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FLAMIN' CAIMAN TALES

MAY 2015

COMMANDER'S SCUTTLEBUTT

Greetings to all. It is May and Doug Smith and Bob Dengel will be heading to Tucson, Arizona to set up our 7th reunion. They will make sure the reunion is set up so the weather is compatible for all attendees. I recently attended a "Dog and Pony" show put on by a Veteran Service Officer from a County here in Northern California. The Veterans Service Offices can provide a veteran his earned entitlement rights to federal and state governments as well as services for their families. The following are a few areas they can assist the veteran with: disability compensation; disability pension; house bound benefits; death pension for surviving spouse and children; burial benefits; CHAMPVA – TRICARE & VA Health Care. Your local county recorder's office will record your DD214, and provide certified copies all for free. Take advantage of this vital service. Make an appointment soon to see your VA Service Officer or his representatives. You can find out a load of information from these folks. It will clarify many questions you may have about VA Health Care and VA Services. See you next year in Tucson – GOD WILLING!!!!!!!

John "Yeo" Fagereng, Commander

FLEET RESERVE ASSN DIRECTORY

The Fleet Reserve Assn (FRA) is publishing a directory of members. I ordered one hoping to find some more of our missing shipmates. It is scheduled for delivery in October 2015. I am still trying to shrink our lost shipmate list. I am not sure of the information that will be listed in the directory, but it should give us an area to look for our un-located shipmates. I will try to remember to bring it to our next reunion so anyone can use it to locate a friend or shipmate.

VA EXPANDS CHOICE PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it will change the geographic calculation used to determine the distance between a veteran's home and the nearest VA medical facility for purposes of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act (VACAA), which took effect on November 5, 2014. The VA will make a regulatory change from straight line distance to driving distance to help ensure veterans have more access to care.

VACAA was signed into law by the president last year. The new law provides a \$10 billion fund to pay for non-VA care for veterans who live 40 or more miles from a VA facility or have been experiencing wait times for care of more than 30 days. VA mailed "Choice Cards" to veterans who were enrolled in VA health care as of August 1, 2014, and to recently-discharged combat veterans who enroll within the five-year window of eligibility.

VA ELIMINATES NET WORTH AS VETERAN HEALTH CARE ELIGIBILITY FACTOR

The Department of Veterans Affairs is updating the way it determines eligibility for VA health care. This is a change that will result in more Veterans having access to the health care benefits they've earned and deserve. Effective 2015, VA eliminated the use of net worth as a determining factor for both health care programs and co-payment responsibilities. This change makes VA health care benefits more accessible to lower-income Veterans and brings VA policies in line with Secretary Bob McDonald's MyVA initiative which reorients VA around Veterans' needs.

"Everything that we do and every decision we make has to be focused on the Veterans we serve," said Secretary Bob McDonald. "We are working every day to earn their trust. Changing the way we determine eligibility to make the process easier for Veterans is part of our promise to our Veterans."

Instead of combining the sum of Veterans' income with their assets to determine eligibility for medical care and co-payment obligations, VA will now only consider a Veteran's gross household income and deductible expenses from the previous year. Elimination of the consideration of net worth for VA health care enrollment means that certain lower-income, non-service-connected Veterans will have less out-of-pocket costs. Over a 5-year period, it is estimated that 190,000 Veterans will become eligible for reduced costs of their health care services.

In March 2014, VA eliminated the annual requirement for updated financial information. VA now uses information from the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration to automatically match individual Veterans' income information which reduces the burden on Veterans to keep their healthcare eligibility up to date. That change better aligned VA's health care financial assessment program with other federal health care organizations.

Veterans may submit updated income information at www.1010ez.med.va.gov/, or by visiting their nearby VA health care facility. For more information, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits or call VA toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

REUNION DATES

We had shipmates suggest we move the reunion into April as Tucson starts to warm up in May. After experiencing Tucson in May and checking the average temperatures, Dings and I agree. So for all of us that are not used to Arizona heat, the reunion is now April 18 – 21, 2016. Break out the crayons and circle that date on all your calendars. We expect all our shipmates to be there. Remember, if you don't attend, we will talk about you and you will not be there to correct the stories. There is only one way to correct that problem.

