

Wayback Whidbey Reunion 2019

The VP-1 POPS reunion ran from October 10 through 13, 2019 at NAS Whidbey Island, WA. It was very successful with 64 members and family attending plus 13 non-POPS VP-1 alumni. In addition, the VP-1 command and squadron partnered with us for a wonderful reunion. The reunion time and place was fortuitous. As VP-1 POPS we pioneered the Orion. The current squadron is pioneering the Poseidon.

We began planning for this reunion after the 2015 Ohio reunion. Using my NAS Whidbey Island experience over the years, I decided to contract with Kathy Carsten and the CPO Club for the barbecue and banquet meal events. Then I contracted with Candlewood Suites Hotel, Oak Harbor. However, I soon realized that without meeting rooms, that was not the best facility. After more research, I found Best Western Plus, Oak Harbor had convention facilities, free breakfast, and was willing to give us rooms at \$25 cheaper per day. I couldn't pass it up and cancelled the first hotel contract. In order to schedule meeting rooms, I had to change the reunion dates from October 3-6 to 10-13. The meeting rooms were not available on the original dates.

In the spring, I contacted the squadron again. The CO, XO and department heads were back east in transition school. I was put in contact with the CMC and made arrangements to meet him at the hanger. Melanie and I travelled to Whidbey. We went to the hotel, CPO club, Rocky Point Lodge and MWR on base. At each location, we met with the principals making arrangements for the reunion and paying for the Rocky Point Lodge. Then we met with Ben Faulise the VP-1 CMC. We had a good talk going over events, schedule, and expectations. Melanie and I had a chance to go to Deception Pass State Park, hiking a little and taking pictures. We also visited Ft. Casey and the Admiralty Head Lighthouse (all places our members could visit during free time).

Hotel contract information: We stayed at the Best Western Plus, Oak Harbor. At first I held a block of 30 rooms which was increased to 40 rooms as more interest developed. Full Breakfast was included with each room. A King bedroom was \$94 and double Queen bedroom was \$104 before tax. The block of rooms was held until 10 days prior to the reunion. We had a Ready Room for four days at \$181.25 per day. The Breakfast Business Meeting Room was \$350.00. We could cancel any of the contracts 72 hours prior to the reunion, without charge.

Meal events contract information: I contracted with the CPO club for the two meal events (noon barbecue at Rocky Point Lodge and the Banquet at the CPO club). The noon barbecue was scheduled for Friday, October 10. I went to MWR and rented the Rocky Point Lodge for the day for \$150. It turned out to be good that the rental was for the entire day. The squadron brief and hanger events were going to be at 2:00 pm. However, two weeks before the reunion, their schedule changed and it ended up running from 9:30 am to about 2 pm. They also wanted to do a Burger Burn. I was able to then move the time of our barbecue to a 6:00 pm **Sunset Dinner** and of course had to change the menu so we didn't have burgers again for dinner. We had Chicken & Brats with three salads. 88 attended at \$12.30 per person. I invited nine enlisted from VP-1 to attend and paid for their meal. The CPO club was very accommodating to the time and menu change. The weather cooperated and the sunset at Rocky Point was gorgeous. All members spontaneously began folding tables and chairs and put them away along with cleaning and tidying the venue. That was a pleasure to see.

The Saturday, October 11 Banquet at the CPO club was outstanding. They had ten menu choices for our buffet. Fenina Fink, Melanie and I chose the Wine Country menu. 79 attended at \$31.80 per person (including 18% gratuity). The Salmon, Pork Loin and Sliced Top Round were wonderful. The facility was beautiful, overlooking Ault Field. We arrived at 6:00 pm having time to talk with our comrades at the bar and at the tables. We had dinner and then I introduced our featured speaker, CO VP-1, CDR Mike "Bull" Trumbull. I asked the CO and his wife, Theresa, to come to the podium. She was surprised to be called up, but soon found out that I had a plaque to present to them. The

plaque was a beautiful combination of wood work and quilting uniquely created by our artisans, Fred and Fenina Fink.

