

From the MCARA President

Thanks to everyone who attended the 2014 MCARA Reunion in Tucson on 1 to 5 May 2014. And a special thanks to Paul Melcher who did all the legwork to plan, coordinate and execute the event which came off without a hitch. We had a great turnout and the weather was absolutely perfect for the entire week. The Pima Air Museum and Davis Monthan AFB Boneyard tour provided a great opportunity to view and inspect some well-preserved aircraft for some well-preserved former aircrew and maintainers. I personally did a walk-around pre-flight inspection of the F-4 and A-6 to see what I could remember from 30+ years ago and it brought back some fond memories of missions and squadron-mates. We also enjoyed some excellent dinners at L'il Abner's and Pinnacle Peak Steakhouses along with some famous western movie scenes at the Old Tucson Studio as well as some local cultural, animal and plant-life exhibits at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum. And Colonel (Ret) Charlie Carr regaled us all at the banquet with some exciting VMJ and A-6 mission highlights from the Vietnam era as well as some more recent HQMC drama.

I was pleased to accept the position of MCARA President as former President Paul Melcher handed me the stick at the reunion. We all owe Paul a deep debt of gratitude as he piloted MCARA through a difficult period and kept the organization straight and level since our last reunion. As we look to the future of MCARA we are also looking at a transition of Marine Corps aviation reconnaissance and electronic warfare (EW) missions, systems and manpower that will lead to a much different role and skillset for our Marine aviation reconnaissance and EW warriors. In following this Marine Corps transition, MCARA is charting a two-fold path to preserve the aviation reconnaissance / EW legacy while evolving with its future mission and operations as the MAGTF fields new capabilities to face an evolving threat with fewer resources. As we addressed these transitions at this year's annual MCARA membership meeting, we identified two major areas of focus for MCARA over the next few years:

- Creating some form of exhibit at a visible and well-trafficked location to showcase the MAGTF contributions and legacy of Marine Corps aviation reconnaissance and electronic warfare,
- Broadening the MCARA membership roles to attract more active duty and recently retired aviation reconnaissance and EW Marines

Both of these activities will take a great effort on the part of the board as well as the general membership and will be especially challenging given the budget and manpower driven changes being made within the aviation reconnaissance / EW communities in today's Marine Corps. One immediate step will be for board members to travel to MCAS Cherry Point this summer and meet with our MCARA cadre there as well as some of the active duty VMAQ and VMU Marines. During this visit we will begin planning the 2015 MCARA Mini-Reunion and broaden the scope for an all-out effort to attract many of the local Cherry Point VMAQ and VMU Marines. In scheduling this Mini-reunion, we will attempt to include some activities, venues and speakers that will attract a large audience and will encourage the entire membership to participate. On the MCARA Legacy display, Flash Whitten will do some research on potential venues and initial content and if you have any suggestions, please send them to him. Watch the Logbook and website for more info updates on these two activities.

One other item we discussed at the Tucson membership meeting was adding a Facebook page to post MCARA pictures and announcements and encourage views, likes and comments. The younger crowd is very active on social media and Facebook is an easy way to get our messages out. Len Ingram is working with the same person who maintains our website to get us an attractive Facebook page online so we can seek to stimulate activity and information posting,

At the Tucson reunion, we also discussed a venue for the 2016 reunion. Five cities that were recommended included Charleston, SC, Memphis, TN, Pensacola, FL, New Orleans, LA and Beaufort, SC. Additionally, Rick Novak suggested that we consider a 4 or 5 day cruise from an easy-to-access east coast port such as Miami or Fort Lauderdale, FL. Rick says that a number of cruise lines cater to reunion groups and offer special packages and onboard facilities for private gatherings and group shore excursions. Rick is researching some candidate

cruise packages for considerations as we select a 2016 reunion venue. Our goal is to make a decision by January 2015. Watch the Logbook and website (and soon the Facebook page) for updates. And if you have any questions, comments or recommendations for me, please drop me an Email at ken.watts@knology.net .

REUNION - 2014

MINUTES of MEETINGS

4 MAY 2014

BOARD MEETING

Paul Melcher opened the meeting having a quorum present. Attending were Kenny Watts ,Ben Quen, Ken Best, Dana Nachtrieb, Flash Whitten, Len Ingram, Paul Melcher, Jimmy Carter and Jack Metrock. Rick Novak was an observer. The meeting came to order and the following decisions and actions were proposed, discussed and decided.