REUNION LOCATION

Dings and I, and of course with our adult supervisors, went to Tucson and decided on the Radisson Hotel for our reunion. The hotel is in the business area of Tucson so we are close to restaurants and shopping areas. Each room is a mini-suite with a living room and a separate bedroom with a king size Sleep Number bed. Also all rooms have a refrigerator, microwave, safe and two flat screen TVs. The ladies will like the heads as each has a dressing room, two sinks, a separate tub and a shower. The rooms have a balcony on the outside and the doors open into the interior courtyard. The hotel is blocking some room around the hospitality room for CAIMAN. We don't want anyone to have to walk a long distance for a beer. Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the hotel. We got all of that for \$90.52 total (taxes and fees included) a night and this includes a buffet breakfast every morning. The rate is good for three days before and after the reunion. Pets are welcome with a \$75.00 fee. The hotel has a restaurant and a bar. G. T. Shafer highly recommends the bar. Reservations can be made by calling 520-721-7100. Don't forget to tell the operator you are attending the USS CAIMAN reunion or you will pay full price.

HOSPITALITY ROOM

The hospitality room is on the ground floor and has a terrace so we can enjoy the outdoors or indoors. It is close to the pool, spa, and exercise room. This will interest all as we attempt to work off all the free beer. Since a breakfast is included, we will not have sticky buns in the hospitality room this time but we will have Seattle's Best coffee. As always free beer, soft drinks, and water will be available. Monday, the hotel is giving us a welcome reception that will include margaritas, lemonade, chips and salsa. The Tucson Tourist Office will have pamphlets and maps showing the many attractions in the area. There is plenty to do and see in Tucson. People that don't live in Arizona will enjoy the landscape. It is definitely different than the Pacific Northwest where I reside.

TOUR

Dings and I picked a very unique place to visit this time. It is called Old Tucson. This is an area where more than 300 movies and TV shows have been filmed. Many buildings have been restored from the early days of the Tucson area. The movie sets are re-creations of early times. There are re-enactments of gun fights, saloon shows, and many displays and presentations from the movies and TV shows that have used Old Tucson. We will have a guided tour, then free time to roam on our own. We will then have a buffet lunch with a presentation on the history of Old Tucson. We will have charter buses to get us there and back to the hotel.

PARKING

There are very large parking areas on three sides of the hotel. The parking areas are large enough to allow us to park EMPTY RV's. Remember, the hotel is in business to rent rooms so no living in the RVs in the parking lot. Later I will print information on RV parks in the area and close to the hotel. We don't want any of the RVers to get lost to or from the hotel

HOTEL SHUTTLE

The hotel provides a free shuttle to and from any place within three miles of the hotel. This is great for dinner or tourist activities. The shuttle to and from the airport is \$15.00 for one person and gets cheaper for each rider with more people. Cabs are \$45.00 to or from the airport.

GOLF COURSES

There are several golf courses in Tucson. There is one next door to the hotel and they will give us a discount because we are such nice guys. The final decision will be made later.

ELECTIONS

The coming reunion will be that time again. Commander and secretary/treasurer positions will be voted on in April. Good or bad news, Yeo and I are running again. If you desire to run for one of these positions, contact me.

ETERNAL PATROL

As happens we don't get the information on a shipmates receiving eternal patrol orders until several months later. I attempt to keep the information updated. The best news is this would not be included in our newsletter

Brown, Charles E. CSC(SS) (55/56) 13 May 2014
Bowlin, Robert C. QM1(SS)DV (57/62) 19 October 2014
Trace, George H. YN1(SS) (51/52) 20 December 2014
Smith, Robert P. CS2(SS) (54/56) 26 December 2014
Tillson, John G. CAPT (60/62) 27 December 2014
Hedrick, Harry YNC(SS) (47/47) 26 January 2015
Mashburn, Charles A. LT (53/54) 14 April 2015
Sailors, rest your oars.

SAILING LIST

Here are our latest stats. I am still looking for shipmates. It is becoming very difficult to locate our remaining shipmates. Many have received eternal patrol orders.

Sailing List:	1288
Expected at the next reunion:	508
Eternal Patrol:	780
Lost List:	143

