



Shotgun Blasts

The 221st Aviation Company – Then and Now



Volume 3, Issue 10

October 2011

*Ahh, my Friends, the Ides of October approacheth rapidly
and with it cometh:*



Be ye prepared?

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This newsletter is dedicated to the men of the 221st RAC who served from 23 March 1965 thru 10 October 1971, to the ladies that stood behind them and to that magnificent flying machine, the Cessna Birddog.

Brothers in Arms – Always

Destinations

San Antonio is a city that is just loaded with destinations, there are destinations to eat, destinations to drink, destinations to shop, destinations to play and of course destinations to relax. The choice of destination is up to you, of course, but the following is just an idea of some of them. You will find many more as you begin to explore the Alamo City during the Delta Birddog Reunion 2011.

Destinations to Eat

Guenther House

Located in the elegant home of Pioneer Flour Mills' founding family in one of the oldest historical districts in Texas, the Guenther House offers a great historical elegance and experience. There is a museum, retail store, and restaurant. Dining at the Guenther House includes a memorable breakfast, where the pastries are rumored to be the best in town. www.guentherhouse.com

Lone Star Café

The Lone Star Café offers classic Texas cuisine. The chicken fried steaks with cream gravy are served without delay. So are the catfish, Texas Style barbecue, and Blue Ribbon Steaks. Enjoy a rustic view of the San Antonio River Walk from the oversized patio on the second floor. www.lonestarcafe.us

Schilo's Deli

This is one deli reminiscent of the "old school" New York style delicatessens. Having been open in its current location since 1942, this deli has been a local favorite for years. Try the Reuben, pea soup and bratwurst. Rumored to serve the best tasting German food in town it's sure to be an instant favorite. Located at 424 E. Commerce St.

Mi Tierra

Open twenty four hours, this downtown staple has thrived in Market Square since 1941. Known as a Texas landmark the strolling mariachis, colorfully dressed wait staff and festive décor make for an altogether unforgettable visit. Don't forget to visit the panaderia (bakery) offering traditional Mexican pastries. www.mitierracafe.com

Destinations to Drink

Blue Star Brewing Company

Located in the Blue Star Arts Complex, this bar has the city's best selection of house-brewed beer, exceptional wine and food. It also offers occasional live music and a patio to enjoy the scenes of Southtown.

www.bluestarbrewing.com

Coyote Ugly

One of the most famous bars in the United States, Coyote Ugly is known for the rowdy atmosphere and dancing Coyotes. Just a few steps away from the River Walk in the heart of downtown.

www.coyoteuglysaloon.com

Destinations to Shop

El Mercado Market Square

El Mercado or Market Square is one of San Antonio's most exciting shopping experiences. It is the largest Mexican style marketplace in the country, with over 100 shops selling a variety of goods. www.marketsquaresa.com

La Villita

Located on the south bank of the San Antonio River, La Villita was the first neighborhood in San Antonio. Now it is a thriving art community. It is home to many art galleries, shops and dining hot spots. Spend a day strolling through La Villita and enjoy the history all around you.

www.lavillita.com

Destinations to Play

The Alamo

A "must see" for all who come to San Antonio. This 4.2 acre complex is where a small band of Texans held out for thirteen days against the Centrailist army of General Santa Anna. Although the 189 defenders and the Alamo fell, the Alamo has come to symbolize courage and sacrifice for the cause of Liberty. www.thealamo.org

Spanish Governor's Palace

Built in the early 1700's by the Spanish and restored in 1930 by the City of San Antonio, this structure represents the last visual vestiges of the Presidio San Antonio de Bejar. It was the

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Comandancia, or home and office, of the captains of the military garrison and the location of Spain's first permanent military presence in San Antonio. www.spanishgovernorspalace.org

