

THE BUGLER

A newsletter of the MAG61 Reunion Association

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Irv Kaplan, 2nd Vice President
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REUNION ANALYSIS

We have held annual reunions for several years (at least 20 or more). we have always had a registration fee to cover a meeting room and refreshments, travel and admission



fees to special events, and the final evening's departing services. These services included a Marine Color Guard, a prominent guest speaker and a special banquet dinner.

We did have a reunion for 2013, but since there were no planned activities or extra costly affairs, we eliminated the registration fees.

You have seen a view of the 2013 program, or lack thereof, in another article of this issue and from that you may be able to draw your own conclusions on the issue of continued plans for future reunions.

I do not consider myself an authority, nor do I believe that I am in the position to declare this as our final reunion. However, I believe the time has arrived for a call for opinions from our entire membership.

Please send me your opinions as soon as possible. PLEASE DO NOT SAY, "They should continue, but I will not be able to attend." Base your comments on your own ability to participate.

Please send your comments to: L. Stewart Allen, 300 Johnny Boy Lane, Berlin, N.J. 08009-2705, or email to: linwood.allen@mygait.com

(Thank you for your participation)

MAG 61 REUNION

Excalibur Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada

May 6 - 9, 2013

My wife, Flo, my son, Steve, and I boarded a Southwest Airlines plane at Phila. Airport on Sunday morning, May 5th, 7:15 a.m., for a non-stop flight to Las Vegas.

After we taxied out to prepare for take-off, the pilot returned to the gate. He then announced that he had called for a mechanic to check one engine, as, during the warm up for take-off, he had noticed a "slight drip" from one engine. We were then delayed for about one hour, but the pilot was true to his word and landed us in Vegas on schedule.

Between Sunday p.m. and Monday a.m., we met with a few of the earliest arrivers of our reunion group. By Monday afternoon they had all arrived. We had a small group, consisting of seven MAG 61 veterans, three veterans wives and the sons of four veterans.

I asked the hotel for a special meeting room, which they were unable to provide, However, the head clerk suggested that Flo and I should take a suite instead of a regular room and use the living room as our meeting room. This was a great idea and we had daily meetings there throughout the week.

The entire group attended a comedy show one evening at a neighboring casino. A few did some gambling and I heard of no significant wins or losses. We did not follow our usual practice of charging a reservation fee to cover expenses as we had no costly planned activities. We could not follow our usual practice of a specific speaker, a Marine Color Guard and special banquet on the final night. However, we did have a nice,

private, glassed-in room at The Steak House in our hotel, where we enjoyed a delicious steak dinner followed by a long session of interesting conversation. The expenses for this very enjoyable evening were covered by a very generous donation from Michael Thompson. He and his wife were unable to attend because their daughter was scheduled for a serious operation during the same week. I informed the group of the donation and the reason for their inability to attend. Several asked for their address and I'm sure they will receive separate thank you's. (*Thank you note to them appears in another section of this newsletter.*)

LIST OF ATTENDEES

Stu and Flo Allen & Steve Allen (Stu's son)
General Earl E. Anderson
Dutch & Beryl Gallon
Irving & Helen Kaplan
John McGhee & Hugo (son)
George Barnett & George (son)
Don Lilenthal & Frank Pond (son)

MEMORIES FROM A SMALL REUNION

It was great to see the three other regular attendees, Dutch Gallon and his wife Beryl, Irving Kaplan and his wife Helen, General Anderson, and John McGhee, and to meet the sons of attendees and renew acquaintance with George Barnett, who had attended a reunion in Arizona and one in Quantico. It was also great to meet Donald Lilienthal, who was in attendance for the first time.

I would like to thank the thoughtful sons who came to meet the group and assist their fathers throughout the week, and a special thanks to my son, Steve who has been with me for many reunions, to run around arranging for any

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situation that may occur and for his major effort in assembling all issues of *The Bugler* and arranging for the printing.

Here are some interesting points that came out in our “Ready Room” meetings, and the long conversations after the final steak dinner.

