Funds will be needed for the next issue.**

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## STATEMENT OF PUBLICATION

The VC-12 VOICE is the official publication of the VC-12/VAW-12 Association. From now on it will be published quarterly in February, May, August and November, *subject to receiving sufficient funding*. The Newsletter is funded by voluntary contributions from the membership. All members are encouraged to support the voice of the VC-12/VAW-12. A financial statement appears in each issue of the newsletter.

The newsletter is intended to be a vehicle for the members to express opinions, make suggestions and especially share experiences.

Unless otherwise stated, the views and opinions printed in the newsletter are those of the article's writer, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Association leadership or the Editor of the Newsletter.

All letters and stories submitted will be considered for publication, except unsigned letters will not be published. Letters requesting the writer's name be withheld will be honored, but published on a space available basis. Signed letters with no restrictions will be given priority.

Letters demeaning to another shipmate will not be printed; letters espousing a political position will not be printed.

The editor reserves the right to edit letters to conform to space limitations and grammar.

You are encouraged to actively participate in the newsletter family, by submitting your stories and suggestions.

*The peace symbol that became popular in the 1960s is the combination of semaphore symbols for "N" and "D" —for nuclear disarmament. The symbol was popularized by British pacifists.*

## NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ON LINE

The Newsletter for the VC-12/VAW-12 reunion is available to download from the Military Locator & Reunion Service Inc web site.

If you are able to visit our web site and download the Newsletter, and therefore do not need a paper copy mailed to you, please let us know.

Please visit our web site at [www.mlrsinc.com](http://www.mlrsinc.com), then follow the link labeled Reunions, then scroll down until you see the listing for the VC-12/VAW-12. Click on the button labeled Newsletters, and in a few minutes the newsletter should appear on your screen. (As a side note - it took about 4 minutes on my computer). This will only work if you have Adobe Reader 4.0 or higher. You can also download this viewer for free from our web site.

If this works for you and you would like to receive all future mailings from us in this method, please send me an e-mail requesting to subscribe to the VC-12/VAW-12 E-mail Roster. Each time something new is available, we will send you an e-mail informing you something new is available on the web site. **Please let us know if your e-mail address changes so you don't miss any important information.**

**To subscribe to the VC-12/VAW-12 E-mail Roster please send an e-mail to [SubscribeMLRS@aol.com](mailto:SubscribeMLRS@aol.com), put the phrase SUBSCRIBE VC-12/VAW-12 in the Subject line and type your name and e-mail address in the body of your e-mail. You will be placed in the e-mail roster.**

Your name and postal mailing address will remain in our computers and will appear on all mailing lists, etc distributed to other members of your group.

If you have any question regarding this, do not hesitate to ask!

Dina Coffey

## A VERY IMPORTANT TFL QUESTION AND ANSWER

This is a very important question that was posed to me and a very important answer. The answer comes from an official DoD source.

**Question:** Do you know if the widow of a qualified for retirement pay reservist who died prior to his 60th birthday and had not selected a SBP is entitled to TFL? The individual HAD received his 20 year letter and was awaiting his 60th to collect retired pay but, unfortunately, did not make it. His widow did not receive any benefits because of his non-selection of one of the survivor programs. Thanks.

Alex

**Answer:** With respect to your inquiry concerning this lady. Bottom line: If she is Medicare-eligible, which I assume from the question she is, and PARTICIPATES in Medicare Part B, she is then eligible and has TFL benefits.

**VERY IMPORTANT NOTE:** If, as of the current date, her deceased spouse would not yet have reached age 60 (or in this case would have reached age 60), she would then be eligible for TRICARE (Prime, if she was under 65; TFL, if she was 65 or over).

The fact that she (or her spouse) declined SBP impacts primarily her receipt of his retirement pay. All of her other privileges (base exchange, commissary, pharmacy, TRICARE) remain in effect as with any DoD beneficiary.

\*\*It is CRITICALLY important for her to ensure that she is properly registered in DEERS, that it indicates she has Medicare Parts A & B, and that she has a CURRENT ID card!

*Submitted by Bob Marvin*



## MAIL CALL

Gentlemen:

I am enclosing a check to help with the expenses. I enjoy the newsletter very much and especially the last one as there were two letters which brought back memories of names from the past.

In the accident and crash history, I noticed a small discrepancy. The name of the pilot of the AD-5W that crashed on 6-29-55 was Joseph F. Steudle. Joe was a good friend of mine (we went through flight training together) and I was chosen to escort his body home to New Jersey.

Sincerely,  
William G. Gwaltney  
505 Lonsvale Dr.  
Anderson, IN 46013

ML&RS,

After having talked to Ed Seykowski, the chairman, I have some information.

I joined VC-12 on January 24, 1948, when the squadron had TBM-3Ws and TBM-3Es at Quonset Pt. R. I. Cdr Allen Shinn was the Skipper. One of our detachments was sent to USS Mindoro (CVE 120) in approximately April of 1948.

We had made stops in Bermuda, Matanzas Bay, Cuba and the Davis Straits in the North Atlantic. While in the Caribbean, we performed what was called "Operation Pin-wheel." A pair of TBMs was at each quarter of the flight deck, forward port, forward stb. port aft, and stb. aft. tails were outboard. This was to determine what it took to control the turns of the ship, before we started up the Mississippi River. Yes, I said Mississippi River. It was quite an experience, as I am sure the river pilots experienced much of the same. At times our bow was almost touching land, as well as the stern on one or two of the turns. Finally arrived in New Orleans and

were tied up at the foot of Canal Street. This was about 13 May 1948. The local newspapers hailed our small fleet as the greatest since Admiral Farragut did the same about 90 years earlier.