Institute of Texan Cultures

Located in downtown San Antonio, the museum features exhibits that tell the stories of Texans. The Institute of Texan Cultures, through it research, collections, exhibits and programs, serves as the forum for the understanding and appreciation of Texas and Texans. Guests are encouraged to interact with the character performers as they bring the museum to life. www.TexanCultures.com

Texas Ranger Museum

The Former Texas Ranger Association and the Buckhorn Museum have created the new Texas Ranger Museum. Located adjacent to the Buckhorn, the museum contains priceless artifacts documenting the history and lore of the Texas Rangers. www.rangermuseum.com

Destinations to Relax

Alamo Plaza Spa at the Menger Hotel

Enjoy the techniques that are based on holistic herbal and water therapy developed in the 1890's by Catholic priest Sebastian Kneipp. The professional staff offers massages, herbal scrubs, wraps, spa facials and so much more. The spa is located right next door to the Alamo at the Menger Hotel. www.alamoplazaspa.com

Just an idea of some of the destinations that are available to you in and around San Antonio, there will be a great deal more information available once you arrive at the Reunion so come prepared for a fun filled experience. **Shotgun Blasts** and the **Delta Birddog Reunion 2011** are not endorsing any of the preceding destinations.



I seem to recall telling you folks some time ago that I would see you in San Antonio in October. Now I note a lot of missing names on our list of attendees. Why?



The Guenther House
Maybe Fritz should check his ownership position on this property.





Something we didn't see often in the IV Corps area of Vietnam – a Birddog at rest.



You really have to stretch your imagination to visualize these guys working on and flying the greatest little war bird ever built, the Cessna Birddog.

**It was fun then but,
you ain't seen nothin' yet.**



...and just where would we be without the ladies to offset the "old soldiers"?



Families are a part of it too, look at Ned, Cindy and Barbara Moore at this family get-together.



C'mon Hank, this weekend is supposed to be about airplanes, you do remember them?



Boss, I know I should have told you about this back in '66 but...

Oh, so long ago and far away...but I remember it well.



A Note of Caution for the Reunion

At previous reunions we have asked participants to bring their souvenirs and mementos for display in our Hospitality Suite. I would like to discourage folks bringing anything other than photo collections or other items of this nature. There will be another reunion taking place at the same time as ours and the security of your personal items might become an issue. I do encourage folks to bring any photos that you have that you would like to see in the newsletter or on the web site, we can arrange to copy them and return originals.

This Month in Military

History

- OCTOBER 4 *THE SPACE AGE BEGINS AS THE RUSSIANS LAUNCH SPUTNIK IN 1957*
- OCTOBER 8 *SERGEANT ALVIN YORK TOOK OUT GERMAN BUNKER KILLING MORE THAN A DOZEN AND CAPTURING 132. LATER AWARDED THE MEDAL OF HONOR 1918*
- OCTOBER 13 *THE U.S. CONTINENTAL NAVY WAS CREATED IN 1775*
- OCTOBER 14 *CAPTAIN CHUCK YEAGER BECOMES THE FIRST MAN TO BREAK THE SOUND BARRIER IN 1947*
- OCTOBER 16 *THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS BEGINS IN 1962*
- OCTOBER 19 *THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR ENDED IN 1781*
- OCTOBER 23 *TERRORISTS DROVE A TRUCK LOADED WITH TNT INTO THE MARINE BARRACKS IN BEIRUT, LEBANON KILLING 241 MARINES IN 1983*
- OCTOBER 25 *U.S. FORCES INVADE GRENADA IN 1983*

