



# Atkron 12 Newsletter



Volume I, Issue 1

Aug. 2002

## Ubangi

### Newsletter Test Run

I am going to give this newsletter a test run to see if there is sufficient interest in seeing it continue. My thought is that it is another way of contacting VA12 alumni. Our current age is moving in the direction of becoming paperless, I'm not sure if this is good, bad, or neither, but I do know that not everyone has a computer, and not everyone has an interest in using one. If we are able to round up a few more guys with a newsletter then I say it's worth the effort.

Please feel welcome to contribute. I will act as editor (for now) and I would hope that you all will add your thoughts from time to time, at least while you still have them.

### Reunion 2002

The Reunion that we held in Norfolk this past June was a great time. It turned out to be a five day event, which was originally scheduled for three.

Wednesday June 19th several of the reunion party arrived in Norfolk early to receive a guided tour of the USS Harry S. Truman. Retired Captain Austin O'Brien, Retired ADJ1 Jerry Thomas and his wife Linda, Neal Russo and his son Neal Jr., Steve Carroll and his wife Brenda, Ed Thomas, John Larch, my wife Kathy, and

## Ubetcha

myself were the lucky group that made it for the carrier tour.



This event was the result of some last minute favor swapping on behalf of Captain Shawn "Vandal" Tallant, the X.O. of the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower. Vandal (he wouldn't tell us the source of his nickname) was able to maneuver a small window of opportunity for us to go aboard the Truman. The Truman's X.O. Ted "Slapshot" Carter turns out to be one of Vandal's old friends. The Truman was due to depart on Thursday morning so Wednesday afternoon was our only chance to get the tour. I should mention here, that John Gynan came up with Captain Tallant's name and email address after having discovered that he was a pilot in VA-12 during the time when the squadron was decommissioned in 86.

Those that were able to get to Norfolk in time for the carrier tour will tell you that it was an amazing experience. Much of it was like walking back in time 35 years for me. The smells were the same, the enormity of the ship reminded me of the first time I stepped aboard the Rosie. But on the other hand, it was so much more than the carriers of the old days. Two Ltjg's gave us an excellent tour. We walked the hanger and flight decks, climbed the nine levels to the Bridge, and ended up with dinner in the officers wardroom. And what a fine meal we enjoyed. The Truman has won the best on board food service for the past several years, and we believe they deserve it.

Our excursion lasted over 3 hours. The officers and crew treated us like VIP's. It was a special event that I will not soon forget, and with my memory, that's saying something.

On Thursday some of us played golf while others took it easy or took in the sites. In the evening we all got together in the Hotel bar/restaurant for drinks and dinner. By this time others had arrived. Eric Harvie, Mike Landers, John & Paula Gynan, Gary & Kae Venema, Frank & Robbi Giaccone, Eddie & Aggie Annibale, Chuck & Karen Graham, and Joel Parrish. Most of us had served in VA12 during the mid and late sixties, but several came from different eras. Joel "JR" Parrish was the old timer having been in the squadron in 1956-58, then there was Chuck Graham who served from 1960-62. On the other end of the time line was John Larch 1976-79 and Shawn Tallant 1984-86.

Friday a group of us went down to Norfolk and boarded a sail boat for a midday cruise around the harbor. The weather was perfect and no one became sea sick. That evening the rest of the reunion party arrived in time for the hospitality room get-together. Jerry Schwartz, Gary Hall, Dennis & Joyce Gierahan, Shawn Tallant, and George Davis. We drank a few beers, looked at a lot of old photos, and told sea stories for about 4 hours. A few diehards retired



to the bar to continue the lies, I mean young men adventure tales.

Saturday the majority of the attendees visited the USS Wisconsin battleship and Nautilus Museum. The Wisconsin was impressive. It is in standby readiness and could be called up for duty if needed.

Saturday evening the Reunion Banquet was served in one of the Hotel Banquet rooms. I was very impressed with the quality and quantity of the meal. The particular absence of metal trays was noteworthy.

Captain Tallant and his wife Joanne joined us for dinner and it was great getting to know this fine officer.

Most of the group left for home on Sunday morning vowing that we would see each other again in 2 years. I will do my best to make that happen.

I'm not sure if everyone knew how far some folks traveled. Here are the cities and states we represent.