- We elected Ken Best as a new Director and approved Ben Quen for another term and elected Kenny as the new President. Bobby Bishop and Chuck Tussey were relieved as Directors; their terms being completed.
- Paul Melcher accepted the position of ‘current Past President’ and Flash Whitten was released from that responsibility. Flash agreed to continue providing support on special projects and helping with the Mini reunions
- Len reviewed the Old Business and we all agreed that we had not completed our Facebook initiative. We learned it can be done but it lapsed at that point. We agreed to have the web guy build a prototype account and test it out before we launch it. We talked about writing a lead-in summary of our goals and missions for the intro but we did not assign that task. We need a designee!
- Len reviewed the financials and the budget. We are living within our means but our budget is limited. We only have 147 annual members and some of those have already paid for 3 years and not all of them renew each year. Our income is limited to the \$1,000 -1500 range .
- Noted that pins, photos and CDs were available for taking.
- Notified all to see Jack Metrock for Cruise Books.
- Asked all to update any E addresses with Jimmy Carter.
- Uploading the NATOPS manuals was approved as a web task.
- We agreed to take proposals for the next Reunion site at the general meeting.
- We agreed to support a Mini reunion at NKT next spring with a ceiling of \$750.
- We agreed to open discussion of a MCARA Foundation whose mission would be to develop a complete history of Marine Recon and its contributions and identify ways that MCARA can support Marine Recon in the future.
- The Board is very concerned that we are not attracting new and young members. Kenny will address that topic in the General meeting.
- We need an additional Board member and we need to elect someone as Vice President
- Our business being concluded , Paul closed the meeting .

The meeting convened at 1500 on 4 May . Paul brought the meeting to order and thanked folks for attending. He then read the names of the members that have died recently .

- Len reviewed the Board Minutes with the membership
- Paul retired himself and announced Kenny as the new President
- The membership applauded Paul roundly for his leadership and willingness to step in when needed
- Kenny made some interim remarks and stated his basic goals
 - Pursue new and younger members
 - Pursue standup of a MCARA Foundation(501c(3)) aimed at providing a durable and tangible legacy resulting from the contributions of EW/PHOTO Marines
 - Identification of methods by which we may be able to assist the future of Marine EW
- Locations proposed for the next Reunion were Pensacola, New Orleans, Memphis, Huntsville, Charleston and a cruise departing from the East Coast. The chance to rate and vote on these will be sent out to the Member List soon with the goal of making a selection no later than November 2014 .
- A round of applause was given to Bill McSpadden for his extensive efforts in recording this reunion in pictures .
- A general discussion as to how to spend the organizations money ensued, some of which was quite humorous!

A recommendation was made to close the meeting and adjourn to the bar. Meeting closed.

THIS AND THAT – ODDS AND ENDS FROM THE SEC/TREAS

Membership and finance report: As of 1 June , 2014 we have 346 members (137 annuals and 209 lifers). The treasury has \$27,600 in 3 accounts. I provide a detailed financial report to the Board of Directors each month as well as a Membership Report.

MCARA has it's funds in 3 separate accounts, i.e. checking, savings and a CD. The total funds at the moment are noted above .

I completed an internal AUDIT (self-audit) at year end. All the ins and outs balanced and the reports were presented to the BOD for review. Our banking is online and the BOD can access the accounts at any time. A budget for 2014 has been approved by the Board and we are operating within that budget. We anticipate living within our means for this year.

In 2014 our MCARA website at www.mcara.us has recorded several thousand visitors. The web site is under a regular update cycle and we try to keep it current. The Membership Directory has just been updated. It is password protected. Please contact me by phone or E mail if you have any trouble accessing the Directory. The WEB SITE and our MCARA name and Domain are under US control now and we have an "as needed" Maintenance company.

The web could always use improvements and we are soliciting requests for beneficial changes. Flash Whitten has a number of ideas and requests, which we hope to present to the Membership via E mail as we approach the next Reunion. A link to past logbooks is being added currently along with changes from the Tucson Reunion (1-5 May).

The Honor Roll has just been updated and In Memoriam donations are in process. Our donations go to the Semper Fi (Injured Marine) Fund.

