

# 6918<sup>th</sup> RSM / SS

## April 2016 Newsletter



Happy Two Thousand Sixteen to our 6918<sup>th</sup> Alumni!! We hope this finds you all well. We have LOTS to tell you about and to share from the September, 2015 Minneapolis Reunion—so let's get to it!!

We should start with—**We're Sorry!!** We know it's been a long time (months too long!) since the reunion and an eternity since our last newsletter (July 2015), but with all that's happened, and with our organizational changes....well, we're just now doing what we'd hoped to do much sooner. We're hoping to do better in the future!

### 2015 Reunion News and Notes

We had a wonderful venue that translated into us having a wonderful time in Minneapolis—and the 6918<sup>th</sup> was nicely represented with 110 folks attending! That's down from our 2013 attendance, however, given the less-traveled location, and with our known deceased count now approaching 500, we thought it was pretty good overall. Obviously, we'd like to bring out 100% of our group each time—although we know that's

simply not possible. Our thanks go to Carl Aegler and Terry Durei, and their lovely wives Diane and Taco, who hosted and assisted your organizing crew and wives greatly throughout. Carl and Terry also donated a BUNCH of T-shirts and other items (they bought with their own funds, and had specially stenciled with our emblem) that were either sold or raffled at our event. Thanks SO MUCH to them for their support and generosity!

**This time, we were blessed with 16 alumni attending as first timers and 9 Survivor family member first timers attending.**

Attendees Per Flight:

Flight	Alumni	Guests	
A	5	4	Total 9
B	8	4	Total 12
C	25	22	Total 47
D	15	12	Total 27
DZ	2	4	Total 6
<u>SUR</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>Total 9</u>
Totals	60	50	Total 110

This marked the first time that another flight has exceeded the Dawg flight attendance numbers at a major reunion, and Charlie flight is to be commended for 'getting out the troops'! Remember that repeating is even harder than winning the first time!

#### Other Reunion Highlights

Business Meeting--As is our custom, a Business Meeting was held to discuss the status of the group and to highlight necessary concerns for our alumni. During the meeting, it was confirmed that Dave, Stan and Bill are officially retired as Reunion Coordinators following this reunion, and that Stan and Dave also retired from the program MC duties. All of the trio will remain board members and are still actively involved—just no longer as organizers, or as involved on a daily basis—so a call went out during the meeting for volunteers, hands and assistance.

Location Selection Committee--Volunteers came forward to serve on a location selection committee to select some location choices for the next reunion, assumed to be in 2017. Volunteers were Don Dickson, Randy Page, Jim Sullivan, Wayne Graczyk, Brad Mingay and Tom Stephens. The committee won't act as organizers, however, will coordinate preliminary research for selection options. This was concluded in March, and Colorado Springs was selected after polling members as the overwhelming choice location for the next 6918<sup>th</sup> RSM/SS reunion, likely to be in 2017.

Armed Forces Reunions Inc—In April, the selected city was turned over to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc., who has been contracted to perform organization and selection efforts to present to the committee and the board. Then, when that's complete, serious final negotiations can occur and the options and selections finalized. AFR brings much expertise to the process, as well as online registrations, on the ground help for the duration of the event, the possibility of interesting tours, excursions, etc. AFR has been in discussions with organizers for over a year prior to this reunion, and we simply proceeded with the plans that had been discussed and sanctioned by membership.

Raffles and Silent Auctions--This year's hospitality suite included more fun and raffles, and our 1<sup>st</sup> ever silent auction, which netted \$160 total for the treasury. Raffle items included numerous shirts, hats, DVD's, mugs, patriotic 6918<sup>th</sup> home made drink coaster sets, 8 x 10 photos of the old base, some even framed in barn wood by Stan, a Japanese Vase, numerous bottles of real imported Japanese Akadama wine, donated by Taps member John Baker, and transported to Minneapolis by Troy Powell. There were also numerous other items raffled, including a pro fishing reel, a 2 night stay at the Minneapolis Crowne Plaza, plus a 50/50 cash prize, and several 2015 event banners. The raffle/silent auction made for a most successful event—thanks to our attending members and guests—and especially thanks to our members for their generous donations!

Photo slideshows of the events appear in The Brady Theater on the public web page, in the 'Winners All' slideshow, or can be purchased in the 2015 Reunion 2-disc DVD set.

Back To Japan Tour Presentation and Drawing—A life-long dream of our Tokyo friend, Charlie Flight's Wayne Graczyk, has been to be able to put together a tour back to Fukuoka that he and all of his Hakata friends could enjoy together. Wayne and his travel agent/tour guide counterpart, also named Wayne Graczyk, believe it or not, worked hard to put together a great tour itinerary and information package that they distributed to interested members. This included a raffle drawing of a new suitcase, donated by Someday Travel, the travel agent, who assisted Wayne with the live introductory sales presentation. The trip was planned for November 9-17, 2016, and would have visited Osaka, Hiroshima, Kyoto, and Fukuoka and the old base area, and

would have included the 7 nights in Japan lodging, daily breakfasts, 3 lunches, 7 dinners, and rail and bus transportation fees, etc.

