

Guantanamo Bay Association

A 501 (c) (7) Organization

www.gitmobay.org

October 2023

Newsletter time again? It seems like it was just a couple weeks ago since the last issue, but after consulting my notes from my “written memory” aka desk calendar, there is no disputing the fact that indeed July was 3 months ago vs 3 weeks that it felt like. Perhaps if I was more “plant like” I suspect I would surely have noticed the daytime temperatures are now slightly less than that of walking on the surface of the sun – typical Florida summer! Yay - 75 vs 84 at the crack of dawn, why it’s almost time for me to drop a few leaves. Cooler temps are so much nicer however, we must not be fooled, for some of us we still need to remain alert during hurricane season. Idalia was a near miss aka a good reminder or a wakeup call. She forced a mandatory evacuation for some of us islanders. I hunkered at Barbara’s with her and Reilly.

In July my 10-year-old grandson stayed with me while he attended a week-long summer surfing program which was being conducted very close to my home at the beach. Oh, the joy of cooking for 2 again, a real challenge...lots of ketchup saved the day. I couldn’t take the boy home hungry knowing that one day his mother, my daughter, would be the one who mostly likely would be selecting my nursing home. Barbara, Reilly and I managed to find a couple free days for a trip later in the month when we visited the UDT/SEAL museum in Ft Pierce, Fl. This was kind of a bucket list item for me, not sure that the girls (Barbara and Reilly) cared that much about it. August was another very active month mostly with doctor’s appointment etc. but one with a nice surprise. I was selected to take an *Honor Flight* in mid-September. Things really got *busy* in September. The Honor Flight was the 16th but more about that later. The next day (17th) we spent the evening in Lake Mary, Fl in order to catch flight early the next morning from Sanford to Branson, Mo. As a member of another (ship’s) association who decide to hold an off year mini reunion we decided to go. Yes, I served aboard a ship back in the “day” and no it wasn’t the Nina. We spent a week in Branson taking in shows and having a really wonderful time visiting with some old (very old) shipmates. Now I’m back in town and back at the keyboard hoping to bring you something in the way of an interesting newsletter worth the mailing expense. FYI the GBA held a reunion in Branson 2010, maybe we might consider doing another one there at some point. Branson is a great place for family entertainment.

The Honor Flight for those of you who have been on one know what I experienced. What an incredible adventure. For me it was very humbling and at times during the day almost embarrassing with the way everyone treated us. There was an outpouring of thanks and appreciation from every one of us; veterans of Korea and Viet Nam. Admittedly it was certainly a very long day starting at 0200 and ending back at the starting point at 2300. My guardian throughout the day was a former Navy Seal, a Super cool dude, and a mere kid aged 57. The day before we head up to Savannah for the reunion, we are attending an Honor Flight reunion with everyone who participated.

It’s hard to believe that we are only about a week away from this year’s reunion in Savannah, Georgia. Reunion 2023 is shaping up to be one of the best attended events in many years. Presently there are 75 people who plan to attend with a couple of stragglers who hope to make it in time. Because of the unexpected crowd size conditions are going to be a little cramped because our hospitality room has a fire code of 50 however, not to worry there is little doubt that everyone will have a great time and we do what we have to to make it work. I’m taking a guess that one of the reasons for the larger than expected crowd this is there are many who are coming to get their name on the travel roster for the next trip to Gitmo. **Yes, there is trip next year** – see Joe Healey’s article for details.

Shelia and her “minions Pat & Diane” are hard at work making arrangements for next years reunion (2024) in Pensacola Beach, FL. She has already found a GREAT hotel located right on the beach and is in the process of arranging a slate of activities to keep us entertained. Her plan is to have everything in place and to unveil the details at this year’s business meeting. Seeing the Blue Angles practice tops the agenda – GO NAVY.

This being the last issue of the newsletter for 2023 I want to wish everyone safe and happy holidays: Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year’s. Also let’s not forget Veteran Day!!

From the desk of Joe Healey, GBA VP/Travel

Naval Station Guantanamo Bay Cuba 2024 Reunion

Naval Station Guantanamo Bay Cuba leadership has approved a visit to the base. The seven day on-base reunion will take place beginning February 23, 2024 and ending on March 1, 2024. Air transportation will originate at Naval Air Station Jacksonville FL and return to Jacksonville International Airport. We are authorized a total of 40 visitors in our group.