**Austin O'Brien**, Titusville, FL

**Jerry Thomas**, Kissimmee, FL

**Mike Landers**, Davie, FL

**Frank Giaccone**, Ft. Pierce, FL

**Gary Hall**, Jacksonville, FL  
**Steve Carroll**, Bixby, OK  
**Dennis Gierahn**, Green Valley, AZ  
**Joel Parrish**, Kayesville, UT  
**John Larch**, Salem, OR  
**Gary Venema**, Delavan, WI  
**Joe Kyle**, Pinckney, MI  
**Chuck Graham**, Palma, OH  
**John Gynan**, Newton, NH  
**Eddie Annibale**, Massapequa Pk., NY  
**Eric Harvie**, Monroe Twp., NJ  
**Jerry Schwartz**, Philidelphia, PA  
**Ed Thomas**, King of Prussia, PA



**Neal Russo**, Harpers Ferry, WV  
**George Davis**, Manassas, VA  
**Shawn Tallant**, Norfolk VA

## Out of the Mist

**R**ecollections of an old sailor.  
 By Austin O'Brien

"Now hear this. Flight Quarters,  
 Flight Quarters. All Hands go to your Flight  
 Quarters Station."

The first time I saw Cecil Field was November  
 1946. A bus was taking me from The Naval Air  
 Technical Training Center, located at NAS  
 Jacksonville, to my new duty station at the Naval  
 Air Gunnery School, Yellow Water Florida. That  
 was right across the highway from the main gate  
 at Cecil. I was a Seaman 2/c and just about to  
 turn 18.



We drove through the Main Gate, down the same  
 road we all used 20 years later. It was more  
 desolate in those days. The barracks were all  
 wood buildings and were located at the end of  
 the main road. From the Main Gate to the  
 Barracks and Hanger areas there was Zippo,  
 Nada, Zilch. Pine trees, that's all. In later years  
 the barracks became Administrative buildings.  
 That was after they built those lovely concrete  
 Hotels you all enjoyed calling home.

The hangers where we hung out for duty were  
 right in the same spot. They were a bit newer  
 then. They were the home of F6F, TBM, SB2C  
 and F4U squadrons and were a part of the  
 Advanced Training Command.

Cecil was really out in the "boonies" in those  
 days. There was only a bus for transportation  
 into the city of Jacksonville. Few people had  
 their own car. It was a hard 45-minute ride  
 into town. Last bus from JAX to Cecil was about 1  
 AM. If you missed that you were SOL and  
 probably going to miss morning Muster. In 1946,  
 missing muster was the biggest pain in the rear  
 you could have. Some CPO usually made mince  
 meat of your backside....not to mention all the  
 shitty little jobs that would flow your way. Some  
 things never change, Huh, guys?

My next sight of Cecil was about 1954-55 time  
 frames. I used to fly there in an F9F-6 and visit  
 buddies from my flight training days. A few  
 years later an ex-Ltjg wrote a hilarious paper  
 back entitled MAINSIDE. It was his reflections



of life at Cecil and Mainside during the early 1950's. I think the author's name was Leaderer. If you can ever find a copy of it, get it and read it. Some of the incidents are fact.

Cecil had changed considerably. The runways were lengthened to 8000 ft. (later on, the NORTH/SOUTH runway went to 10,000 ft) and a host of new buildings had been constructed. Going on Liberty was still a chore. Fortunately, more sailors owned their own cars. But the lowest ranks still needed that damned bus. Coming back from Libs on the bus with a snoot full of liquid liberty was a real challenge.

By the time of the mid 1960's Cecil was now the "in" place to be stationed if you were into carrier aviation. In 1963 there were about 6 air wings there: Cag-4 (the RAG), CVG's-1, 3, 10, 15, 16. The last two I'm not positive of the numbers. They were forming up and would shake down the Constellation and Ranger and then go west to the PACFLT. It was a beehive of activity. When the Vietnam conflict began in 1965, no one envisioned that it would go on for the next 9 years. But that's when Cecil really jumped in population and activity.

I had arrived at Cecil for duty as Maintenance Officer with VA-172 in 1962 and then did tours with VA-44 and then VA-12. I loved the place. I have so many great memories of Cecil Field...and the FDR.... that my family used to think they were the only Navy duty stations in the USA. The time in VA-44 was rewarding as I met and trained every A-4 pilot that came for his tour in the Atlantic Fleet. It was also the place where many of the EM's came for introductory training on the A-4. So I really felt like I was in one great big family. The deployments and coming and going were hectic. Just as you made a few friends off they went on another cruise.

