

POST-REUNION NEWSLETTER, DECEMBER 2009

The November edition of the American Legion Magazine started with: “**Veterans Day** is a time to honor all who have served in the U. S. Armed Forces. Those who swore with their lives, and those who paid the ultimate price, as well, share a bond few others understand. Military service changes people. The lifelong friendships and the unique bonds veterans have with one another is a camaraderie not found in other walks of life.” This was most evident at the recent 6918th Security Squadron Reunion held at the St. Louis ’ Harrahs Casino on September 27, 28 and 29, 2009. Seventy-four 6918th members and wives/significant others gathered for a three day event of unique new memory making and remembering the past. In 2007, Dawg Flight and two Charlie Flight members gathered in Las Vegas . The format evolved in 2009, and the event became the 6918th Security Squadron Reunion, hosted by Dawg Flight. There were initial concerns that the combining of the entire squadron might dilute the bond that was felt at the previous reunions, but that fear quickly dissipated as soon as the 6918th began to arrive. What a group of guys and gals! Able Flight was represented by 5 attendees; Charlie Flight, 14; Dawg Flight 53; Days and Ops 2. Did it matter that we did not all serve on the same flight? Did it matter that we did not all serve in Japan at the same time? Did it matter that our wives would know no one, except from previous reunions, but still joined us in support of our effort? The answer is; NO! We gathered and enjoyed each others friendship and camaraderie. We revived forty year old friendships and made new friends. We relived old memories and, if not more importantly, we created new memories. There was a feeling in the room that I can’t describe. What was the bond with the feeling of esteem, respect, regard and loyalty that was there? I went to the dictionary and found the word that described it perfectly, LOVE! I thought I was too macho to use it, but you cannot argue with Webster!

The event began at noon on Sunday. We had the “New Orleans Room” as our hospitality suite from noon until midnight. As members began to arrive, there were handshakes then hugs. There was laughter and there were tears. There were “remember when’s” and there were “you are full of it, that never happened!” But the most rewarding happening was the look on the faces of the members when a new arrival would enter the room and it was a friend that had not been seen for over forty years. We had name tags with Japan era pictures. I guess some of us have changed in looks in the last forty and it was fun to watch one look at another’s name tag and see the recognition “click.” Some of our old brains needed a boost to get the memory juices flowing. In the hospitality room, we had a cash bar. We had complimentary mid-afternoon snacks of sandwiches and chips. We had tables set up for memorabilia items to which many contributed to, that were fun to browse. The hotel brought in a TV for the football fans. We had tables of reunion items to sell for fund raisers to help off-set the reunion costs. There were 6918th and Dawg Flight t-shirts, there were 6918th baseball caps and there were 2007 and 2009 reunion two disc DVD sets for sale, and there were raffle tickets sold.

Monday was similar to Sunday. There were new arrivals and a lot of visiting. We again had the cash bar, snacks, mid-afternoon sandwiches, TV and some went to play golf. Monday afternoon we had a business meeting to discuss future reunions. It was decided that the future “big” reunions will continue to be 6918th Reunions but with help from the other flights to maintain and service your flight. Following is the list of your flight coordinator who will continue the never ending task of locating new members and keeping you updated on upcoming events.

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Guys, these fellows need your help. They have your flight roster and timely information changes are most important. If you have an e-mail, phone number or mailing address change, **let them know as soon as possible**. Old orders and old pictures are a gold mine for organizers. We all have them, so dig yours out and send a copy to your flight leader. It takes untold hours to expand and keep the roster

current. Please help! The more members that are found, the better the attendance will be at the reunions. Those who have attended will agree that a reunion is a most rewarding experience.

Tuesday, the 29th, was a different kind of schedule. Nothing was planned until 5:00 PM . That afternoon many of the members car-pooled to Jefferson Barracks Cemetery to visit Dot Dorsey's grave. For those who did not know Dot, he was an Able Flighter who left Japan in '68 and was killed in action in Vietnam in February '69. Dot was well known and well liked by all who knew him. The remains of his entire crew are buried at Jefferson Barracks Cemetery in St. Louis , which is about twenty miles south of the reunion site.