GBA policy dictates that those (GBA members) attending the land-based reunion (Savannah, GA. October 8-13, 2023) be given preference to participate in the GTMO visit. As of this writing, nearly 75 members/guests will be attending the October reunion in Savannah. I will canvas the Savannah attendees to determine interest in reserving a slot to return to GTMO.

After the reunion, at 0001 October 14 2023, I will begin accepting emails from Guantanamo Bay Association members in good standing that desire to visit the base. Those folks will be placed on the list after those that attended the Savannah reunion. GTMOBayAssnVP@gmail.com

Those that desire to be placed on the list must have a U.S. Passport valid through September 1, 2024. I've notified the stateside reunion attendees of this requirement due to the U.S. State Department current backlog of 6-10 weeks for Passport renewals or initial applications. **IF YOU THINK YOU MAY WANT TO GO, ENSURE YOUR PASSPORT IS VALID THROUGH September 1, 2024.** If that is not the case, apply for a passport or renewal immediately. If you don't have a valid passport in hand by the end of December, 2023, I will not process your Base Clearance forms.

Visitors must be mobile, sorry, no walkers or wheelchairs. Canes are allowed; however, you may be required to climb stairs. The GTMO Navy Lodge is **NOT** ADA compliant.

The following costs reflect Fiscal Year 2023 prices, FY 2024 begins on October 1, 2023. Prices may increase as of that date.

Flight, roundtrip NAS JAX- GTMO- JAX International Airport is approximately \$800.

Lodging at the Navy Lodge is quoted as \$85 per night (7 nights). Standard rooms have 2 queen beds, a kitchenette, dining area for 4, clothing storage and a full bath with shower and tub. Washers and dryers are available. The Navy Lodge is 2 stories, no elevator. We have 20 rooms reserved.

Navy Exchange Rental cars are available from \$47 to \$65 a day. NEX rental cars are not generally allowed on the ferry. There are a few designated cars that may use the ferry. We have a block of rental cars reserved.

Dining- 3 meals a day in the galley will cost \$17.10. There is Navy Exchange, MWR (Morale, Welfare and Recreation) dining available. (McDonalds, O'Kelly's Irish Pub, Pizza joint, snack bar, Mexican, health food). Bayview ("O" Club) has dining available featuring a Mongolian BBQ on Thursday nights. In addition, there is Caribbean food on Rasta Hill, and private businesses out of resident's homes provide different types of dining. Private businesses are approved and inspected.

In addition to flight, lodging and rental car costs, visitors will be required to have MEDEVAC insurance. Proof of insurance or participation in the Association's group policy is required. Group cost is prorated by age. For example, as a 72-year-old, my cost for the week was \$103. Cost will be less if you are younger, more if you are older.

Each visitor will be assessed a minimum fee of \$100, paid in advance of the trip, to support a contribution to Non-Federal Entity (Entities) on the base. Although many members were very generous after our February 2023 trip, your duly elected officers agree that an assessment is more equitable than randomly passing the hat.

In an effort to maintain our membership and reduce the number of "one and done" members, each visitor is required to have their Association dues paid through 2025.

I expect to have close to, or over, 40 people on the list when I leave the reunion on October 13, 2023. Past experience shows that there is always attrition for numerous reasons. If you think you want to visit GTMO again, get on the list. We can't be certain that we will be invited back after Captain and Mrs. White transfer. 2024 could be our last trip in the foreseeable future.

Guantanamo Bay Association Facebook page

Established in January of 2023, we have grown to over 735 members. We try to provide current base info, and reflect on the past. Our members have made significant contributions by sharing photos of the 2023 GTMO reunion and all the activities that they participated in. If you haven't already liked/joined our page, stop in and visit. Reminisce about days gone by, or catch up on GTMO 2023. Maybe you have some stories or comments to share. Perhaps you have a question about the base, past or present. With 700+ other Guantanamigos reading your comments, or answering your questions, memories of our time on the base come flooding back. Stop in and visit, there are 3 simple questions to answer to keep out the riff raff. If you don't answer the questions, I'll look at your profile and/or groups that you belong to and admit you.