Dates to Remember

- OCTOBER 1 *WORLD VEGETARIAN DAY*
- THE PANAMA CANAL ZONE WAS FORMALLY HANDED OVER TO PANAMA IN 1979*
- OCTOBER 3 *EAST AND WEST GERMANY REUNITED AFTER 45 YEARS IN 1990*
- OKTOBERFEST ENDS IN GERMANY*
- OCTOBER 4 *NATIONAL GOLF DAY*
- OCTOBER 10 *COLUMBUS DAY OBSERVED*
- OCTOBER 12 *TRADITIONAL COLUMBUS DAY*
- OCTOBER 13 *A GATHERING OF EAGLES AS THE DELTA BIRDDOG REUNION 2011 GETS UNDER WAY*
- OCTOBER 23 *MOTHER-IN-LAW DAY*
- OCTOBER 24 *UNITED NATIONS DAY*
- OCTOBER 28 *PROHIBITION BEGAN IN 1919*
- OCTOBER 31 *HALLOWEEN*

AND

LEST WE FORGET, THE ENTIRE MONTH OF

OCTOBER HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS
BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

AND

CLERGY APPRECIATION MONTH

Chaplain's Corner

"The fool says in his heart, there is no God ... " (PS 14:1a; 53:1a NIV)

By Ned Moore, Shotgun Chaplain

I have decided there is no such thing as a true atheist – in part because several of the people with whom I have talked, claiming to be atheists, have shown more of a spirit and process of “I am my own god”. That being evidenced by their negation of others’ statements of faith and having an attitude of “no one and no thing can tell me what to do and not to do.” To ascribe to the dictum that there is no such thing as a supernatural god nor activities, one needs to tell oneself many lies in multi-leveled denial (I discovered ~ 40 years ago).

One person said to me, “I am a proud atheist and humanist”, apparently not realizing that statement is at odds with itself. Even the Supreme Court has recognized Secular Humanism as a religion, though some dispute this and even the Council on Secular Humanism website seems to contradict itself in several places – no matter – that is not my issue here.

What is the issue that I wish to address is: To what or to whom does one turn to for strength, guidance, wisdom and understanding when the road of life becomes really rocky or seems to have been blown away completely? What does one do when one finds him/her self in such agony of mind and soul that there seems to be no relief; No turning; No light in the endless darkness?

I have spoken with some who have said they were Atheists, Free Thinkers or Humanists. But during their times of stress, struggle and agony, they cry out, expressing feelings of being completely lost, alone and abandoned.

You may remember, the operational definition of “religion” I have developed is: “... all those things people do to keep from doing what God wants them to do.” With that in mind, I offer this (I think somewhat confused) quote.

The Secular Humanist website says this, in part:

“... early organizers classified humanism as a non-theistic religion which would fulfill the human need for an ordered ethical/philosophical system to guide one's life,”spirituality” without the supernatural. In the last thirty years, those who reject supernaturalism as a viable philosophical outlook have adopted the term "secular

humanism" to describe their non-religious life stance.

Critics often try to classify secular humanism as a religion. Yet secular humanism lacks essential characteristics of a religion, including belief in a deity and an accompanying transcendent order. Secular humanists contend that issues concerning ethics, appropriate social and legal conduct, and the methodologies of science are philosophical [what, really?] and are not part of the domain of religion, which deals with the supernatural, mystical and transcendent. “

There are other areas of their discussion which seem to elevate “Human Rights” as a type of god which should rule over all.

Aside from being totally wrong on the subjects “concerning ethics, appropriate social and legal conduct” not being part of Christianity, (Sermon on the Mount anyone?) how are the philosophical aspects of scientific methodologies and ethics going to help someone in a crisis of body, soul and spirit? To whom can they cry out if there is no one bigger, more powerful or more caring than themselves? Do they believe that the philosophical and scientific society among us is concerned enough for them to come to their aid when they are in spiritual, emotional or other crisis? (Sorry. I was being sarcastic – that gained from finding out from personal experience. It was some of God's people who came to help – not my atheist “friends” – one of the reasons I came back).

One does not have to go all overboard depending on supernatural rescue responses to personal crises in order to place one's trust for temporal and ultimate well being in Someone bigger than we are. Even when we are not miraculously delivered from our troubles, it does not mean there is no one to turn to in our pain. Trusting that God cares for us does help us find meaning in our struggles and gives us a hand-hold in our storms. Peace is not necessarily the absence of conflict. It may be the serenity born of Trust in the midst of it.