Unfortunately, try as they might, they weren't able to satisfy the minimum number of paying guests, and, last month, the tour was officially cancelled. Thanks to Wayne and (Someday Travel's) Wayne for their sincere effort—we're sorry this didn't work out as planned, as it would have been a wonderful, once in a lifetime trip.

Keynote Speaker Glen Rodgers—The Keynote speaker at this years' banquet was retired Lt. Col. Glen E Rodgers, who was a chaplain at Hakata in 1971-1972. Glen presented a wonderfully fun and inspiring talk, which was, as promised, less than 30 minutes long! It was enjoyed by all attending. Unfortunately, Glen, who we'd nicknamed Friar Tuck after his e-mail address, passed away in December following the reunion. Glen appears in slideshows 'Banquet Night' as well as in the 'Friar Tuck Memorial' which are some of the newest slideshows in The Brady Theater on the public web page—or, can be purchased on the 2015 Reunion DVD.

Every year, saying goodbyes gets harder at the end of these events—and this year was no different. What with our MC retirement, our wonderful members presented us with signed T shirts mementos as well as a beautifully decorated 6918<sup>th</sup> cake at the end of the night. Thank you all!

With Memorial Day approaching, here is a thought to consider. Wikipedia says “a **memorial** is an object which serves as a focus for memory of something, usually a person or an event”. Let's consider the thought that the 6918<sup>th</sup> reunions are truly a memorial to the brotherhood that served in Japan during the 1958 through 1972 timeframe. It goes on to say “**Memorial Day** is a federal holiday in the United States for remembering the people who died while serving in the country's armed forces”. How vividly aware we were made of this by the reunion attendance of the family of our brother, Dot Dorsey! Also notable at this reunion was the attendance of a total of 9 Survivor family members of deceased 6918<sup>th</sup> alumni. That puts real meaning to the statement that “we all gave some, but some gave all! You owe it to yourself not to miss the next one.

Tidbits—We are ALWAYS looking for helping hands and donations. We are now a 501(c)19 corporation, and we depend on the contributions and monies received from members, especially during reunions, to keep us going. Merchandise sales are also considered donations and help us tremendously. You are welcome to purchase 6918<sup>th</sup> merchandise and/or to make small or large donations to The 6918<sup>th</sup> Corporation at any time and in any amount. Visit: <http://www.6918thhakata.com/hakatastore1.html>

We also have a great need for volunteers to work on future reunion planning, newsletters, fundraising, computer/web maintenance, etc. Please consider donating some of your time and skills—we're a pretty nice bunch to work with overall!

Roster Numbers--We just thought you'd like to know the numbers of our 'little' 6918<sup>th</sup> group right now. I would be remiss if I didn't pay tribute here to Bill Mink, Carol Farr and Bill Spencer, as well as all who have assisted us to add names and addresses, and to keep them all up to date over the years, to increase our active roster population—thank you!

We currently have 851 members located from the 6918<sup>th</sup>. Of these, 708 are considered 'active' on our list—the others, not so much, and by their choice. From these, we currently show 113 on Able Flight, 139 on Baker Flight, 151 on Charlie Flight, 155 on Dawg Flight, 126 on Daze and 26 listed as unknown flight. In addition, we have 208 active survivor family members also, making us in touch with 916 families/alumni, with another 195 alumni/survivors who have chosen not to remain in touch.

But the most staggering number to me is this one: We currently have **490** members listed as deceased on our Taps video/roster. These are the ones we can confirm—we have others that we suspect are dead...but we can't prove either their life or their death.

My point is this: We ARE in the winter of our lives. PLEASE spend time with friends and family as often as you can—and plan to attend one (or more) of these reunions while you can! We guarantee that you won't regret the time you spend with us!

None of us know when our expiration date is—so we should live our life fully today!!

Till next time—thanks to Stan and Carol for their contributions putting this together.

*Dave Bethard*

Again, we want to share with you the contact information of key staff members:

Dave Bethard [davebethard@att.net](mailto:davebethard@att.net)

Carol Farr [updates6918th@yahoo.com](mailto:updates6918th@yahoo.com) or [the6918thcorp@yahoo.com](mailto:the6918thcorp@yahoo.com)

Here are links to our websites: Public site <http://www.6918thhakata.com/>

Many photo slideshows to view: <http://www.6918thhakata.com/bradytheater.html>

Roll Call site <http://www.spokt.com>

(The Roll Call site requires a login name and password--If you need help please contact Carol at either of the above listed email addresses)