A few of you old timers may remember October 13, 1775 but for the benefit of the younger generation that is the *birthday* of our beloved US Navy.

Story submitted by Dallas Hudson, former AD2

I was stationed at Gitmo from Aug 1958 till Jan 1960, in VU-10. The Cuban Revolution was going strong during this period. There was no Liberty inside Cuba, I was allowed to go on a launch one Sunday for about 6 hours to Caimanera, across the bay from the Naval Base, this visit was cut short by rebels coming in and shooting up the town!

Two or three of us, can't remember their names, used to rent a small boat from special services at night, and with the aid of an aircraft battery and an Aldis lamp (Morse Lamp), would go "gustering" catching Langosta, which are tropical rock lobsters, as you all know. We would take spear guns, but mostly we would just reach and pull them from under rocks by hand. We all wore leather palmed gloves. At low tide we were usually very successful.

One night, one of the guys dropped his Zippo lighter overboard, even though it was low tide, we were unable to recover the lighter that night. A couple of nights later we went out again at low tide, and low and behold!! In a short while we spotted the lighter, were able to recover it and believe it or not, it lit the first try!! During this time VU-10 presented each member of the command an engraved Zippo lighter, I still have mine!

A Cold Winter Ahead

It's late fall and the Indians on a remote reservation in Oklahoma asked their new chief if the coming winter was going to be cold or mild. Since he was a chief in a modern society, he had never been taught the old secrets. When he looked at the sky, he couldn't tell what the winter was going to be like. Nevertheless, to be on the safe side, he told his tribe that the winter was indeed going to be cold and that the members of the village should collect firewood to be prepared. But, being a practical leader, after several days, he got an idea. He went to the phone booth, called the National Weather Service and asked, 'Is the coming winter going to be cold?' 'It looks like this winter is going to be quite cold,' the meteorologist at the weather service responded. The chief again went back to his people and ordered them to collect every scrap of firewood they could find. Two weeks later, the chief called the National Weather Service again. 'Are you absolutely sure that the winter is going to be very cold?' 'Absolutely,' the man replied. 'It's looking more and more like it is going to be one of the coldest winters we've ever seen.' 'How can you be so sure?' the chief asked.

The weatherman replied, 'The Indians are collecting a **HUGE** load of firewood'

Membership and Communications

New and returning members: July - September 2023

A Kotrola*
R. Haner
S. Wagner
L. Kowalski
G. Hutchinson*
D. Eggars
B. Talbot
D. Seeger*
J. Rich
W. Woods*

D. McCarthy
C. Chapman
D. Newman
W. Vainosky*
J. Wagner*\$
T. Tullis
G. Craige
G. Coupland*
S. Tussey
L. Grable LM

*two + year membership

BOLD = new members

CM = charter member

\$ = donation 😊

Please make sure to take note of the date next to your name on the newsletter address label. The expense of printing and mailing our newsletter continues to increase. We rely on membership dues, please stay current.

If I missed listing your name, please let me know!

Please pray for the family of our recently deceased member: *Oscar Buchanan and Deb Brunson*

A special thanks to the family of Oscar & Eva Buchanan for the wonderful donation to the GBA.

As a tribute to Oscar and Eva the GBA had two "Tribute Tree's" planted in a National Forest in their names.

END OF WATCH - by Billy Abbott, U.S.Navy

When we were young sailors the ringing of
A bell ruled our life. Bells marked the
Hours of a watch. They regulated our day.

Our lives have been like the bells as they
Rang through our early life we heard them
Out we paid little attention. When we were
Young we thought we had so many left. But
As we later learned that our Creator can ring
That last bell at any time.

Many of our departed shipmates never got
To hear the bells signaling the end of the
Morning watch. Gone at an early age some
Died in war and heard taps.
Others made it to noon. Halfway to the end
Of the day.

Those of us left have heard the bells signaling
"Liberty Call." We can retire and enjoy
The rewards of a job well done. Our "Good
Conduct Medal."

But; we will all hear the eight bells that
Signal the end of our watch. If we have

Remembered our friends maybe our friends

Will remember us.