Other St. Louis sites visited Tuesday afternoon were: The Gateway Arch, the Anheuser Busch Brewery with free samples at the end of the tour, Grant's Farm with free samples at the end of the tour, the seventeen acre Japanese Garden at Missouri Botanical Gardens , the Transportation Museum and the Cabela's Sporting Goods Store. Some of us continued to visit Tuesday afternoon and some of us old ones took a nap.

By 5:00 PM. all had returned and were ready for the planned cocktail hour and program in the conference room. We had an open bar that all seemed to enjoy. We then conducted our flag ceremony by posting the American Flag and the Dawg Flight Standard. Here is a short story about the Dawg Flight Standard. Bobby Fuerstenau, Dawg Flight, 1967-1969 is quoted; "being the diligent airman that I was, while doing research for an upcoming test, while working a mid, I came across a file cabinet with A, B, C, and D Flight Standards. Thinking it would be a great souvenir, IT decided to go back to the barracks with me. It has been folded in a drawer at

home for the last forty years (except for the 2007 Vegas reunion). Bobby could not be at this reunion, but he shipped the Standard to us so it could be part of the evening's ceremonies. Thanks Bobby! CG. Green then led us in prayer and the banquet meal followed with a huge Italian feast that included the largest, melt in your mouth chicken breasts I have ever seen. I thought, after the meal, I may have to take another nap! The hotel did such a wonderful job with this and all of the arrangements during our stay! They made us organizers look good and we told them so.

The conference room was equipped with a superb sound system and two movie screens with crescent seating at the dining tables to ensure all had an excellent view of the video presentations for the program. During the meal we enjoyed a collage of patriotic videos. We purposely kept the volume low to avoid interrupting the meal conversation but when the clip of the young girl playing Taps on a trumpet played, you could have heard a pin drop. These videos, even though I would like to take credit for being artistic enough to have found them on my own, were copies of e-mails that I had received from you guys between the 2007 and 2009 reunions. I simply dumped them in a "patriotic stuff" file and enlisted Linda to put them together on a Power Point presentation. We were reprimanded however, for showing them during the meal because "It is hard to swallow when there is a big lump in your throat." That just tells us that "love of your country still abounds in the 6918th Family" and why we are so proud to have served with the caliber of people that you are.

The banquet meal was followed by the Memorial Segment. Dave Bethard , my able bodied co-emcee, and I, found that this segment of the program was the toughest to present. We would like for you to think that we made it up, but, like the Dawg Flight Standard, we "respectfully borrowed" it from someone else. Bill Francis, 6918th

Charlie Flighter, 1964 to 1966, developed the Memorial Table. The table was set between the podiums making it highly visible during the entire program. We had five frames with ten to twelve names in each frame. We used similar set-ups in Vegas and St. Louis. With St. Louis being a Squadron Reunion, our list of names on the table numbered substantially more than our Dawg Flight list in Vegas. Bill, thank you for your insight! Here is how it was presented:

“Please stand. Let us take a moment to remember the men who are no longer with us. We’ve set a place at the table for them. The table cloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their intentions to respond to their country’s call to arms. The chair is empty; they are not here. The glass is upside down to remind us that they cannot join in our festivities. A slice of lemon is on the bread plate to remind us of their bitter sweet fate. The black napkin stands for the emptiness that our friends have left in the hearts of their families, their comrades, and in our circles of friendship. And there is salt spilled on the bread plate, symbolic of their family’s tears. Finally, the single red rose and red ribbon is for love. The love of country and countrymen that led these sons, brothers, husbands, fathers, and friends to defend the principles of freedom...some even to the point of paying the ultimate sacrifice.” A touching ceremony! Again, Thanks to Bill Francis!

Next we were honored to have a guest speaker join us, Colonel Patrick Taylor and his lovely wife Christine. Colonel Taylor is the Director, Aeronautical Services, Office of Global Navigation, National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA). He leads aeronautical and geospatial analysts who produce information and services to support the Department of Defense’s worldwide aeronautical mission. He was commissioned from Air Force ROTC in 1987. He is a Command Pilot with over 4,800 flight hours in various aircraft and weapons systems. Colonel Taylor has commanded the 330th Combat Training Squadron, Robins AFB, Georgia., and the 7th Expeditionary Air Command and Control Squadron, Al Udeid, Qatar. He has also served as Deputy Commander, 116th Operations Group. He has three Master of

Science degrees. Colonel Taylor did a fantastic job of sharing his “Intel” military experience with us. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed his talk. He seemed so young to our old group. After his presentation we had a question and answer session in which he gingerly side-stepped the questions to which we did not have “the need to know!” Colonel Pat, thank you so much for being part of our program and thank you for your service to our country.

