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JANUARY 2009 EDITION**HAPPY NEW YEAR 2009**

We made it into another year and hope that your holidays went well and that this year brings you, above all, health and happiness. Many thanks to all who sent Christmas cards and greetings on the INTERNET. They were very much appreciated.

When we finished our reunion in Philly we started looking for a reunion site for 2010. George Flores tracked down a lot of info on the Tucson area and, let's see, I have info in front of me from Tunica, MS, St. Cloud, MN, Lake County, IL, Myrtle Beach, SC, Wilmington, NC, and San Diego. Lot of different places to look at but we'll have it narrowed down to one come September. Many things are considered when we choose a site. We do it in September because it is "out of season" and the kids are back in school and tourism scales down a notch. Hotel prices are better and we try to keep expenses to a minimum of pain and suffering. You have no doubt noticed that over the years we have avoided the south in September because of hurricane season not that we couldn't go that direction in May "before the season". Another thing is that the smaller hotels, we've found, will give you better treatment than the bigger ones. So, it's an ongoing process and we learn a little at each one.

WRITE IT DOWN..WRITE IT DOWN

Over the years, George Phander has asked me on more than one occasion, "When are we going to write a book about 311?" This is the time I usually emit a big laugh. Thing one: I do not consider myself eloquent enough to write a book, thing two: I don't know anything about writing a book, and thing three: I do not know how to go about amassing all the information?

The current 311 history book published in 1978 covers the squadron's beginnings to that period and Major William Sambito did a great job putting it together. This book is where I extract most of my "Tomcat Facts" that I put in the newsletter. I am not aware of any other book that covers the period 1978 to the present. One thing that the book was lacking, I feel, was the input of accounts by ground personnel and their involvement in the squadron history. It built well on pilots, missions, history and geography (not taking anything away from pilots, missions, history and geography!) There are countless Marines that made up the aura and quality of VMF/VMA-311.

Those attending the reunion 2004 in Arlington heard the Squadron XO give a report that the Marine Corps ran a study of all it's fixed wing squadrons factoring in many accomplishments both in peace time and war. VMF/VMA-311 out performed every other fixed wing squadron from 1942 to present and was considered the "Best of the Best". That's something to howl about!!

Most of our associations with 311 were very short (mine was 13 months; Gus Pierce from Arkansas was in 311 6 or 7 years). Most of us were but a small speck in the 311 history archives. However short of time you spent with 311, you must have thought it was pretty special or you wouldn't be reading this newsletter.

As a young Marine assigned to VMF/VMA-311 you most likely weren't concerned with it's lineage or

history. You were assigned to the squadron and you did your job. Remember the TV series "Naked City"? (How old you have to be to remember that one?) It started off "There are a million stories in the Naked City. This is one of them." Well, there are a million stories in VMF/VMA-311.

When Dick Arnold (Roi Namur) passed away his wife and family compiled a book about Dick's service in the Marines and in VMF-311. They interlaced it with photos and world events of the day. It was truly an inspiring tribute. Birdie Bertrand (Chu Lai), a pilot from 1964-66 with 311, amassed a two year chronological history of pilots, missions and personal accounts of the pilot echelon that flew in that two year period putting it all on a 3 CD disk library.

Al Tedeschi (Roi Namur) showed me a scrapbook in 1996 at the reunion with a meticulous account of his Marine Corps time and the Solomon Islands Campaign. He said he was including all the newsletters that he was getting from us in the history to give to his grandchildren. There are many who wrote those events down and knew that it was something worth remembering.

The Dick Arnold tribute spurred me to start my own story not to be a book but as something to pass down to my generations that they would know what the Marines, the squadron and my service to the country meant to me. Most will probably not give it much thought but there is always someone who will think that what I did was worth reading about.

So how do we start telling our 311 story? How many of our squadron are still left out of the original group at Page Field to tell the story?

Over the past 13 years I've kept every story and photo that has been sent to me by mail or INTERNET. Most are in albums that I take to the reunions along with alumni rosters to that time. Many of the 311 guys that I corresponded with over the years are no longer with us and their input was a valuable asset. There is a cold reality in that we are all getting older. This becomes more evident when we read the names at the memorial service at the reunion every two years.