- A couple of the sons were Vietnam Veterans
- Donald Lilienthal was an electronics expert in MAG 61 Headquarters Maintenance. After discharge he attended California Institute of Technology, where he received a Bachelor of Science Degree. He worked in that field, for RCA. He owns two airplanes and has flown them for several years. He has now given up flying, but his son is learning to fly.
- George Barnett, after piloting twin engine PBJ Bombers for Squadron 611, in WW II, became a Helicopter pilot in the Korean War. He was one of the first pilots to fly wounded rescue missions in Korea. He and another pilot were interviewed for an article in Air and Space Magazine, called “Rotary Rescue.” He flew the Bell 47B, which carried two wounded on stretchers outside and also the Sikorsky S-52 (HOSS-1), which carried two stretcher patients inside. He said that even though they encountered much mortar fire they considered the many telephone wires (that each unit would leave as they moved to new locations) as the most dangerous hazard. He served as Operations Officer for Operations Squadron VMO6. During our conversations, he was surprised to learn that at one point, General Anderson was Commanding Officer of VMO6.

We were a small group, but had an enjoyable time.

SURPRISE PARTY

On the first day of March I received an invitation from the Chaplain of my Marine Corps. League, Semper Fi Detachment,



to attend a surprise party to pay tribute to Retired Lt. Col. Al Bancroft for his many years of service to the Marine Corps League, to be held on Saturday evening, March 23rd.

It was to be held in a hall where the league normally holds its affairs, including the annual Marine Corps Ball. When Flo and I arrived on the 23rd, we found the parking lot full of cars. I met a Marine veteran in the parking lot and as we walked in he was explaining how they fooled Col. Bancroft into coming. Many of our reunion attendees remember him for the work he contributed to MAG 61 reunion programs in Cherry Hill.

I walked in to experience the biggest surprise of my life. Lt. Col. Bancroft was there along with 110 other guests. It was a surprise party for me to celebrate my 90th birthday.

The guests included many people who I have known since they were children, three God-Children from Florida, a boy who I had given my used car to as he was about to get his license (he is now retired from the New Jersey State Police), a woman who I hired at the age of 18 as a clerk and, much later, became my assistant, during my 30 years at Educational Testing Service, in Princeton, NJ (she is now a grandmother), and so many grandchildren, great grand children, nieces, nephews and friends. (I was completely surprised and overwhelmed)

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I received many gifts and so many gift cards and restaurant gift cards that Flo and I will be eating out for months. It was such a wonderful affair that I feel obligated to pass it on to our membership. *(I was completely overwhelmed.)*

A VERY SPECIAL THANKS

I am certain that I am expressing the feelings of the entire group of attendees at our recent reunion when I use this opportunity to offer our **very sincere thank you to Mr. & Mrs. Michael Thompson** for the extremely generous contribution to the expenses of our trip to Vegas.

The wonderful steak dinner in a private, glassed-in room at The Steak House at Excalibur on our final evening, followed by a session of discussions on a variety of subjects and recollections of past experiences, was paid for by their desire to make sure we had an enjoyable reunion week.

The Thompsons were really looking forward to joining us but, unfortunately, their daughter was in need of a serious operation at the same time as the reunion. They live in Cincinnati and she was in Boston. I have since heard from them that, unfortunately, the operation did not completely solve the problem and she must undergo another operation.

THIS IS NOT JUST A SPECIAL THANK YOU FOR THEIR KINDNESS AND GOOD WISHES, IT IS ALSO A SINCERE HOPE THAT THE NEXT OPERATION IS A COMPLETE SUCCESS. OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH ALL OF YOU

Semper Fi from MAG61

ONE GREAT LETTER FROM A VETERAN'S SON

A few months ago I received a letter and a check for \$50 from the son of a MAG 61 veteran. Unfortunately, it did not specifically mention the connection. I wrote to the person on the return address label and received the following response.

Dear Mr. Allen:

I am sorry I did not enclose a note with my \$50 check. I hope that the check can help with the considerable mailing expenses you must bear. I also want to thank you for the lovely calendar. I will always enjoy the photos taken by the members of MAG 61.

My father, Sgt. First Class, Walter Leroy Pray, is listed on the roster of Marine Bomber Squadron 443 as an Aircraft Armorer. I understand that in the air he served as a toggler. He was proud of his service to our country, but reluctant to take the credit he deserved, for his contributions. In this sense, he was typical of so many of you who, although just a bunch of kids, undertook jobs that were so demanding and exposed you to mortal danger. You did what you were asked to do, then came home and resumed your interrupted lives. You started the families you wanted so badly, struggled to find jobs, and quietly and courageously met the demands of peacetime.