From there, the program continued with raffle drawings of reunion souvenirs, a two night stay at the hotel, and many other items. Someone even donated a “slot machine pay out ticket” to be given away. It was for ten cents! Thanks, Seed! Next the “Old Business” segment included past reunions. The “New Business” covered future reunions and why we have reunions. The “Monkey Business” was a “roast” of several of the attendees. Then we read notes from members who would have liked to attend but could not, but still had something that they wanted to say to the group. Then the following segment did what this segment always does, “The Closing,” saddens and brings the end to the current reunion. The rest of the night was spent by taking group and individual pictures, handshakes, hugs, promises to “keep in touch” and “good byes for now!”

In other newsletters, I have included a few pictures. We have hundreds of them of the reunion. This time there are no pictures of the reunion for a couple of reasons. The first is; it takes a lot of space in a newsletter and there are many pictures already posted on the two web sites that Pinky does such a good job of maintaining. The second is; Dave Bethard has produced a two disc DVD for the 2007 and the 2009(to be complete soon) reunions. The second disc of each set contains the best of the best pictures and video of each gathering (At least as much as space will allow!). For you “non-computer” guys, for “computer” guys, for “attendees” and for “not able to attend” guys, this many page newsletter can be seen in living color rather than just

reading it.

Not only do they include reunion material, he has professionally produced a whole spectrum of viewing pleasure items that will be of great interest to you if you have the slightest interest in the 6918th or your Japan stay.

Send Pinky (the treasurer) a check for \$24.00 (\$20 for each disc set and \$4 for shipping) and you can watch it instead of read it. Order the 2007 and the 2009 sets together and pay only one shipping charge.

We are currently out of 6918th baseball caps. We can order more if you let us know your color choice. White is also available though not pictured. One size fits all.

We do have 1ea Blue.

Send Pinky a check for \$16 per hat plus \$4 shipping per order.

**We have a few of the 6918th white t-shirts still available. Sizes on hand are
3ea Small 1ea Medium 3ea XLarge**

Send Pinky a check for \$16 per shirt plus \$4 shipping per order.

And we have a few Dawg flight t-shirts if you want. We have an assortment of colors and sizes.

4ea XL 2ea XXL Green

1ea XXXL Black

1ea Small Blue



Send Pinky a check for \$16 per shirt plus \$4 shipping per order.

The profit is not tremendous but it did keep us in the “black” for this reunion. And, expenses go on after the reunions with web site maintenance, newsletter postage, printer ink and more, just to name a few. Help us out if you will!

At this reunion many members made it a point to thank the organizers for “putting it together.” I know I speak for the others when I say the same thing we said before. We appreciate the thanks, but it did not matter what we did, right or wrong, once the 6918th Family began to arrive. The mood evolved, the bond formed and the camaraderie grew because YOU made the commitment to attend. YOU made the reunion what it was. For that, we, the organizers, thank

YOU!

As with any group our size and our age, there are always ongoing health issues that concern us:

On Thanksgiving day we received word that Mark Turner, Able Flight '64-'66, lost his wife, Brenda. Our sympathy goes out to Mark and his daughter Sara.

Those who attended the 2007 Reunion will remember Len and Penny Burger, Bob Burger's brother and sister-in-law. Len and Penny were not 6918th members but accompanied Bob, Dawg Flight '66-'68, to the Vegas gathering. Penny has recently had double by pass and valve replacement surgery. She has Diabetes and requires dialysis and is not doing well.

Terry Herman, Dawg Flight '64-'66, is currently undergoing bone cancer treatment.

Marshall Gregory, Dawg Flight '68-'69, is currently undergoing prostate cancer treatment.

Jim Howard, Dawg Flight '67-'69, is currently undergoing cancer treatment.

Please keep these folks in your thoughts and prayers. Give them an encouraging call or note when you have a chance. And we are sure there are more of you out there, so let us know who and where you are. With our size group, we can send a lot of requests to the Man Above, when we remember you daily.