EIGHT BELLS AND ALL IS WELL!
Savannah Facts

As the oldest city in the state of Georgia, Savannah has a long and colorful history chock-full of interesting characters and beautiful locales. From manicured parks and horse-drawn carriages to ornate antebellum architecture, it's no wonder Savannah is one of the most visited cities in the South. So, to help make your upcoming trip to Savannah just that much better, we've compiled a list of the top fun facts about this intriguing city on the river.

Founded in 1733 by General James Edward Oglethorpe, a British philanthropist and Member of Parliament, Savannah was organized into grids and has been dubbed "America's First Planned City." The picture of antebellum hospitality, Savannah is nicknamed the "Hostess City of the South." Over the years, many notable residents have called Savannah home including composer Johnny Mercer, inventor Eli Whitney and Juliette Gordon Low, who founded Girl Scouts of the USA.

Savannah has five sister cities, as designated by Sister Cities International. These include Batumi, Georgia; Patras, Greece; Jinjiang, China; Halle, Germany; and Kaya, Burkina Faso.

Designated by the U.S. government in 1966, the city is one of the largest National Historic Landmark Districts in the country.

Forsyth Park, a large city park that occupies 30 acres in the historic district, is home to the Garden of Fragrance. Originally built in the late 1950s, the garden features fragrant plants and flowers surrounded by wells and an ornamental iron fence.

Founded in 1839, the Georgia Historical Society, located on Whitaker Street, is the oldest continuously operated historical society in the South.

Located in Tricentennial Park, the Georgia State Railroad Museum features historic railcars, guided tours and train rides on either a steam locomotive or diesel locomotive.

Savannah is home to more than 100 distinct neighborhoods in six principal areas of the city including Downtown, Midtown, Southside, Eastside, Westside and West Chatham.

Located in the historic district, the Telfair Museum of Art was the first public art museum in the southern United States. It was founded in 1883 through the bequest of prominent local philanthropist Mary Telfair.

Since the early 1700s, City Market has been the commercial and social center of historic Savannah. Today, the market boasts art galleries, street musicians, a wide array of eateries and coffee shops and dozens of boutiques.

Founded in the late 1970s, Savannah College of Art and Design (better known as SCAD) offers more degree programs and specializations than any other art and design university.

The Mercer-Williams House, the former home of Jim Williams, is the main location of the 1997 film *Midnight in the Garden of Good and*

Evil, which was directed by Clint Eastwood and starred Kevin Spacey and John Cusack.

Savannah's Colonial Park Cemetery, located on Abercorn Street, was opened around the mid-1700s and serves as the final resting place for many of the city's earliest citizens including Confederate soldiers and African-American slaves.

The Pirate's House, a restaurant situated a block from the Savannah River on East Broad Street, first opened all the way back in 1753.

Some of the architecture you'll see in Savannah's Historic District includes Federal, Victorian Regency, Greek and Gothic Revival and Italianate.

Built in 1867 by the Freedmen's Bureau, Beach Institute was established as a school for newly freed slaves. Today, it serves as an African-American Cultural Center featuring artwork and other exhibits.

Savannah is located at the mouth of the Savannah River and remained an important port city for the cotton and lumber industries for many years.

Parts of the 1994 movie *Forrest Gump* were filmed around the city including the famous bench scene where Tom Hanks' character talks about how "life was like a box of chocolates." The Irish were among Savannah's first settlers, which is why the city hosts one of the largest St. Patrick's Day parades in the country.

Several well-known Confederate generals lived in the city before the Civil War began including William Hardee, Francis Bartow and Henry Jackson.

Savannah was home to the sailing competitions during the 1996 Summer Olympics held in Atlanta.