The Recon Log Book is the member's newsletter and is open to everyone. If you have something you would like to say or share, contact me or Jimmy Carter to get it in print. Allow the rest of us to enjoy it.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWABLE

This will be your last issue of the Recon Log Book (RLB) if your MCARA membership expires on July 31 and you have not renewed. July 31 is the membership expiration date for all members who have paid on an annual basis through 2014 (by either one year or three years renewal). All renewals are gratefully accepted whenever you can send them to me. Contact me if you have any questions about your status. lenandcarolyn@comcast.net

This RLB issue (June 2014) has planning information on our reunion in "TBD" in May 2016. Please start saving and encourage your mates to put the next Reunion on the MUST DO list. Please vote for the next location by grading the six choices that have been nominated.

Pensacola _____	Huntsville _____	New Orleans _____
Memphis _____	Charleston _____	Cruise (from East Coast) _____

Rate your choice from 1-6 with 1 being your first choice. Send your rating to Jimmy carter or to Len Ingram.

CONTRABAND OR TREASURE?

I am writing in response to the article on a Marine Corps wide contraband search in your May 11 edition. The article listed results of inspections directed by the Secretary of the Navy last year to find and remove items that were deemed in violation of policy banning materials that create a degrading, hostile or offensive work environment. To the surprise of many, the item leading the list of 51 violations found at MCAS Cherry Pt. was "a Playboy bunny silhouette" discovered by the inspectors on a static display aircraft.

Thanks for including a copy of the trademarked Playboy bunny in your article, but to set the record straight a picture of the aircraft with the actual bunny display found to be so offensive is attached for publication if it passes your sensitivity censors! Please note the group of aging men and women in the forefront who do not appear to be offended by the bunny logo on the tail of the old aircraft behind them. That is because they were former flyers and fixers of that legendary aircraft along with their wives, and widows of others who gathered on 26 April 2013 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first flight of the EA-6A Electric Intruder aircraft. It also was a fitting tribute to the Marines whose names are on the aircraft that were lost in combat over North Vietnam.

To refer to that aircraft as just a static display is like referring to the Statue of Liberty as just a statue! In fact it is bureau number 147865, the 2nd A-6A Intruder produced and later the prototype for the electronic attack variant that would be the nation's first purpose built electronic warfare aircraft. It was nicknamed Methuselah for its long service from 1965 until 1980 in the Corps including a lengthy Vietnam war stint, and another 12 years with the Navy. Understandably when it was retired in 1992 Methuselah was preserved in the same paint scheme it carried during its service with VMAQ-2, including the classic bunny on the tail. That would last for 20 years while on its pad near the flight line or on public display during open houses and annual airshows. But alas, the bunny, which had been the mascot of VMAQ-2 and VMCI-2 before it, was unceremoniously removed, presumably in the interest of political correctness, during the Fall of 2012 by order affecting retired and active

service aircraft alike.

When the blank tail was discovered by old veterans arriving for the 50th anniversary celebration it was deemed by many as an act of defamation of a historical artifact. What happened next was somewhat predictable. In the interest of historical correctness the bunny logo was mysteriously restored to its rightful place on Methuselah's tail in time for the group picture.

Ironically, the details of the resurrection of the bunny are cloaked in secrecy under the don't ask – don't tell rule, but for sure it was not at the hand of anyone on active duty and certainly not with command permission. (can't you hear the sighs of relief?) Although intended to only serve a temporary need, the bunny managed to remain visible for several months as evidenced by the contraband inspector finding it sometime after the June 2013 AllNAV edict.

As the author of *Silent Heroes, U.S. Marines and Airborne Electronic Warfare 1950-2012* I now worry that my book will be removed from the historical files at the 2nd MAW and the library at the Gray Research Center given I devoted several pages in it to the lore of the Marine Corps' most famous or rather infamous bunny. What can we expect next, sending inspectors into the National Air and Space Museum to report the use of offending nose art on our fathers and grandfathers WW II bombers??? Tell me nay.

H. Wayne Whitten
Colonel USMC (ret)



Former pilots , maintainers and spouses gather for 50TH anniversary of the EA-6A Electric Intruder in 2013 . Someone replaced the bunny on the plane's tail.

A tribute by an old Navy Warrior to his long lost friend

This is a moving tribute by an old Navy Warrior (Schaffert) to his long lost friend, wingman and room mate (Norm).