This is my plea and promise. No matter when you were with 311 or how much time you spent with the squadron "write it down". Tell me what your job was like, where you were, funny things, sad things, marines you knew or budded up with on leave, what did you do when you were off duty (besides chase girls and drink beer!!) add any dates to events and places. Write down anything that you care to remember about your time with the squadron. Most of you have photos and documents that you don't want to part with. Copy anything and I will reimburse you for it.

Include names and dates on photos if possible. Put a pad and pencil by the easy chair and write down your story when the commercials come on TV or out in the back patio when you are gathering sun watching the birds in the feeder. It doesn't have to be finished today, tomorrow or next week. Take your time and write when the mood strikes you.

I (we), in return, will make sure that your stories and time in 311 are not forsaken to time. Maybe after all is said and done the project will end up as a bunch of photos and personal accounts to be passed on to the squadron, should the association one day cease to exist. Future generations of Tomcats will be able to look back one day and read what it was like to be at Page Field, Roi-Namur and countless other 311 assignments over the past 67 years. Here's how I'm going to start it. I'll buy a scrapbook for each decade 40s, 50s, 60s etc. All the info that I have thus far accumulated will be separated into the year in which the pictures were taken or the stories take place. We'll put all these books together and we'll have us a history of 311 to pass down. My daughter gave me a cross stitch wall hanging years ago for Christmas that reads "You only fail when you have failed to try." I think we ought to do it. We'll give it a try. Let's call the project
"TOMCATS: A TRIBUTE TO MARINE AVIATION".

NEW ALUMNI

BEGLEY, DAVE 8696 Edelweiss Road, New Tripoli, PA, 18086
610-972-2113 ; begleymspa.96@yahoo.com
1971-72 Ben Hoa RVN, Avionics

CALLAZO, LONNIE 88 Colonial road, Stillwater, NY 12170
518-664-6038, LonnieCollazo@colganair.com
1989-92 Saudi / Iraq Desert Shield / Storm
Plane Captain, Flight Line

PAGE, JACK PO Box 8207, Gadsden, AL 35902

256-546-5365, reppage@bellsouth.net
1970-71 Da Nang RVN, Ordnance

TOMCAT FACT: February 1942: During the month of February the squadron had four commanding officers, three second lieutenants and one captain. In the 4 ½ months that the squadron remained at Cherry Point, the essentials of the squadron were completed. During this period the squadron was assigned 12 North American SNJ Texans for training in fighter tactics, gunnery and night flying.

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SMITH, JACK jsmith126@tampabay.rr.com

SWARTZ, DAVE david45_tx@yahoo.com

HASTINGS, JIM hastings001@peoplepc.com

TAPS

BAUER, FRED Cincinnati, Ohio 1944-45, Roi Namur

TOMCAT FACT: 7 December 1950: The forward echelon or VMF-311 consisting of 2 officers and 48 enlisted men departed Japan for Yonp'o (K-27) Airfield in North Korea approximately 160 miles NE of Seoul.

SCOOP FROM THE TROOPS

LINDA ORTEGA-RENOVATO, FRESNO, CA: (Linda is the oldest daughter of Javier and Cecilia Ortega who have attended most of our reunions. Some of you were asking about them in Philly and I received this before Christmas. (This may bear out any questions. jg) "I wanted to share with all of you what has been going on with my mother, Cecilia. I don't know how many of you are aware that my mother is not in the best of health. In 2003, a year before my brother Andy passed away, she was diagnosed with a lung disease known as Interstitial Pulmonary Fibrosis, scar tissue on the lungs. We are not sure how or why she got this. The doctors have studied the disease for thirty years and still cannot figure out how or why someone catches it. There is no cure. She has been sick off and on for the past 6 years battling either lung infection or pneumonia. She is going on 6 years living with the disease and is progressively getting worse. She is on a lot of medications and the doctors are treating her with everything they can to keep her lungs functioning. Currently, she is on oxygen all the time especially when she leaves the house. Her immune system is really weak and no one can be around her when they are sick. She is home a lot of the time especially now when the weather is colder. Her phone number is **559-222-5909** and cell phone is **559-259-7580**. She would love to hear

from anyone if you have a spare moment. It would mean more than you know."