I forget the book title, but in it a father was grieving the death of his son in WWII combat. He confronted his pastor who had come to be with him. “Where was God when my son was being killed?” he asked. The pastor is recorded as replying, “The same place He was when His Son was being killed.”

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People who Trust in God are never alone. God lives in His people and in getting together, God's people combine His strengths in each of us to help each other. People who force God out of their lives cut themselves off from His care.

Will Philosophy and Science as a person's god be with them in their pain? Is your personal strength and resilience sufficient for ALL your needs? I have been with some who though so – only to find out differently.

God grant that may that not be you.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVSeQaHlpjg>



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Thank you for your Service and may God Bless the Troops!

Colin Kimball, Artist

WWW.MILITARYLEGACYPORTRAITS.COM

Are you looking for something to pass on to the kids or grand kids?

Looks like Colin Kimball might have come up with just the item. His Legacy Portraits lay out your career as you would like to be remembered and you can pass it on along with your "war" stories and personal history.

Colin will be with us in San Antonio at the start of the reunion but you don't have to wait to talk to him.

George (Corky) Cook has once again put together a deal for us on the purchase of Unit Wear and Collectable items for the upcoming get together in San Antonio. Now is the time to get your orders in to him. Check out the site for his items.

www.corkysstudiographics.com

Corky will be with us in San Antonio with his equipment.

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Delta Birddog Reunion
25% OFF Markup thru October
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Three 221st Stories

by **Bob Preble**, Crew Chief for Shotgun 34
(Tauno Wirkki, Fritz Guenther, and Gary Varner in
Go Cong Province) 1965-1967

I spent most of my 22-month tour stationed at Go Gong Province as Crew Chief for Shotgun 34. I really loved the job, and thus extended my tour twice.

Lieutenant Tauno Wirkki was my first pilot. We became fast friends and remain that way today. I ended up moving to his home town, Salem, NY. Since the Go Cong days he and I have shared many adventures, hunting, sailing, and flying, and we've owned several airplanes over the years. However, we'll go back to Go Cong.

Tauno knew of my desire to fly, as I'd been rejected from flight school because of a very minor eye problem. He did a great job of teaching me how to fly from the back seat. I later went on to solo from the front seat (without anyone's knowledge at the time).

Who is Flying?

One morning we were taking off from the strip at Go Cong with the usual crosswind. I was at the controls and got a bit behind on the rudder, resulting in over control. I felt Tauno kick the rudder and straighten things out. We climbed out a bit, he put the flaps up and we started in to a dive toward the ground. As we often flew low to avoid small arms fire, I thought nothing of it. At about 100 ft. Tauno leveled off and started to climb again. He apologized for taking over, and suggested we were getting a bit low. I had let go of the controls about half way down the runway and thought he was flying! He assumed I was flying! After that, and to this day, we always make sure we know *who is flying*.

Fast Jeep, Dented Wing

We flew air cover for anyone from the Advisory Team that was driving the roads. This day we were providing cover for Major Henesy, the Advisory Team Leader. On one section of the road known to have VC roadblocks, Tauno decided we should check it out from a lower

altitude. We were cruising along with our wheels brushing the rice paddy while watching the elevated road on the dike. The road looked good and up ahead was the Major in his jeep. As we went by we shortened up his whip antenna by about two feet. Later he said that the radio actually worked better, but that if the only way out of Go Cong was in Tauno Wirkki's Birddog, he'd take his chances and walk out!

A week or two later we went down to Soc Trang for a 100-hour inspection. The head inspector, whose name I don't remember (ask Fritz, he knows), was a very thorough person. All the crew chiefs dreaded him. He immediately spotted the dent in the leading edge of the wing with resulting crease on top, and questioned me as to what had happened. Not wanting to get Tauno in trouble, I told him a jeep drove under the wing at the air strip. He quickly calculated that the jeep had to be going at least 120 mph. I told him that indeed it was the fastest jeep I'd ever seen!