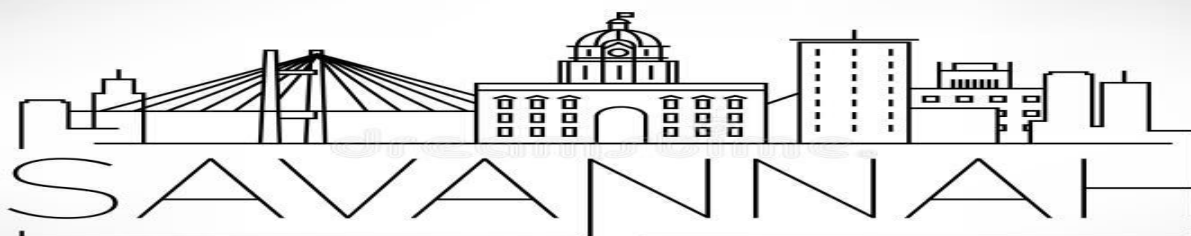
The Flannery O'Connor Childhood Home, located on East Charlton Street, is a museum dedicated to the work and life of the acclaimed novelist who lived in the house from her birth in 1925 until 1938.

Dedicated to the city in December of 1983, the Celtic Cross in Emmet Park is made of Irish limestone from the County of Roscommon in West Ireland.

Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum, founded in 1966 and located within the William Scarbrough

House, features ship models, paintings and maritime antiques from the 18th and 19th centuries.

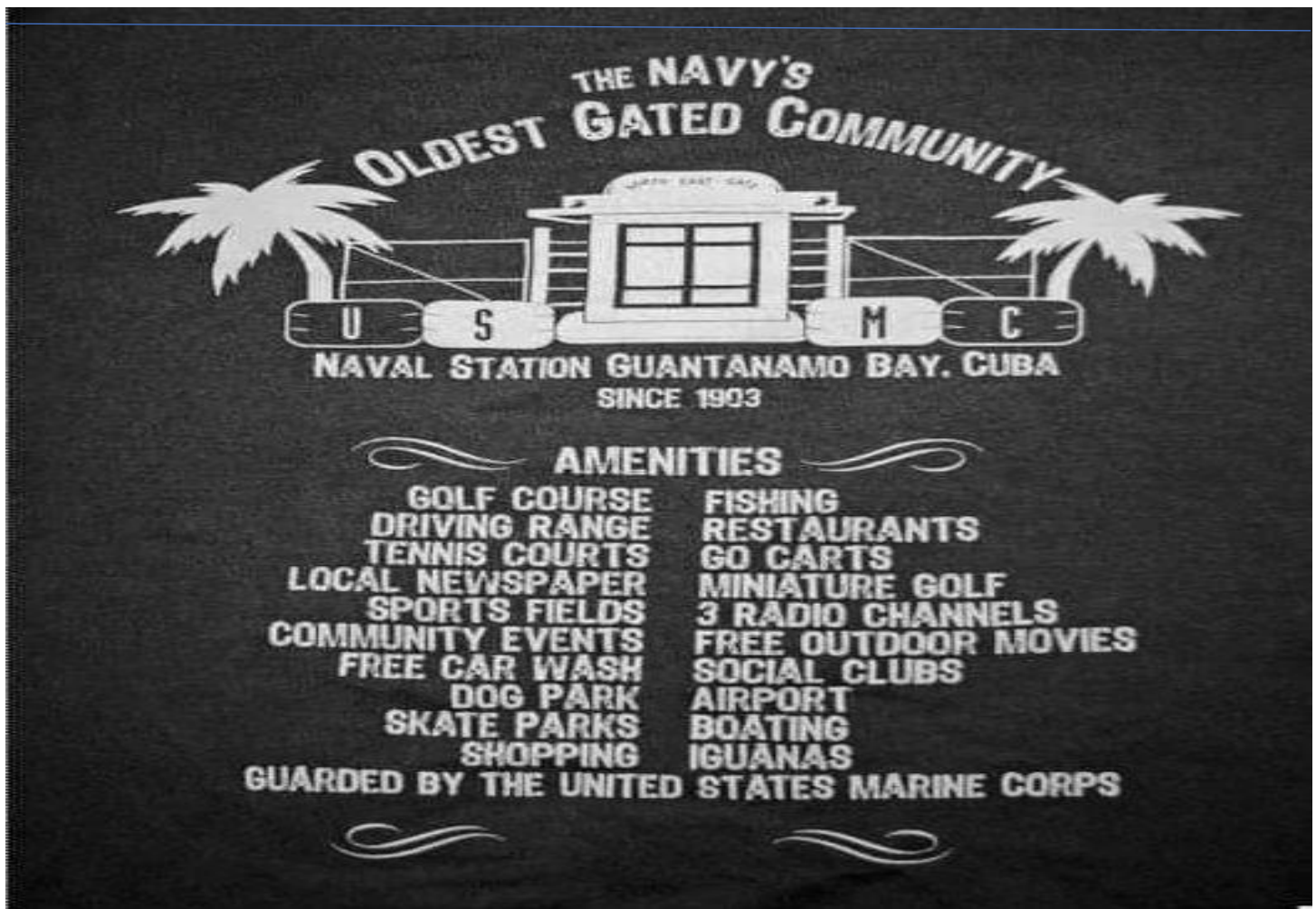
The first and only Prohibition themed museum in the country opened in Savannah in May 2017: the American Prohibition Museum. It's no dry establishment either, with a password you also get access to the speakeasy.