JEANETTE ARNOLD BEMUS POINT, NY: "I'm sorry that I missed the reunion in September. I went to the hospital for a visit and spent two months instead. I'm home now and progressing each day. So enjoy the newsletters, please keep mine coming."

JIM HASTINGS, YUMA, AZ: "Sorry about the lack of communication. I had a job change and lost my email. New email is hastings001@peoplepc.com. Address and phone are the same. We are trying to sell our home and move to Texas so we'll keep you informed.

SSGT Gary Dehadway (new member in October newsletter) was my NCOIC during my Viet nam tour and I had a good conversation with him a few weeks ago."

SHIRL TODD, CAL USA, CA: "I couldn't make the last reunion. In June I had a small stroke that laid me up in the hospital for three weeks. I'm still confined to a wheelchair in the house but bought an electric scooter for when I go out. Boy-it's the fastest thing in Wal-Mart and can cause about as much excitement as a cross eyed javelin thrower at the Olympics. You say John Glenn never responded. Don't feel bad. He never made any China Marine reunions either (We were in VMF-218 Peking, China 1946-47). (See picture in this newsletter) When LTC Tony Anton and Major Les Brown flew the first combat flight from Yon Po in 1950, WL-2 could very well been one of the aircraft.

PAT SHIKANY: "My husband, Louis G. Shikany, was in VMA-311 March 1966 to April 1967. I was looking through his Maine Corps memory book and have a history of 311 in his book and was wondering if you had one or would like one. It is a typed copy (no computers back then) and it is from VMF 1 December 1942 to 7 August 1957 and then VMF thereafter, until September 1966. It shows all the commanding officers. Let me know if you are interested in seeing this. I would mail it to you. When and where is your next reunion? Please let me know. (I received this through George Flores who made the initial contact. I tried contact her but got no reply. George says he remembers the name from Chu Lai. I don't know if Louis Shikany has passed or what. Her email is Dobiebroad@aol.com. (I'll send off another email to try to contact.-jg)

DICK LEBER, CLACKAMUS, OR: "I was with 311 from June 66 until August 67 in Chu Lai. I had the pleasure of knowing Gary "Injun" Colby while I was there. One of these days I'll get off my duff and send my copy of the squadron album we put together while in Chu Lai, Japan and Okinawa."

TOMCAT FACT: 2 July 1967: For Captains William Loftus and John Wilke, the area around the DMZ became an attack pilot's dream. The pilots were on the alert pad when Marines at Con Thien reported that the NVA troops were attacking in close formation. Capt. Loftus located the enemy and the jets began making their run. After killing 25 of the enemy, the Tomcats turned the enemy assault into a retreat. Capt. Loftus returned to Chu Lai with a hit in one wing and his 150th combat mission completed.

LONNIE COLLAZO, STILLWATER, NY: "I was with VMA-311 from 1989-92. I served with the squadron in desert Shield / Desert Storm. ***A VMA-311 fact, we were the first American Harrier squadron to fly it (Harrier) into combat 17 January 1991. I was a plane captain in the power line shop that launched the first four aircraft. If memory serves, it was Capt. Frank "Pudge" Smith, XO Major "Stump" Branch, Capt. "Machine" Peros, and Capt. Albertson. Not sure about the last two.*** I have pictures of these guys. As a matter of fact, Capt. "Wolfman" Woltman was our LSO, he went on to become LTC Woltman and took the squadron into Iraq.

We were based at Saudi Naval Base, Abdul Azziz Base. We used the soccer stadium there for our HQ and the King's runway as our airfield. The Seabees (God bless the Seabees!) came in and built taxi ways and parking spots for the Harriers we had there. It was VMA-231 with 20 planes, VMA-542 with 20 planes, VMA-311 with 20 planes and Det B off the boat VMA-513 with 6 planes. And an OV-10 Bronco squadron was there. They lost one to enemy fire and stopped flying after that. The other squadrons lost some too. Later on Congress had hearings wanting to know why so many Harriers were lost in combat. One reason is that we got all the crap targets. IE, Triple A and other BS. The F/A-18 squadrons (glory boys) got all the good targets I think because the III MAF CG (Gen. Moore) was an F-18 jock. Funny story about that too. Some other time.

