

VP-16 REUNION ASSOCIATION, INC

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www.vp-16reunion.net/contact-us-page.html

September 16, 2024

Shipmates,

I hope this letter finds you all well. It is the final act, officially concluding business of the 23rd reunion of the VP-16 Reunion Association, Inc., and the Annual meeting. As always, it was a time for us to come together, reminisce, and celebrate our shared experiences. The Annual Meeting allows us to meet and conduct the association's business and elect our new Board of Directors as prescribed in our By-Laws.

As planned, the attending members started gathering at the Courtyard by Marriott Orange Park, our "home base" and the host hotel, on Wednesday, September 4, 2024. President and organizer Ellis Chenault, Carol Chenault, and Ron Malotke arrived on Monday, the 2nd, to take care of the last-minute preparations. Their dedication and hard work are to be commended.

While our attendance was not as high as we had hoped, we are deeply grateful to those who were able to join us. We understand the effort it takes to attend these reunions and sincerely appreciate your presence. We missed many of our regular attendees and hope to see you at future events.

Despite the lower-than-expected turnout, we continued with the planned agenda. Ellis was able to adapt to the situation by canceling our bus transportation commitment without penalty and securing two 15-passenger vans in its place. This change allowed us to continue with our planned activities without disruptions, which is a testament to the need to remain flexible.

Our use of the vans not only served a practical purpose but also fostered a sense of camaraderie as we traveled together to and from our group activities and to local eateries for dinner. Grumpy's 'Home of the Bad Mood Dude' in Orange Park was our chosen spot for breakfast, a tradition we've upheld over the years. The friendly competition for the biggest breakfast eater, Bob Goecker or Bob Carlson, added a fun element to our gathering. Bob Goecker even left with a doggie bag, sparking a debate on whether it should count towards the consumption category!

We understand that planned activities or interactions with active-duty personnel are subject to change on short notice. While the Sub Group 10 twice-canceled previous visits to Sub-base Kings Bay were disappointing, we fully respect that military ops come first. The "third time is a charm" played out except for a change while at Kings Bay. Ellis received word on Wednesday afternoon that we could not board a "boat" due to operations; however, all else remained as planned.

The group left the hotel on Thursday morning at 0730 for the trip to the Sub-base Kings Bay, GA. We were given a guided tour of the training facilities, where the newly arriving personnel would spend four to six weeks training before boarding their assigned boat. The tour was extremely interesting and informative, especially the "tank" portion, which gave us an appreciation for the training these young officers and sailors undergo.

On Friday morning, we loaded up for the short drive to NAS to be received by the squadron. Upon arrival on the hangar deck, the squadron was assembled for quarters in anticipation of our arrival and the

presentation of various awards to our War Eagle shipmates. With Skipper Reilly on leave, XO Weinzalt introduced President Chenault. Ellis explained the Association's commitment to supporting deserving and qualified War Eagle sailors actively enrolled in college education. He then presented a check for one thousand dollars to PO1 Delvin Riley. After the presentations, we were escorted to and toured triple O skippers' aircraft.

At 1015, we departed the hangar for the ten-minute ride to Mulligans Restaurant at the NAS Golf Club, where they had reserved tables for us to sit as a group. Nineteen of us joined for lunch and camaraderie, including XO Weinzalt and "all our things onboard NAS" POC LCDR Kulp. Due to the reduced number of reunion attendees, we were not having our traditional Friday evening banquet and fundraising auction, so lunch was included as part of the reunion fee.

Although I was not sitting at the table with CDR Weinzalt during lunch, the scuttlebutt has it the conversation moved to our experience witnessing the "tank" experience at the training facility at Kings Bay. XO remarked that he had to undergo "tank" training as part of his qualifications. Sailors, being sailors, grasped the moment and engaged in a bit of embellishment regarding the challenges and harshness of the training in a highly focused and apparent effort to raise XO's anxiety level.

Following an enjoyable lunch and social time, we returned to the hotel at 1300. We met at 1330 in the Hospitality room for our Annual Meeting. The initial meeting of the Board of Directors followed immediately after the Annual Meeting.