More Fire Power

Our quest for more weaponry was never ending. Four rockets and my fully auto M-14 firing out the back window were not enough. (Lord, please make this thing an A-10). I had some friends at Vinh Long that flew gunships, so I told Tauno I would make a call. A few days later a chopper showed up with two pods that held seven rockets each. I beefed up the shackles and figured out how to wire them up. We progressively loaded them up and discovered we could get off the ground with fourteen rockets armed with the smaller 6 lb. warheads. We must have been 1,000 lbs. over gross, but I guess Cessna knew how to build airplanes.

Our first mission with our newly constructed light fighter-bomber was a VC Tax Collection Station a few clicks north of town. We would try to blow it up with our four rockets expecting that they would jump out of their fox holes and start shooting at us. We had a surprise for them this time. Tauno started the rocket run much higher. We shot off three on the first run, then came in again and shot the fourth rocket. They came out of their hiding

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places and started shooting as we quickly let off ten more shots. I am not sure what the results were, but the Tax Station had relocated to a less obvious place the next day.

Word quickly spread about our rocket pod conversion that, to my knowledge, was the first one in the 221st. I figured I would probably be court marshaled for this unauthorized modification of government property; however, it wasn't long before they were being hung "officially" on several other birddogs.



Bob Preble

Editor's Note: I extracted this commentary by Bob from the Unit History portion of the Web Site to point out to all of you folks that we all have a tale or two to tell of our adventures in the "Pearl of the Orient". I really would like to see more tales of the Birddog crew chiefs and the mechanics that kept the airplanes flying. If it weren't for all of you 67- and 68 MOS folks nothing at all would have been accomplished in the Mekong Delta and the 221st Aviation Company would never have attained the high availability rates that it had.

C'mon troops, tell your tales.

Anybody know these folks?



Thoughts

You know that on a regular basis most of us note that those that do not bother to study history are doomed to repeat the mistakes of any given time again. Many times this is due to the fact that “history” has been recorded incorrectly or that it has been recorded by individuals that did not witness the events and may not even have been alive at the time of the event.

Some of you may be familiar with the **Vietnam Center and Archive** at Texas Tech University. The scholars at this institution are striving to collect an oral history of the Vietnam War in the words of those that served during this violent conflict and they are asking our help in doing this.

I have invited Dr. Kelly E. Crager, PhD, the Head of the Oral History Project to spend a few minutes with us on Thursday evening, October 13 to explain a bit about the project. He will be joining with us during our Welcome Reception and then may meet with you as individuals for further discussions.

We do need to consider involvement in this project but on an individual and personal manner. Unless enough Vietnam Veterans come forward to tell the history of what happened in Southeast Asia, ours could become the Forgotten War.

Take a few minutes to look at the web site for this project and if you have questions I am sure that Kelly will try to answer while with us in San Antonio.

www.vietnam.ttu.edu

Notes from all over

I have been to a lot of places, but I've never been in Cahoots. Apparently you can't go alone. You have to be in Cahoots with someone. I've also never been in Cognito, either. I hear no one recognizes you there. I have, however, been in Sane. They don't have an airport; you have to be driven there. I have made several trips, thanks to my friends and family. I would like to go to Conclusions, but you have to jump and I'm not much on physical activity!!

Thanks, Norm



Final Flight

A simple listing of our Comrades-in-Arms that have departed on their Final Flight. As confirmation is received notices will be posted.

David H. Cook, Sr.

Shotgun 49A
Crew Chief

Our Comrade-in-Arms, David, passed away on September 2, 2011 at the age of 68 after a long and grueling battle with his health. David is survived by eight children from his two marriages, 19 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. David also worked with troubled teens and many think of him as family.