What impresses me is that you seldom reminded us of what you had accomplished. We rebellious youth saw you, our fathers, as the old folks we would replace. We learned too late that your generation would be impossible to replace.

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I salute everyone of you and sincerely hope your families fully appreciate the sacrifices you made so long ago. I will do my best to make sure my children and grandchildren understand what you did. My beloved father died in 2000, and I have dreams in which I take his head in my hands, look into his eyes, and ask him, "Do you know how much I love you?"

You outstanding men of MAG 61 knew my father. You worked alongside him. If you get to heaven before me, please tell him how much we all loved him.

In highest regard,
Walter Steven (Steve) Pray, Ph.D

BARTLETT TO SPEAK

As one of the two WWII veterans who regularly attend meetings of the Semper Fi Detachment of the Marine Corps League, Wenonah, NJ, I was asked if I would be able to arrange for a speaker from that era for our Marine Corps Ball, to be held on November 9th, 2013. I offered to try as I thought Brig. General George Bartlett would do so if he was available.

I contacted him and he said he would be able to accept my request. He and his wife plan to drive up to New Jersey and the League is arranging for their hotel facilities as close as possible to the hall. I sincerely appreciate George's generous offer to speak and am very pleased to hear that his wife will accompany him. I will certainly promise to give the ball complete coverage in a fall issue of *The Bugler*.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letter from George Bartlett

Ms. Pam Mc Cann, Frank Schnebbs's daughter, who was Frank's primary caregiver for many years until Frank passed on, just graduated from Nurses Training in Toms River, NJ. She realized how much she enjoyed giving care so she went to school. Frank was a Navigator in VMB-443.

Semper Fidelis, George

LETTER FROM GENERAL ANDERSON

Stu,

Still hanging in there with no additional health problems I know of. Jane is the strongest, and does most everything that needs doing. I just returned from Morgantown, where I was the parade marshall in their Independence Day parade, and I received an award that evening at a ceremony at the Amphitheater on the Monongahela River. It was a great day. This week I will return to Morgantown for the Anderson Family Reunion, followed by a drive on Sunday to Pittsburgh for a Memorial Service for my youngest brother, the Rev. Dr. Donald D. Anderson. So you can see that I am busy. Early next month I will be flying to San Francisco for the Annual Meeting of the American Bar Association. Because of my age and balance problems, Jane tries to discourage me from attending these events alone, but I still disobey her and struggle through.

My very best to all of our members and their families.

'A'

HEALTH REPORT

Bennie Leonberger Report

Not much update here. I use a cane outside the house. I go to therapy 3 or 4 times a week. I hope it keeps me on my feet. I still drive to therapy, church, doctor, grocery store and Walmart. I still volunteer at food pantry three times a month and I am now 90 years old. (When I get *the Bugler*, I read every word.)

Wesley Slagle

Wesley reports that he continues to have leg and back pain, but is able to get around slowly. Is thankful that his wife gets around better than him.

Irving Kaplan

Irv is doing pretty well, but sends this report on his wife Helen. "My Helen is creeping along at a slow pace, but has a brand new walker with automatic transmission."

General Anderson

See his letter in this issue (still traveling).

Manny & Gloria Roy

Latest note indicates they are moving slower and not making any trips (reunion response).

John McGhee

Slowed by stroke (handwriting effected), but made reunion, with his son.

DINNER PARTY FOR FLO ALLEN'S 90th BIRTHDAY

Three months after Stu's big surprise party, we had the pleasure of going to a very nice dinner party to celebrate Flo's 90th birthday (July 7th). It was very nicely arranged at a local restaurant.

We had 50 people from Flo and Stu's families. She saw several members of her family whom she hasn't seen very often in several years.

The honors for making such arrangements must go to Flo's son, Jim, who actually made all of the arrangements from his home in Virginia, with some help from Flo's granddaughter, Donna, and my daughter, Ruth.

We all had a great time, and although it was not a surprise, Flo was still surprised by the wonderful turnout. She was delighted.



Excaliber, Las Vegas, NV