Our LCPO, Joe Malicoat was such a tremendous help to me when I was the XO and CO. I never made a move without getting his input. On more than one occasion he and I would have to scheme of ways to get things done. Usually with a devious plan. He used to kid me and ask" Will I

wind up In Portsmouth doing this?" "Over my dead body, Chief!" I would reply. Every time we came back from cruise The Leading Chief and another officer would go and check out the Barracks assigned to us. A bit of finagling was required to get a better-conditioned Barracks. I kept my nose out of the LCPO's behind the scenes work as to how he came up with the assignment. After the men settled in I would go and check out the new digs. It was amazing how many guys would be sacked out. When I queried the LCPO he would say "Night Check" guys. I swear half the squadron was on Night Check.

Malicoat would then take me aside and explain that every sailor sacking out was "authorized" to be there. And then wink at me. I never could figure that one out until months later when one of the other Chiefs explained the "deserving rest" privilege. It was a reward for hard workers who deserved a "Late Sleepers: pass.

I know you all think you were the greatest Hell Raisers of all time. Especially beyond the 3 mile limit. You were normal. Trust me guys. You were as normal as apple pie and Chevrolet cars. After 35 years in the "Canoe Club" I am an expert on sailors. You went from awkward teenagers to responsible adults in 3-4 years. You returned to civilian life and many years later, looked back on the "Great Adventure" with enormous pride and fond memories.

You served your country. Right down in the trenches.

I was proud to be a part of it with you.

OBie

## Reunion 2000

Some may be interested in the Reunion that was held in Roanoke, VA, June of 2000.

Here is a brief recall of that event. Fourteen Ubangis from the 66/67 WesPac cruise gathered



for a weekend at a hotel in Roanoke.

We spent Friday evening looking at Rich Forristall's massive slide collection from the days of old, and laughing till our sides ached.

Saturday we rented a pontoon boat and toured Smith Mountain Lake. Our pontoon pilot, Robert Kaplan, must have held some sort of grudge for 30+ years, as he tried to kill us all within the first 15 minutes of the cruise. He drove the USS VA12 directly into a four foot swell and the bow submerged for several minutes as the group of elderly ubangis turned very pale.

Skipper wannabe Kaplan was forcibly removed from his duty and placed in irons. JD Rogers assumed the bridge and the rest of the afternoon we sailed safely.

That evening we found a restaurant near the hotel that would admit us and enjoyed a comfortable dinner. No one was shot, no one went to jail, and the shore patrol didn't even show up. All the more remarkable when you realize that only 3 wives attended that first reunion, and they avoided us as much as possible.

## Ubangi Biographies

This will be a regular feature of the newsletter. As you send me your bios I will incorporate them into the next edition each time. Don't be shy, everyone wants to know what you've been up to all of these years.

### John Larch

"High-School & Year: St. Mary's High, Medford Oregon, 1970, Enlistment Date: April 4, 1975 Age at Enlistment: 23 Discharge Date: April 3, 1979 Rank-Rate at Discharge: AQ2 (Aviation Fire Control Technician) Work History: May-1979 - Aug. 1979 Worked for Pacific Bell, San Francisco, as a telephone installer. Sept. 1979 - Mar 1988 Worked for Oregon Dept. of Transportation as Motor Carrier Size & Weight Enforcement Officer

Mar-1988 - Present Still with Oregon Dept. of Transportation, working as Senior Computer Systems Analyst for Motor Carrier Size & Weight Enforcement Unit. Personal: Married Sept. 1, 1985 in Salem, OR. No kids. Just a couple of DINKS (Double Income No Kids). Retirement plans: Hope to retire in September 2007."

### Bruce Carawon

"I entered the Navy in June 1959 as a Seaman Recruit and retired, after 35 years of Naval Service as an LDO Commander on 1 October, 1994. I served in VA-12 as the MMCO / AMO from 17 Jan 1975 thru 03 August 1978. Today, I continue to be active in Naval Aviation as a contractor in support of the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program (PMA-225) for the A-7 Program in Jacksonville, FL. Aside from serving as the Manager of the FMS Division of Information Spectrum, Inc., Jacksonville, FL Office, I have primarily supported the Hellenic Air Force (Greek) since I joined the company in December 1994. My phone numbers follows: Home (904)276-9025 and Work at (904)573-7873. Email [brcar1@bellsouth.net](mailto:brcar1@bellsouth.net) "

### Don Tucker

U.S. Army 73-76, U.S. Navy 76-93, AMH1(NAC/AW) Retired Aug 93, VA-174 A7B/C/E, VA-12 A7E, VA-203 A7B/E, VP-62 P3B Aircrew, VR-52 C118C/C9B Aircrew, NAS Willow Grove, PA.(and Desert Storm in Bahrain) UC12B Aircrew, VR-52 C9B Aircrew