We had two subs and I believe two destroyers in our group. Around September 1948, (I cannot recall the exact date or where we were), one of our aircraft, TBM-34 BUNO 86170 had the entire empanage and half of the fuselage chopped up by an aircraft coming in for a landing on the flight deck. Missed the wire with his hook and 7 NE met her demise. No one was injured. We were parked alongside the ship's island.

While in the Davis Straits, we did little or no flying, because of heavy seas and bad weather. My question is, if any of the pilots or navigators who were there would know how far north in latitude we were?

On April 28, 1950, our detachment was sent to the USS Leyte (CV-32), and to the 6th Fleet. We had newer aircraft by this time, AD-3Ws. The cruise was good until we anchored off shore in Beirut, Lebanon, when we had to head back to the states, due to the conflict in Korea. We arrived stateside, went to Newport News, VA, for yard work, then the ship went on to Korea. I had left the ship in Norfolk about August 1950, and had orders to VX-1, NAS Key West, FL in January 1951.

I am proud to say I had served with Ens. Jesse Brown, the Navy's first black aviator. He was in Squadron VA-35, aboard the USS Leyte, flying F4U Corsairs. Most of the F4Us were free launched, not from a catapult. He was killed in action in Korea on 4 December 1950.

I may have left out some facts, but with age creeping up and getting "CRS" at age 77, my "forgetter is getting worse!"

I have given Ed Seykowski some pictures and a roster from the Mindoro.

I am sorry that I will not make it to Newport, R.I.

John N. Lovric, Usn (Ret)

*(Continued on page 4)*

(Continued from page 3)

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## "OLD GEEZERS"

From Ed Seykowski

"Geezers" (slang for old men) are easy to spot:

At sporting events, during the playing of the National Anthem, Old Geezers hold their caps over their hearts and sing without embarrassment. They know the words and believe in them. Old Geezers remember World War I, the Depression, World War II, Pearl Harbor, Guadacanal, Normandy and Hitler. They remember the Atomic Age, the Korean War, The Cold War, the Jet Age and the Moon Landing, not to mention Vietnam.

If you bump into an Old Gesser on the sidewalk, he will apologize. If you pass an Old Geezer on the street, he will nod or tip his cap to a lady. Old Geezers trust strangers and are courtly to women. Old Geezers hold the door for the next person and always, when walking, make certain the lady is on the inside for protection.

Old Geezers get embarrassed if someone curses in front of women and children and they don't like any filth on TV or in movies. Old Geezers have moral courage. They seldom brag unless it's about their grandchildren.

It's the Old Geezers who know our great country is protected, not by politicians or police, but by the young men and women in the military serving their country.

### TRIVIA

*A person is almost one-half inch taller in the morning—pads of cartilage become compressed during the day, making us shorter. Perhaps there is some merit to the idea of being "worn down" by end of day!*

## A SPEECH BY JOHN McCAIN

As you may know, I spent five and one half years as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War. In the early years of our imprisonment, the NVA kept us in solitary confinement or two or three to a cell.

In the 1971 the NVA moved us from these conditions of isolation into large rooms with as many as 30 to 40 men to a room.

This was, as you can imagine, a wonderful change and was a direct result of the efforts of millions of Americans on behalf of a few hundred POWs 10,000 miles from home.

One of the men who moved into my room was a young man named Mike Christian. Mike came from a small town near Selma, Alabama. He didn't wear a pair of shoes until he was 13 years old. At 17, he enlisted in the US Navy. He later earned a commission by going to Officer Training School. Then he became a Naval Flight Officer and was shot down and captured in 1967.

Mike had a keen and deep appreciation of the opportunities this country—and our military—provide for people who want to work and want to succeed. As part of the change in treatment, the Vietnamese allowed some prisoners to receive packages from home. In some of these packages were handkerchiefs, scarves and other items of clothing. Mike got himself a bamboo needle. Over a period of a couple of months, he created an American flag and sewed on the inside of his shirt.

Every afternoon, before we had a bowl of soup, we would hang Mike's shirt on the wall of the cell and say the Pledge of Allegiance. I know the Pledge of Allegiance may not seem the most important part of our day now, but I can assure you that in that stark cell it was indeed the most important and meaningful event.

One day the Vietnamese searched our cell, as they did periodically, and discovered Mike's shirt

with the flag sewn inside, and removed it. That evening they returned, opened the door of the cell, and for the benefit of us all, beat Mike Christian severely for the next couple of hours. Then, they opened the door of the cell and threw him in. We cleaned him up as well as we could.

The cell in which we lived had a concrete slab in the middle on which we slept. Four naked light bulbs hung in each corner of the room. As said, we tried to clean up Mike as well as we could. After the excitement died down, I looked in the corner of the room, and sitting there beneath that dim light bulb with a piece of red cloth, another shirt and his bamboo needle, was my friend, Mike Christian. He was sitting there with his eyes almost shut from the beating he had received, making another American flag.

He was not making the flag because it made Mike Christian feel better. He was making that flag because he knew how important it was to us to be able to pledge allegiance to our flag and our country.

So the next time you say the Pledge of Allegiance, you must never forget the sacrifice and courage that thousands of Americans have made to build our nation and promote freedom around the world. You must remember our duty, our honor, and our country.

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

## YOUR STORIES WANTED

Please send us your stories about your days with the VC-12/VAW-12 for others to enjoy. You may send them by mail or to the newsletter e-mail address. Both addresses are on page two. This is your newsletter, and you should use it to share your stories with others.