This year's reunion roster

Name Tags	Command	Dates	City	State
Mike Warman	Navsta – EOD	69-72	St Augustine	FL
Barbara Brugger	Guest		Ponte Vedra	FL
Joe Healey	NAS VC 10/AIMD	74-75 81-84	Scranton	PA
Donna Healey	Spouse		Scranton	PA
Diane Delage	Student	65-70	Orange Park	FL
Jim Fitkin	Special Services	67-68	Cedar Falls	IA
Jan Fitkin	Spouse		Cedar Falls	IA
Pat Porter	Navsta Boatshed	61-63	Newburgh	IN
Ronda Hurt	Guest		Evansdale	IN
Gary Hayward	NAS	72-76	Clermont	FL
Terri Hayward	Spouse		Clermont	FL
Jody Brown	Dependent	74-76	Clermont	FL
Raul Brown	Spouse		Clermont	FL
Bill Jones	VU-10	61-63	Pell City	AL
Sandy Jones	Spouse		Pell City	AL
Orlando Angeli	NAS - Air Ops	73-76	Gambrills	MD
Charlotte Angeli	Spouse		Gambrills	MD
Dan Relinski	Dependent	77-78	Chapin	SC
Marti Relinski	Dependent	77-78	Chapin	SC
William Griffiths	Navsta Supply	61-65	Westminster	SC
Bill Gazar	FTG	70-75	Dewey	AZ
Linda Gazar	Spouse		Dewey	AZ
Mary Anne Gardner	Hospital	87-90	Fairfield	PA
Don Kornowski	VU-10	63-64	Jackson	TN
Emery Beard	Navcom Center	70-71	Newburgh	IN
Kay Beard	Spouse		Newburgh	IN
Thomas Keene	USMC	78-81	Vista	CA
Judith Keene	Spouse		Vista	CA
Bill Carter	USMC	63-65	Middleburg	FL
Emily Carter	Spouse		Middleburg	FL
Nancy Gubbiotti	Guest		Prospect	CT
Cathy Somers	Guest		Prospect	CT