(In Oct 66, while operating off the coast of North Vietnam, the USS Oriskany suffered many casualties and drastic damage due to a white phosphorous fire caused by an accidental ignition of a parachute flare which torched off dozens more. It was a runaway fire aboard an aircraft carrier loaded with tons of bombs and jet fuel. Damage was severe. It was a miraculous damage control effort by hundreds of sailors that saved the ship.)

I had two flight school Navy buddies that perished aboard Oriskany. At the time, I was flying combat missions from an expeditionary airfield in South Vietnam (Chulai) in support of my fellow Marine and Army grunts. We received word of this tragedy the day after it occurred.

Semper Fi, Duke

The following is Schaffert's final letter to Norm:

Norm was killed on 26 October '66. Exactly one year later, we were again back on Yankee Station. After flying my 4th mission against Hanoi in 3 days, I rose from a restless night to scribble a note to Norm. I folded it into a paper airplane; then walked back to the Oriskany's fantail, lit the paper on fire, and launched it into the darkness above the ship's wake. Norm and I would both have turned 80 this year ... so, due to natural causes, this will be the last of the 47 annual letters I've written to him. With the help of friends and mutual acquaintances over the years, my original note has expanded into a perhaps "too lengthy" letter. With great respect for your significant contribution of time and expertise to the Crusader group.

Dick Schaffert; 14 May 2014

To: Lieutenant Commander Norman Sidney Levy, US Navy Deceased (1934-1966)

Good morning, Norm. It's Memorial Day 2014, 07:29 Tonkin Gulf time. Haven't talked with you for a while. That magnificent lady on which we went through hell together, USS ORISKANY, has slipped away into the deep and now rests forever in silent waters off the Florida coast. Recall we shared a 6' by 9' stateroom aboard her during McNamara and Johnson's ill-fated Rolling Thunder, while our Air Wing 16 suffered the highest loss rate of any naval aviation unit in the Vietnam conflict. Three combat deployments, between May '65 and January '68, resulted in 86 aircraft lost from the 64 assigned to us; while 59 of our aviators were killed and 13 captured or

missing from Oriskany's assignment of 74 combat pilots. Our statistical probability of surviving Rolling Thunder, where the tactics and targets were designated by combat-illiterate politicians, was less than 30%. The probability of a combat pilot being an atheist approached zero!

Seems like a good day to make contact again. I've written every year since I threw that "nickel on the grass" for you. For several years, it was only a handwritten note ... which I ceremoniously burned to simulate your being "smoked." With the advent of the internet, I shared annual emails to you with some of our colleagues.

Unfortunately, the net's now a cesspool of idiocy! Much of it generated by those 16 million draft dodgers who avoided Vietnam to occupy and unionize America's academia; where they clearly succeeded in "dumbing down" an entire generation which now controls the heartless soul of a corrupt "Hollywoodized" media. This will be my last letter. I'm praying Gabriel will soon fly my wing once more, and I look forward to delivering it to you personally.

This is the 47th year since I last saw you, sitting on the edge of your bunk in our stateroom. You remember ... it was the 26th of October 1966 and we were on the midnight-to-noon schedule. There was a wall of thunderstorms over North Vietnam, with tops to 50,000 feet, but McNamara's civilian planners kept sending us on "critical" missions all night. At 04:00 they finally ran out of trucks to bomb, in that downpour, and we got a little sleep.

Our phone rang at seven; you were scheduled for the Alert Five. I'd bagged a little more rack time than you, so I said I'd take it. I went to shave in the restroom around the elevator pit, the one near the flare locker. The ordnance men were busy putting away the flares. They'd been taking them out and putting them back all night as McNamara's "whiz kids" continually changed the targets. I had finished shaving and started back to our room when the guy on the ship's loudspeaker screamed: "This is a drill, this is a drill, FIRE, FIRE, FIRE!" I smelled smoke and looked back at the door that separated the pilot's quarters from the flare storage locker. Smoke was coming from underneath.