And now some good news! Since our reunion organizing began in '72, Dave Bethard has made an untiring effort to find Lt. Nancy Ulrich, Dawg Flight Commander of the late '60's and early '70's. As the old country song says "he

had been looking in all the wrong places” and had all but given up on finding her, but then on November 20, Nancy found us on the 6918th public site. There is no doubt that you old new guys remember her and you old old guys who didn’t know her have surely heard of her. As far as we know, Nancy was the only female that ever served inside the compound, and possibly the only female that was ever inside the compound during operations. I asked Nancy if she felt like she was always under a microscope, having heard that she had the prettiest eyes, the cutest face and the most awesome legs? She answered, “I could have been Ugly Betty and it wouldn’t have mattered. I was the first single American girl these guys had seen in a while.” Nancy went to Guam after her Japan tour. In Guam she met her husband to be, Ken. When they received “different parts of the world” assignments, Nancy resigned from the Air Force and traveled the world with Ken, who made the AF a career. Ironically, Frank Shemek(Sheik), Dawg Flight, ’65-’67, and Nancy both served at Hakata(at different times), then were at Izmir at the same time and at Offutt at the same time. Their sons, Dave and Heath, were friends at Offutt. It is remembered that Sheik organized a Boy Scout field trip for the two boys, while at Offutt. Nancy expressed the interest to attend the next reunion, be it a “Big One, or a Mini”. What a small world! What a thrill to have found you again, Nancy! Here lies another reason why we have had and will continue to have reunions.

A few tidbits from the 2009 reunion:

Colonel Taylor, our keynote speaker at the reunion is the son of Shirley and Myron Taylor, a 6918th Charlie Flighter, 1969 to 1972. And, Shirley Taylor’s maiden name is Wineland. After a lengthy discussion at the reunion, Shirley and Bill Wineland, 6918th Dawg Flighter, 1968 to 1970, established that they were distant cousins.

The quote of the reunion: Roger Miller says “In Japan we were young and crazy lads but then we grew up and matured. Forty years later we come to St. Louis and we instantly lose that maturity and revert back to young and crazy.”

At the beginning of the reunion I had a slight touch of the flu or a bad cold. Some of my symptoms were watery eyes and a runny nose. I would like to apologize for possibly spreading it because a couple of times I noticed that some of the other 6918th members were showing the same symptoms. One time in particular was during the patriotic videos during the banquet meal, and the other was Tuesday night and Wednesday morning when good-byes were being exchanged. Strangely, my symptoms lasted for over a week and the other members’ seemed to be only temporary.

So the 2009 Reunion is ready to archive. Seventy four 6918th members attended. One from Tokyo , Japan , one and spouse from central Mexico and one and spouse from St. Peters , Mo. , eleven miles from the reunion site; the rest were from way up north, or way down south, or the east coast, or the west coast or everywhere in between. Some were retired and some were still working. Some wanted to attend but could not because of health reasons. Some wanted to attend but could not because of economic reasons. Some could not attend because of prior commitments and of course some did not attend because they were not interested. All are valid reasons and all are understood. What a slice of society we are! Yes Roger, forty years ago we were young and crazy lads, but there was something about us that was different. I was told that we were selected from the top three percent of the Airmen that were tested in basic training. You can look up Wikipedia and it says “The USAFSS was composed

primarily of airmen culled from the cream of the Air Force's enlisted recruits, the top one-half of one percent. The USAFSS was a secretive and tight knit branch of Air Force cold warriors. Their jobs, which required top secret codeword clearance, were extremely high pressure and were considered essential to U. S. cold war efforts." So we were, and are, different. We were young when we heard our country call. We loved our country then and we love our country now. We served our country well! For that reason, we have reunions and will continue to have them. For that reason, I am honored and proud to have served with you. God bless the 6918th Family, and God bless the U. S. A. !!!!

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Any of you who have something you would like to share with your group, e-mail it to me and it will enter the “newsletter file” to be included in the next edition. Always when I begin a Newsletter, I think I do not have enough content to make it worth while, and always when I finish, I think it is too long. Maybe Linda is right! Maybe I am full of it! With all of the new “news” at the end of this month, this November edition may be distributed in December. So Happy Thanksgiving AND Merry Christmas/Happy Hanukah to all!

Stan