A Commentary

Saturday, September 10, 2011

Yesterday I attended David Cook's funeral at the National Cemetery in Kent, WA. He was attended by a Rolling Thunder Honor Guard and a military honor guard which carried the casket and presented the flag to David's oldest son.

I spoke briefly at the reception after the service and emphasized that the camaraderie the Shotguns have felt over the decades since we served together in the RVN has not diminished over the years and that the honor and respect we feel for each other will remain alive as long as there are any of us left.

David left behind 8 children and a lot of grandchildren as well as foster children he had taken in over the years. His time spent with the 221st was a key part of his life and was prominently featured in the panel of photos displayed at the reception and in the retelling of his life by his family.

It was obvious to me that my presence on behalf of the Shotguns meant so much to his family that I would encourage us all to make every effort to attend funerals and memorials even if we served at different times and did not personally know our departed comrade.

A last minute crisis with Fritz Guenther's wife kept Fritz away. Fritz reconnected with David before his death and several family members told how important that was to David and to them.

God bless you all on this eve before the anniversary of the attack on the Twin Towers.

Bob Gee
Shotgun 22, 1966





No! It ain't San Antonio but...maybe for the next reunion, whenever that may be.



Editor's Note:

It has been suggested that we, the Shotgun alumni, think about having a volunteer "Morning Report Clerk" to track where we are and our condition. Not a bad idea as we enter into that time in our life that can be filled with incidents and accidents.

It has been pointed out just how much impact the presence of a Comrade-in-Arms can have upon the family of a fallen friend and perhaps in this manner we can all participate at one time or another in our particular geographical areas.

I am sure that this subject will be discussed at our unit meeting during the reunion in San Antonio but if you wish to comment please do so by sending an e-mail to me at Shotgun-8A@hotmail.com .

Don Smith
Shotgun 8A, '65 - '66



Remember those amazing men in their flying machines that paved the way for us all those years ago. They took to the air in the Little Plane That Could and helped make the world a better place to live.

Mekong Delta Vets Reunion

Once again, the 13th Combat Aviation Battalion Vietnam is sponsoring its:

Mekong Delta Reunion

Hosted by:

1-13th Aviation Regiment

1st Aviation Brigade, Fort Rucker

The reunion will be held at Fort Rucker , AL on Armed Forces Day weekend; **May 17 to 20, 2012...**

In the past our Fixed Wing units, the 221st RAC and the 199th RAC have not shown a lot of interest in this reunion due to the emphasis that was placed on the helicopter units of the battalion. It is now time that we put forth an effort to demonstrate that we were there with those Fling Wing units and carried our fair share of the load in the fight against the VC and NVA in the IV Corps region.

All of us need to return to our "home", Fort Rucker occasionally if only to view the change that has taken place in the nearly half century since we received our flight training. This may be the best opportunity we will have to do just this and to meet with friends from the helicopter units that responded so rapidly to our requests for assistance.

Please at least consider organizing as the Delta Birddogs and presenting a united front at this reunion. It would be impressive to see twenty or more Birddog pilots at this event representing all of us and telling the tales of the greatest little war bird ever built, the Cessna L-19/O-1 Birddog, to the folks gathered at Fort Rucker on this special weekend.

More information will be published in the next issue of *Shotgun Blasts...*

Links

A few more sites that you may want to check out.

74th RAC www aloft74th.org

183rd RAC www.183seahorse.org

184th RAC www.184rac.com

185th RAC www.angelfire.com

199th RAC www.swampfox199thrac.com

219th RAC www.219headhunters.com

220th RAC www.catkillers.org

221st RAC www.221st.org

And

1st Aviation Brigade

www.1stavnbde.com

OV-1 Mohawk Association

www.ov-1mohawkassociation.org

Army Otter-Caribou Association

www.otter-caribou.org

International Bird Dog Association

www.ibdaweb.com

Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association

www.vhpa.org

Army Aviation Association of America

www.quad-a.org