I ran the last few steps to our room and turned on the light. You sat up on the edge of your bunk and I shouted: "Norm, this is no drill. Let's get the hell out of here!" I went down the passage way around the elevator pit, banging on the sheet metal wall and shouting: "It's no drill. We're on fire! We're on fire!" I rounded the corner of that U-shaped passage when the flare locker exploded. There was a tremendous concussion effect that blew me out of the passage way and onto the hangar deck. A huge ball of fire was rolling along the top of the hangar bay. You and forty-five other guys, mostly Air Wing pilots, didn't make it, Norm. I'm sorry. Oh, dear God, I am sorry! But we went home together: Norm Levy, a Jewish boy from Miami, and Dick Schaffert, a Lutheran cornhusker from Nebraska. I rode in the economy class of that Flying Tigers 707, along with the other few surviving pilots. You were in a flag-draped box in the cargo compartment. Unfortunately, the scum media had publicized the return of us "Baby Killers," and Lindberg Field was packed with vile demonstrators enjoying the right to protest. The "right" you died for!

Our wives were waiting in a bus to meet our plane. There was a black hearse for you. The protestors threw rocks and eggs at our bus and your hearse; not a policeman in sight. When we finally got off the airport, they chased us to Fort Rosecrans. They tried interrupting your graveside service, until your honor guard of three brave young Marines with rifles convinced them to stay back.

I watched the TV news with my family that night, Norm. Sorry, the only clips of our homecoming were the "Baby Killer" banners and bombs exploding in the South Vietnam jungle ... although our operations were up North, against heavily defended targets, where we were frequently shot down and captured or killed. It was tough to explain all that to my four pre-teen children.

You know the rest of the story: The vulgar demonstrators were the media's heroes. They became the CEO's, who steal from our companies ... the lawyers, who prey off our misery ... the doctors, whom we can't afford ... the elected politicians, who break the faith and the promises. The only military recognized as "heroes" were the POW's. They finally came home, not because of any politician's self-aggrandized expertise, but because there were those of us who kept going back over Hanoi, again and again ... dodging the SAM's and the flak ... attacking day and night ... keeping the pressure on ... all by ourselves! Absolutely no support from anyone! Many of us didn't come home, Norm. You know; the guys who are up there with you now. But it was our "un-mentioned" efforts that brought the POW's home. We kept the faith with them, and with you.

It never really ended. We seemed to go directly from combat into disabled retirement and poverty, ignored by those whose freedoms we insured by paying that bloody premium. Our salary, as highly educated-combat proven Naval officers and fighter pilots, was about the same as what the current administration bestows as a "minimum" wage upon the millions of today's low-information, unmotivated, clueless graduates. Most of them lounge at home on unemployment rolls and feed off the taxes that we pay on our military retirements; which are 80% less than what the current All Volunteer Force receives and from which we have already lost 26% of our buying power to pencil-sharpening bureaucrats who "adjust" the economic data.

Do you remember, Norm? We got 55 bucks a month for flying combat; precisely \$2.99 for each of the 276 missions I flew off Yankee Station. Can you believe America's new All Volunteer Force, which recently fought a war with a casualty rate less than 10% of ours ... and only 1% of WWII ..., received more than \$1,000 a month combat pay from a guilt-ridden Congress, which trusts paid mercenaries more than old-fashioned American patriotic courage. The families of those of us who were killed in Vietnam got \$10,000 of life insurance. Today's survivors get \$100,000! Unfortunately, the gutless liberalism of today's elected officials has created the worst of

all possible situations: Our socially engineered, under-funded, military couldn't presently fight its way out of a wet Chinese paper lantern!

The politically adjusted report, issued for the 100th Anniversary of U.S. Naval Aviation, confirmed that we and our brothers who flew in Korea have been written out of American history. Norm, I only hope that today's over-paid bureaucratic "dudes" who cook the books, scramble the facts, and push the propaganda for their political puppet-masters, will not be able to scrub your name off the Wall. The Wall and our memories are the only things many of us have left. We hold those memories dear! We band together in groups like the Crusader Association, which is now holding its 27th "Last Annual" reunion. Some say the association has to do with flying a peculiar aircraft, I say it has to do with a peculiar bunch of guys. We're damned few now! After 5,000 hours flying simulated and actual combat, and pulling at least 5 g's more than 25,000 times, those who are still around have ultrasounds resembling haunted houses on Halloween; with nerve bundles sagging like cobwebs, leaking valves, and ruptured pipes. We'll all be seeing you shortly, Norm. Put in a good word for us with the Man. Ask Him to think of us as His peacemakers, as His children. Have a restful Memorial Day. You earned it.

Very Respectfully,
Your Roommate
Dick (Brown Bear) Schaffert