Dennis Stoiber	FTG	88-91	Darien	NY
Linda Stoiber	Spouse		Darien	NY
Jon Stark	NAS - Fuel Farm	78-80	Lenoir	NC
Victor Yanosy	NWS Weather	68-69	Monroe	CT
Carol Yanosy	Spouse		Monroe	CT
Elizabeth Reed	Dependent	73-77	South Pittsburg	TN
Sandra Jacobs	Spouse	73-77	Chattanooga	TN
Sharon Bailey	Dependent	73-77	Chattanooga	TN
Jerry Brehm	Seabee	74-77	Cable	OH
Al Kotrola	Hospital	57-59	Thomasville	AL
Joe Kotrola	Guest/son		Mobile	AL
Alan Ball	Dependent	61-63	Tampa	FL
Gary White	FTG & Satcom	70-73 77-81	Elizabethton	TN
Mary Ann Smith	Guest		Elizabethton	TN
Brian Wellbrock	SatComm Det	76-79	Atoka	TN
Dottie Wellbrock	Spouse		Atoka	TN
Jim Doyle	NAS Boat Shed	58-60	Mt Prospect	IL
Ed Astle	NAS Lox Plant	76-79	North Charleston	SC
Carol Astle	Spouse		North Charleston	SC
Liam Astle	Dependent		North Charleston	SC
Diane Rickhoff	Guest		Coons Rapids	MN
Les Lankford	NAS - AE shop	78-79	Georgetown	GA
Dale Lankford	Spouse		Georgetown	GA
John O'Connor	USMC NSGA	73-74	Ocala	FL
Karen O'Connor	Spouse		Ocala	FL
Lou Kowalski	NavSta Weapons	67-68	Newton	NJ
Judy Kowalski	Spouse		Newton	NJ
Ernie Hall	Sea Bee	59-60 62-64	Lexington	SC
David Friedman	Friend		Lexington	SC
Greg Swain	USMC		Springfield	VA
Joan Swain	Spouse		Springfield	VA
Shelia Evans	NavSta PD	88-90	Mansfield	OH
Kim Lee	AAWC/JARCC	82-83	Tarpon Springs	FL
Wayne Vainosky	Dependent	70-72	Orange Park	FL
Bill Gray	NAS VU-10	61-63	Newburgh	IN
Henry Radcliffe	NAS Fuel Farm	75-79	Bloomington	NY
Laurel Radcliffe	Spouse		Bloomington	NY
Michael Weld	NAS Fuel Farm	79 - 81	Des Plaines	IL
Stan Kromfols	CMD Staff	84-89	Valley Springs	CA
JoAnn Kromfols	Spouse		Valley Springs	CA
	Base	54-58		
Lloyd Grable	Management	1970	Sun City	FL
Bedris Gonzalez	Spouse		Sun City	FL
Neal McCoppin	NavSta	85-87	Palm Coast	FL
Nancy McCoppin	Spouse		Palm Coast	FL
Lisa Cilfone	USMC	77-81 85-89	Winter Springs	FL
Patty Curry	Guest		Winter Springs	FL



A story of my past navy aviation days.

.....

By Ross at VU-10 Gitmo Cuba 52-55.

Another Gitmo story about my shipmate buddies from my diary. I didn't have much time for clubs, my past time was flying, playing all type of ball and the navy flew us other places to play. Didn't know too much history of Cuba at the time but yes it was before Castro while I was stationed at Gitmo. I did live in Ciamanera with first wife for almost a year before moving to the base living with friends and Batista was in charge at that time. Anyway, we lived at the foot of the pier where the sailors came a shore and departed from liberty. Now the best part was sitting on the 2nd floor around 10 pm watching a bunch of drunks getting into that boat for the trip back to the base with some falling into the water and had to be pulled out, oh yes you know who you were till the boat was out of site singing. Next morning, I would have to check out their plane because your head had "Caminoch" written all over it and the eyes looked like the red barn train tracks running from the front to the back of the eyeballs, how you guys flew a hop I don't know but I think I took some of their hops on their request only if I wasn't to fly that day. Thanks goodness it wasn't any of you that took the NAS SNJ up late one night drunk and crashed into the bay killing himself, did it on a bet hear tell. Life was good on the rock because watching those guys trying to move the island after a few of that "Hatueys beer" was better than watching the outdoor movie unless Dolly Pardon was showing. But somehow you kept the planes flying so a high 5 for that. My files are full of such letters of Gitmo experiences. What's life if you can't reminisce the good times. This hillbilly said that...Ross

These are Well Stated

BEAUTY PARLOR

A place where women curl up and dye.

CHICKENS

The only animal you eat before they are born and after they are dead.

COMMITTEE

A body that keeps minutes and wastes hours.

DUST

Mud with the juice squeezed out.

EGOTIST

Someone who is usually me-deep in conversation.

HANDKERCHIEF

Cold storage.

INFLATION

Cutting money in half without damaging the paper.

MOSQUITO

An insect that makes you like flies better.

RAISIN

A grape with a sunburn.

SECRET

A story you tell to one person at a time.

SKELETON

A bunch of bones with the person scraped off.

TOOTHACHE

A pain that drives you to extraction.

TOMORROW

One of the greatest labor-saving devices of today.

YAWN

An honest opinion openly expressed.

WRINKLES

Something other people have ... similar to my character lines.

OLD

I very quietly confided to my friend that I was having an affair.

She turned to me and asked, "Are you having it catered?"

... and that, my friend, is the definition of 'OLD'!