We lost one too. **Captain "Raz" Barryman.** He took a SAM up the tailpipe. We thought he was gone until we seen his name come across a CNN newscast, displaying the POW release, post combat. We were amazed. The day he was shot down, his wing man, Capt. "Hienz" Sprout, landed, taxied and climbed out of the

cockpit in tears. The CO came down in a Humvee and whisked him away for debrief. Sad day. The only one we lost. We brought 19 Harriers home. A lot of them had sucked up Triple A fire and the engines were FODDED out. Darn Rolls-Royce engines flew all the way home with all that damage. We didn't find out until we were in CONUS for a few weeks.

Another day we were ripping an engine out of a harrier, in the palace parking lot (our engines were 500 hour engines so we were engine changing fools!) and a C-130 rolled in like it did every day and a bunch of VIP's walked out. No big deal because they were always coming and going. I kept on ripping and tearing the engine out when I felt a tug on my trousers. A very aged fella was looking up at me and said "You Marines Tomcats?" I said "Yes sir" and he said "I flew with the Tomcats in Korea, my name is John Glenn, Where's your skipper?" I was surprised!! I yelled at one of the guys "Go get the skipper, tell 'em John Glenn is here!" In about 2 minutes the skipper came down from the stadium and met up with Senator Glenn. He stood around for a long time telling us stories about him and Ted Williams and MIG alley. It was a

real honor to have met him. In Saudi Arabia no doubt!! I got him to sign a Saudi dollar for me. Anyhow, lots of memories with the Tomcats. Most of us are spread to the winds and I don't keep in touch. One of my friends is in Spokane and I'll forward on to him your email and things. I'll try to get my pictures scanned. Some are pretty incredible. We burned through a lot of ammo. Especially the 20mm ammo. Our pilots would shoot up any target of opportunity that they could. We used to yell at them and tell 'em to knock it off because we used to have to help Ordnance remove the spent casings and reload with new ones. The fire from the cannons burned the side of the airframe and guns. Too funny!"

EDITORS NOTE: Lonny Collazo is one of the few TOMCATS that we have on the roster from the DS/DS era, late 1980s and 1990s and he obviously has a lot of stories to tell. He has attempted to send me pictures over the INTERNET but my computer won't open the files but I'm confident when he has time he will dupe them and send them along. That was a great story about John Glenn. Just because I have never heard from him doesn't mean he never wore a 311 emblem on his sleeve. As for attending reunions, as stated earlier by Shirl Todd, I doubt that many military men who became famous actually do attend these functions for whatever reasons.

SOME CORRECTIONS FROM PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER

Gary "Injun" Colby was listed as an ordnance person. He did in fact work on the flight line and check crew.

Dave Swartz does not live in Yonkers but in Waxahachie, Texas.

Cora Schults, widow of Bill Schults, VMF-311, lives in Yonkers.



This is the picture Shirl Todd sent. Notice question mark behind pilot. Anyone recognize?

TOMCAT FACT: FY-75: VMA-311 flew an array of missions and tasks and compiled a safety record which was rewarded by the presentation of the FMFLant and CNO safety awards for that period.

JIM'S BOOK REVIEW

Trying to fill up some space in the newsletter. Here are a few more books that I've read lately.

FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS: EVERY Marine has probably seen the movie as I did when it came out. I got the book and read it in two nights then I went and rented the movie to see how it followed the book. The book went a lot more into the lives of the three flag raisers (and the three who were killed on Iwo) who survived the war. For them it was a sad tale.

Ira Hayes who died a young man, **John Bradley** who was shrouded from notoriety by his town and family and **Rene Gagnon** who was the only raiser who tried to cash in on his fame and found that he was yesterday's hero and nobody cared. Pretty sad really. Did you know **Ira Hayes** was a chauffeur for Dean Martin's family? Great book and movie.