### Jerry P. Thomas

"I Joined the Navy in 61, Was Stationed at Patuxent River, Md. In the Crash Crew, as a ABF, in 63 Went to VA12 until 68... Then I Went to NAS Oceana, VA. VA46 until 71,, 71 Went to VP 8 at Pax River for Flight Eng. School, Squadron Moved to Nas Brunswick, ME. My Orders Got Changed and I Went to VA45 Det One at Good Old Cecil, Field... Went on the Intrepid for a North Atlantic Cruise, Made

a Med Cruise Also, 73 VA45 Decommissioned, 73 - 75 Worked Navy Invest. Det. At Cecil Field, Was Kinda Attached to VA56, Did A lot of Traveling, Working as Druggie Invest. Went to NAS Lemoore, Quonset Point, RI. NAS Woodby Is..WA. Grand Prairie, TX 73 - 77 Finally Got Orders to a Squadron HT18 NAS Whiting Fld, FL. 78-79 Took Family to Yokosuka, Japan on the Midway in a A-7 Squadron VA64. 79-81 Went to NAS. Alameda, CA. As OOD. Retired Moved to Brunswick, ME. Worked at NAS Brunswick as a Sand Crab Till 85 Then Worked at The Portland, ME. Post Office Until 95 Had Both Shoulders Operated On, Went Out on a Disability, Moved to Sunny Florida " Kissimmee Work Now For a Vacation Home Rental Co. "Then I Found Va - 12 Again " All Is Well You Bet ya"

### Joe Kyle

"After getting orders to VAW-122 in December 1968, I found myself stationed at Norfolk NAS for my last 9 months. With my college cut knocking off the last 3 months of my enlistment, I started classes the weekend after being discharged and raced through my degree in 13 years. I suppose 2 wives and four kids had something to do with the pace. I put in 26 years with the State of Michigan as a social work supervisor and took an early buy-out in '97. My next job as a Veterans Counselor in my home county gave me the idea of hunting down old VA12 guys. Now I have my most favorite job, working as a Personnel Analyst. Hope to do this till my ship comes in."

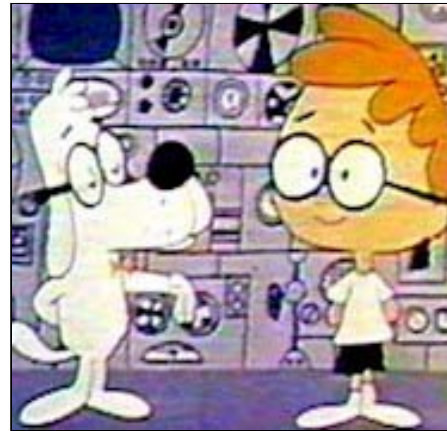
### The Word from the West

**S** hits & Giggles From The Only Coast  
On The Left Side That's In It's  
Right Mind!

THE WAYBACK MACHINE:

Does anyone remember watching "The Rocky & Bullwinkle Show" on TV? On the show, Mr. Peabody (the Beagle) would take Sherman (his pet boy) on rides in the WAYBACK MACHINE and they would visit a moment in history, and add their own brand of chaos and farce to the mix.

Almost pure Marx Brothers stuff...



Well, I am on a ride on that machine right now. Here's how the ride is going:

- One point of interest in the aftermath of our Reunion is, how many Flying Ubangis came from Florida!
- *(Question for another day - How come there are so many living there now?)*
- I'm from "the other side", in Oregon.
- How in the world did I ever get orders to *Cecil Field*?

Answer: Ubangis, always remember the eternal admonition and rebuke: The Navy never does anything THE RIGHT WAY, or THE WRONG WAY, but rather THE NAVY WAY.

