

Shotgun Blasts

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2009 Delta Birddog Reunion Just A Memory Now

It's all over but the accounting and the review.

By Don Smith, Shotgun 8A

Well now, it is over and only the memories linger on. That is why I am writing now, I want those memories to be fresh so that you can bring them to the surface before the begin to dim. I feel that we had a very successful reunion even though there were a few rough spots.

We all learned when we were still novice airplane drivers that the weather does not always cooperate with us, such was the case during our time together. When the chill and the nasty winds settled in over the Florida panhandle it almost looked like our time together was going to be spent in the hospitality room at the hotel and none of us were looking forward to that. We did lose the opportunity for some of our anglers to provide food for the tables due to the local captains canceling the fishing

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Moving On To 2011

Where do we go from here?

There are so many things that need to be accomplished before we will be able to do the most basic planning for a reunion in 2011. This is where all of you have the opportunity to shape the next get together so that all may enjoy it. Please take the time to let the Committee know about your experiences and what you would like to see.

There was a lot of talk about a change of venue for the next reunion so let's make that one of the topics to be discussed early on. Most reunions are locked into a location 1 ½ to 2 years prior to the actual reunion so we need to come to a meeting of the minds. Several different locations have been mentioned. These include but are not limited to: Fredericksburg, Texas, San Antonio, Texas, Houston, Texas, Nashville, Tennessee, Fort Walton Beach, Florida, Orlando, Florida and Dayton, Ohio.

Each of these locations have something special as an attraction, ie. San Antonio has the Alamo, so we need to think about what we have to do other than talk airplanes and possibly get to see or fly in those great little War Birds. Remember, our lives are centered on the Bird Dog but that is not necessarily so for our spouses and families.

In addition to where we also need to decide on when we want to have our reunion. Do we want to continue with our Fall schedule? If not, when would we like to do it? Fall is probably the most economical of the seasons but it is an open question.

Those are the two primary questions that we need answered to begin a planning process but that is not where it ends. We need to know so much more and

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trips due to high wind but the duffers headed up by the intrepid Jim McGraw managed to do battle with the wind and get in a round of golf.

Of course, with the forecasters calling for high winds at ninety degrees to the runway for Saturday we feared that we may not be able to have the L-19/O1 Bird Dog fly in at Sam Dawson's place as scheduled. We were fortunate that Ma Nature settled down on Saturday morning and did allow the Bird Dogs provided by their owners, all members of the International Bird Dog Association (IBDA) to land their tough little War Birds for our group to see, feel, smell and I swear I saw one mechanic taste.

There had been big plans for rides but due to maintenance problems we were only able to field two aircraft so the number of folks that managed to go around the pattern were limited. This was fad for us but it was probably more difficult for our friends that rode the bus from Fort Rucker and the 219th RAC Headhunters reunion hoping for an opportunity to feel the wind rushing through what little hair they have left during a trip around the pattern.

Of course, it was not a total loss by any means, we had a great catfish cookout that was provided by Sam Givhan and some of his friends from Alabama. It was every bit as good as promised and we did have the opportunity to meet up with some folks from the 219th and pass some time with them renewing old friendships and making new ones.

Sunday, most of us attended our Memorial Service that this year was conducted by Don Modica with the able assistance of Chaplain, Ned Moore and Hugh Libbey, resplendent in a Dress Blue uniform. This is just one of the reasons that we have reunions, we need to honor and remember those that have gone before us, whether in combat or in the normal course of their life. Each chime of the bell at the service brings the message home that our time is coming.



Of course, before I stop raving about what we did I need to use a few lines to mention those that did the work and we so often overlook. First, we need to thank Ann Poor, Fran McGraw and Pauleta Caylor for their support at the registration table, this is two times for these great ladies and they were joined this year by Pat Johnson and I believe we will see more of her in the future.

And, what is a hospitality room without beverages? We would have been lost without the work of Don Loftus and his efforts to keep everyone "wet down".

The endless work of Bill Poor preparing the admin paperwork, nametags and publishing the Eyes Over the Delta book was above and beyond the call.

A lot of behind the scene work was done by other committee members, Don Modica, Jim McGraw, and Tim Brinkerhoff as well as our undervalued web master Monte Caylor. Without these folks and the great assistance of our Swamfox team members; Sam Givhan, Woody Barnes, Don Nicholson and Doc Jennings there would have been no reunion.

If I overlooked somebody I am truly sorry, it was not intentional but rather lack of looking at my notes, just forgive me please and let me know about it.

Don't forget our friend and supporter, Sam Dawson and all of the members of the IBDA, they understand what we did.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

VETERANS DAY OBSERVANCE

PLACE YOUR CHOICE

TIME NOVEMBER 11, 2009

Take time out of your schedule to honor those who served in the Armed Forces of the United States of America

we can only get that information from all of you, let us know what you want and you can start doing that by letting us know what you thought was good and what was bad about the 2009 Delta Birddog Reunion.

While the memories are still fresh put them in an e-mail and send it to any of the committee members, we will be communicating regularly and we can begin the process of planning a reunion for you. There were many things verbalized while we sat around at the Hospitality Room or in Sam Dawson's hangar but we need to get them together now. Were you unhappy with the food, not enough activities, too much free time?

We want to get things moving so let's all get on it. Talk to your friends that did not come to Fort Walton Beach and ask them why. It would be nice if we could increase our attendance in 2011 by 25 percent. I know the folks are out there and they need to join with us to remember that we were young once.

2011 Committee Members

Don Smith

Frank Allen

Don Loftus

Boyce Cates

Emmett Johnson

Bobbie Gee

Monte Caylor

Tim Brinkerhoff

Bob Preble

Rip Rentmeister

Drop us a line, any way you can but we do not accept collect calls.