GHOST SOLDIERS: The movie "The Great Raid" about the 6th Rangers rescuing 500 POWs from the

Japanese held camp at Cabatutuan Philippines. Movie and book were pretty close. The book says they left one person behind. A civilian who was deaf and fell asleep in the latrine and missed the whole rescue. They got him a couple days later. Another great book and movie.

THE ESCAPE FACTORY: Remember the movie "The Great Escape"? Want to know how the POWs in Germany got all the escape stuff maps, compasses etc? We sent it and it's worth a read to see how they did it.



Al Favala sent this photo of an A-4 on a pole at MCAS Yuma. The red tail design was, I think from the 64-66 period. Someone correct me if that is a mistake.



This photo was sent by Hugh Reynolds of the pilots and officers on Roi Namur 1944: Standing L-R: Sherill, Doc Cohn, Landry, Gandle, Neuman, Tulb, Miller, Loos, Ward, Rood, Schret, Kirby, Pope, Parker, Blakerey, Tanner, Reynolds, Stalmaker, Cragin, Crain, Warrendar, Kline, Bacon and Thomas. KNEELING L-R: Peterson, Schroeder, Boise, Jarod, Rouch, Mauldin, CO Major Kuntz, Hoffecker, Seafert, Stragham, McCormick, Dorsey, Boone, Newton, Whiteside, Knight, Barrett, Todd (Shirl Todd?), Lemon, and McCullough. Great picture. **Thanks Hugh!**

TOMCAT FACT: 1958: The Douglas A4D-2, later designated the A-4B Skyhawk was a single seated, lightweight attack bomber. VMA-311 started receiving A4D-2s during the summer of 1958.

DONATIONS

Thanks to all who continue to contribute to the association: Stars and Stripes Tokens (**Ralphie Read**) Kingston, MA:

Tom Lackovic, Los Gatos, CA: **Tom Johnson**, New Berlin, WI: **Shirl Todd**, Calusa, CA: **Gunner Lathrop**, Danielsville, GA: **Jeanette Arnold**, Bemus Point, NY; Jim Hastings, Yuma, AZ and **Cary Pickens**, Guilford, IN. **Thanks Marines!!**

AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE...

Some leftovers from the reunion in Philly. Ever notice that when we take off on our tours at the reunion cities that there is always one person who mans the orderly room? That's **Fred Waigand** and I forgot to give him his due thanks in the last newsletter. I think he's starting to take the job too seriously. We came back from Philly and he had rounded up a big soft high back cushy seat to relax in! He said may as well be comfortable. Anyway thanks for the job you do Fred. It is really appreciated.

Going once, going twice, Sold. The famed black bear skull donated by **Debbie Davis**, daughter of **Pete and Ruth Phillips**, for the auction in Philly has been sold for \$75.00. Ah, what a thing of beauty! **Phander** got the money and will apply it to purchase items of interest for the next reunion. Speaking of Phanders-**Jackie Phander** doesn't want anyone to know it but she turned 60 in December. Just thought I'd throw that in.

Someone brought up a point that there ought to be something set up for all the women to do aside from our normal military tours. We did that on our first reunion attempt in Columbus, Ohio. Sue took all the women out shopping and to eat their very first White Castle hamburger. That seemed to go well. We'll give it some thought for 2010.

If you have been watching the history channel and others you have seen that the seers have predicted that it's "checkmate" in 2012. That means we only have two good reunions left so we will attempt to make them really good ones just in case. In any case we hope to see you all back again and many more new faces in the future.

Getting back to the 311 history project. If you send me pictures make sure that you write on them what they are and the date it was taken. Don't send me photos over the INTERNET. My computer is not set up to reprint Kodak quality photos. Maybe it is but I haven't figured out how to do it yet being the computer genius that I am.

Well that's a wrap for now. We hope this finds you all well. When you hit your knees at night say one for our men and women in uniform that continue to be in harms way protecting our way of life.

SEMPER FIDELIS,
JIM GALCHICK for the
Reunion Assn.

MARINE AIR. ON TIME. ON TARGET!!