I was young, and stupid, and about 1/2 way through "AQ" A School at NS Millington we filled out the proverbial

DREAM SHEET for orders:

1. NAS Whidbey Island
2. NAS Lemoore
3. Any West-Coast NAS

Now, don't you figure that's just about got it covered? What could go wrong? Well, you know what happened, hey shipmates? Yup, there's the orders for Cecil Field, Jacksonville, Florida. Based on a virtual reversal of my Dream Sheet. *It's THE NAVY WAY, I tell ya!*

#### THE BOTTOM LINE:

Now, while I am no longer young (but I'm still stupid see, so I have managed to retain something from my youth), I look back and wonder:

*Why the hell did I ever want to go to NAS Lemoore? What has Whidbey Island got over Jacksonville and Shit City (Norfolk)?*

*VA-12 wasn't based there! VA-12 has got all of my friends. VA-12 has my buddies. My Navy Family is there at VA-12. I'm pretty proud to be an AQ2 in the Flying Ubangis.....John Larch*

## IKE's Birthday

**A** hoy, **Former IKE Warriors!** Thank you very much for sending us your information. We have already received hundreds of emails from personnel interested in participating in USS Dwight D. Eisenhower's 25th Anniversary. "IKE 25," as we call it, is still in the planning stages and this letter is designed to notify you of dates and events. We will send you updates on times and events as they become available in the coming months. As you probably know, the US Navy's birthday is October 13. What > most folks don't know is former President Dwight D. Eisenhower's birth anniversary is on October 14. And, all of us should know that October 18 will be the anniversary of USS Dwight D. Eisenhower's (CVN-69) commissioning. To that end, the IKE crew is working hard to promote a week's worth of activities in the greater Norfolk area for two reasons: 1.) To reunite the former crew and motivate the current crew. IKE will then be 17 months into its scheduled 3.5-year refueling and complex overhaul at its birthplace

-- Northrop Grumman Newport News Shipbuilding. (\*\*\*)Due to the nature of the shipyard work, public tours of IKE will not be available for safety and security reasons. We will attempt to coordinate alternate tours with the Navy's Tour and Information Office in Norfolk.\*\*) 2.) To raise money to rebuild the Five-Star Museum. By establishing a non-federal entity (sort of like a booster club run by civilians for ethical and legal reasons), we hope to have enough money donated to renovate the shipboard museum dedicated to Dwight D. Eisenhower, our ship's namesake. So far, we are planning events starting on 14 October 2002 and running through the 18th. We are tentatively scheduling a 5K run, Command Picnic, golf tournament, and ticketed gala ball. We also expect to coordinate events with Norfolk's Fleet Week, which will be running simultaneously. (For example, we will have exhibits running inside the Nauticus Museum in downtown Norfolk.) Additionally, there are other non-related events that prospective vacationers may be interested in, such as a regatta and a wine tasting event which is also being held in Norfolk that week. For more information regarding Norfolk-area events, such as Fleet Week, visit: [Www.norfolk.va.us/home](http://www.norfolk.va.us/home). If anyone is interested in helping assist us with a crew reunion or be interested in joining the non-federal entity (NFE), please send an email to [IKE25@eisenhower.navy.mil](mailto:IKE25@eisenhower.navy.mil). Thanks in advance for all of your support regarding this event! Stay tuned for more details as they become available. We will send routine emails to you and will update our web site <http://www02.clf.navy.mil/eisenhower/> as events are made available. We look forward to celebrating IKE 25 with you! Shawn Tallant

## Newsletter Name

**I** realize that the current name is not very imaginative. But that is somewhat intentional. I am hoping that you guys will suggest something better for the next edition. Also, I see this project as something that

continues to evolve and grow. Formatting, topics, contributions and style should mature as we do. It's success will be determined by your interest and participation.

If you don't already know it, we have a website. It is <http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Barracks/9745/VA12/>

Please return the attached application form with your first years donation if you would like to continue to receive the newsletter. We'll call it a calendar year beginning Jan 2003. I'll get another one out before the end of this year and then, get on a regular schedule next year. If you have names and addresses of other VA12 alumni please send them to me, or give them my addresses. "The adventure is not over" ,,,,,,,Joe Kyle



**Application for Membership**  
**Attack Squadron Twelve Reunion Association**

established 8/1/02

You are hereby invited to join the ATTACK SQUADRON TWELVE Reunion Association. We are bound together by our service in VA-12, the one thing that touched all of our lives and that joins us together.

We will attempt to publish a quarterly newsletter and encourage members' contributions.

We will also publish a membership roster which will contain current addresses, years of VA-12 service, as well as rank and ratings. It will be available solely for the private non-commercial communication among our members.

Our dues will be by donation to begin with, suggested \$12.00 annually.

Please fill out the Application Form so that we have accurate information for our newsletter mailing list.

Thank you

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname \_\_\_\_\_

2. Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

3. Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_

4. Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Home ( ) or Work ( ) E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

5. Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Current Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

7. Dates of Service in VA12 \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Your Rating \_\_\_\_\_

9. Signature \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to

Joe Kyle

10421 Barbara

Pinckney, MI

48169