The Friday squadron events were great fun. The day began with a 9:30 am meeting at the base theater. They gave us a briefing on the capabilities and mission of their last deployment in the P-3 and the capabilities of the P-8. The squadron CO asked for one officer and one enlisted to be prepared to speak to the squadron personnel about a day in the life back 50 years ago when we were in VP-1. Mike Taylor and I gave our thoughts. Later, we helped present awards to sailors and then helped meritoriously promote other sailors. After the ceremony, we all walked across the street to the flight line and hanger events. We had a P-3C and P-8 tour. The squadron also had a Burger Burn for us. They barbecued hamburgers and hotdogs with salad and drinks. In order to pass through the gate to the flight line, we all had to be on a security list. I compiled a security list for our POPS people in about a month for 70 members attending. Collecting the info went a little easier than I thought it would, but I had to wait till the last minute for a few.

We had our Business Meeting Saturday morning, October 12, 2019. Many members brought breakfast into the meeting. After President, Paul Lusk, called the meeting to order and Chaplain, Carson Hunt, gave a blessing, the name of each deceased member was ceremoniously read along with the toll of a bell. Next, there was a motion to amend the bylaws allowing any VP-1 veteran to have membership in VP-1 POPS. This idea came about due to concern over our aging membership and the interest from non POPS people wanting to join us for our reunion. There was much discussion pro and con. After everyone had a say, the motion was defeated. It was voted unanimously to keep the membership requirements as they are. [On a side note we will continue to encourage non POPS people to join our reunions as guests, but that does not include membership.]

Next came the discussion of our next reunion, 2021. Mike Taylor volunteered to host it in Nashville TN. It was decided that the event would be around the beginning of October. [NOTE: Later, it was suggested that the reunion be held around the end of August. The reason for this change is that VP-1 would like to send a P-8 to the reunion. Since they deploy in late September, Mike Taylor will make every effort to make the change of date. Call for election of officers came next. The following were elected:

President	Michael Costello
Vice-President	Eddie Dayrit
Secretary	Ken Sherman
Treasurer	Reisse Perin
Chaplain	Carson Hunt

Final Schedule:

<u>Thursday</u> October 10, 2019	1500 Check-in the Hotel Lobby.
<u>Friday</u> October 11, 2019	0930 VP-1 Briefing and Quarters followed by P-8 tour and Burgers. 1800 Sunset Dinner at Rocky Point Lodge.
<u>Saturday</u> October 12, 2019	0900 Breakfast Business Meeting at the hotel. 1800 Banquet at the CPO Club.
<u>Sunday</u> October 13, 2019	1100 Hotel check-out.

Having non POPS people join our reunion was a good decision. They were helpful, engaging and appreciative. We had two meal venues that could accommodate many more than our members, so having additional guests was not a logistical concern. My concern was for the Hotel accommodations. I wasn't sure if we would have enough rooms in our block for POPS members. Therefore, I left non POPS hotel accommodations to themselves. That worked well.

With all of the successes and problems, overall, we had a great reunion. It was wonderful being back at Whidbey (for many of us, after such a long time). The aircraft tours were interesting and seeing the sights around the island were the same yet different. But, of course, the very best thing of every

reunion is the people. Getting to reconnect with old friends and getting to make new ones is enriching. Wasn't it wonderful meeting squadron personnel and non POPS people? I look forward to seeing them at our next reunion.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary E Spees

G. E. Spees



Ready Room



Presenting Awards to Squadron personnel



Briefing at the Base Theater



CO VP-1 (left); Gary talks about our flag



Shipmates by P-3C



Squadron Burger Burn



Gary & Melanie Spees, CO & his wife at Sunset Dinner



Business Meeting



Banquet at CPO club



CO & wife receive plaque