Your newly elected Board of Directors: Bill Sherman, 1962-1965 President; Kaydale Cruz, Vice President; Ellis Chenault, 1970-1973 Secretary; Bob Goecker, 1961-1963 Treasurer; CAPT Anthony Corapi Ret. 2008-2010; LCDR Bob Ballew Ret. 1963-1966; and Ron Malotke 1962-1966 members-at-large. Appointed Non-member Carla Ballew, Assistant Treasurer. Many thanks to you all for volunteering. A special thank you to our webmaster, LT Jim Ivey Ret., 1966-1967, for continuing the arduous task of maintaining our website.

Welcome, Kaydale. Kaydale is the wife of PO1 Jose Cruz, an active-duty War Eagle. She is also the highly energized and successful past President of the War Eagle Family Readiness Group (FRG) and is our first active-duty spouse to join our Board of Directors.

In summary, we enjoyed our time together, and the Sub-base Kings Bay trip was a unique and memorable experience. As always, everyone appreciated time with our War Eagles; it forced our minds to slide back in time, a time when we donned the flight suits. As for me, I could see myself standing in those ranks on that Friday morning. How about you?

For all of you who wanted to be with us in Jacksonville but missed it for various reasons, we hope to see you at our next reunion. Attending and supporting reunions is crucial to their success and continuation.

Work on the initial plan for the next reunion has started with a geographic location, hotel contacts, and date considerations.

Reunion Background and Planning:

With the reduced attendance we experienced at the most recent reunion in JAX, future reunions must be affordable and financially self-supporting. With the low turnout, we experienced a financial deficit. This deficit is **not** due to poor financial planning, as historical attendance, revenue, and expense records guide estimates and projections for the next reunion. This process is fluid and ever-changing, including at the reunions, as evidenced above. As one would expect, the planning process starts months, usually more than a year in advance of the actual date of the reunion. Financially, our organization operates solely through donations from our members. Donations to the General Account are not intended to support the reunions; reunions should be financially self-supporting.

So, where did we fall short, and how should we proceed as we consider the next reunion? This is where each of you who were not in attendance must assist us. Recalling The Field of Dreams phrase, "If you build

it, they will come.” Your Board of Directors is committed to maintaining our annual reunions; your attendance is essential for us to continue to offer them. So, how should we “build it?”

Was Jacksonville not an attractive location? Were there more attractive offerings than Sub-base Kings Bay and the Squadron visit? Is the current format too costly for our members to attend? Do we not have enough interested members to attend the reunions of the 320 delivered mailings? Did we not provide enough advance notice? Are there other reasons for reduced attendance at the last two reunions?

The answer(s) lie somewhere in the preceding paragraph. Your board can only speculate about the answers to these questions. We need your help by participating through input or feedback and attending the reunions, which is the route to continuing our reunions. Of course, we know and appreciate that many of our members cannot attend due to physical and medical restrictions.

The next reunion:

Suggested Location: Pensacola. Based on the survey results from a couple of years ago, this location is at the forefront of consideration. Jacksonville was the most popular city, with Pensacola being the second most favored location. Since our past efforts to secure a host hotel in Pensacola have been unsuccessful, we will expand our search to include the Mobile, AL, area.

The date (s) being considered and distributed to area hotels: (1st) 10/22-26, 2025, and (2nd) 10/15-19, 2025. The hotels have been informed of our flexibility with dates. However, to provide ample planning time for our members, the final decision should be made NLT at the end of November. Since this is not the optimal lead time, time is of the essence.

Our request and how you can assist:

Proceed to the website www.vp-16reunion.net. On the home page, select the following: “Reunions/Photos” and then the dropdown “Next Reunion Page” option. Click the “Reunion Questions” at the bottom of the page to provide the requested information. Give us your thoughts and feedback by completing the requested information including the “Comments.” When finished, click the **send** button below the comments section.

Alternatively, if you don't have website access, send us a note via USPS at the above address or call, indicating whether you will most likely attend the 2025 reunion and would utilize the host hotel for accommodations.

Please let us hear from you as soon as possible with your input regarding the next reunion. As mentioned, time is of the essence.

Until we come together again in the Fall of 2025, Shipmates, be well, be safe, and stay connected with us and each other.

My sincere and best regards to you all,



Bill Sherman, President