

# U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ATLANTA CHAPTER NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2009



**LUNCHEON VENUE – SHERATON SUITES – FEBRUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>**

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## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

We had a great luncheon meeting in January. The speaker was our own Clint Johnson '60. Those of you who didn't attend, you missed a great talk. Clint had been featured on the History Channel's Dogfight series. I had seen the show, but hearing it from Clint was even better than watching the program. You can read a summary of the story further down in this newsletter.

Those in attendance were: Donald Thompson '59, Bill Holmes '64, Tony Womble '63, Paul Borer '70, Steve Frederick '72, Ed Hux '61, Stew Caldwell '65, Tom Galloway '71, Charles Hurd '04, Jerry Mackey '54 with his beautiful bride Connie, Johns Jaudon '55, Pete Knoetgen '77, Paul Hurst '62 with his lovely bride Nancy, Bill Rentz '55, Jon Barton '66, Lee Whitfield '71, Jim Hatch '47 and Mario Maddux '85. SOPA was Jim Hatch '47 and the winner of Plebe for a day was Charles Hurd '04.

We will have the Dark Ages Party this year on March 28<sup>th</sup>. The speaker will be Col Art Athens, who is the Director of the Academy's Vice Admiral James B. Stockdale Center for Ethical Leadership. I hope that we will get a large turnout for this event. You must be a member of the Atlanta Alumni Assn to get an invite to this event.

The membership letter for 2009 will be out very soon. Those of you who took advantage of our December registration will be considered members for 2009. Also, last year we established a lifetime membership category for our Atlanta area alumni. For anyone who is a member of the class of 1948 or earlier, you are considered a lifetime member and will not be charged dues.

Beat Army,  
Mitch Rowland '71

## Clint Johnson '60 Speaks at January Luncheon

The following is a summary of Clint's presentation at the January Chapter Luncheon:

Frustration and fatigue were starting to simultaneously set in on me on 20 June 1965. It was supposed to be a stand-down day, but by noon we were suiting up for an emergency RESCAP. An Air Force photo-recon pilot had been shot down very deep into the northwest corner of North Vietnam.

We manned up three times before we launched. By now we were fast becoming the leaders in the squadron sweat stain contest. The sweat stain contest was unique to Skyraider squadrons. The winner was the pilot who could merge the salty white left and right armpit stains in the center of his flight suit first. This contest was made possible by the USS MIDWAY (CVA-41) laundry and morale officer who would accept only one flight suit per week per pilot from us. At any rate we were hot, sweaty and beginning to worry that this man up was going to mean no dinner. This time, however, we started, were told that we were a go mission and began our taxi forward to the catapults. It was almost 1800. The cat shot killed my radio. I was able to get the number two radio working, but continued to fiddle with number one so that I could act as relay. I got it working and checked in on tactical frequency as we went feet dry. Then it failed again. Feet dry at 12,000 feet heading northwest we were passing north of Thanh Hoa. LCDR Ed Greathouse was in the lead. On his port wing was LTJG Jim LYNNE. I was on his starboard wing with Charlie Hartmann on my starboard. We all had the standard RESCAP load: two 150 gallon drop-tanks on the stub racks, four LAU-3 pods with 19 2.75 inch rockets apiece and 800 rounds of 20mm for the four wing cannons. We were flying steadily toward the downed pilot. Suddenly Ed Greathouse rolled inverted into a near vertical dive with Jim Lynne following. I rolled and followed him down. I was concerned that I had not heard anything and that we were only 70 miles inland, at least 80 miles from our RESCAP point. A quick radio check confirmed that my radio was dead. We had been jumped by two Mig-17's. Our only hope

was to get down low and try to out turn the MiGs. Ed was doing just that. Our split-S got us some speed and reversed our course toward the ship. I figured that any time my nose was pointed at the ground my ordnance should be armed. I armed the guns and set up the rockets. About that time I saw a large unguided rocket go past downward. My first inclination was that it was a SAM, but SAMs generally go up. This was confirmed when a silver MiG-17 with red marking on wings and tail streaked by Charlie and me heading for Ed. Tracers from behind and a jet intake growing larger in my mirror were a signal to start pulling and turning. As I put g's on the Skyraider I could see the two distinct sizes of tracers falling away (The MiG-17 had two 23mm and one 37mm cannon in the nose.) He stayed with us throughout the turn firing all the way. Fortunately, he was unable to stay inside our turn and overshot. He climbed to a perch position and stayed there.

Our turning had separated us from Ed and Jim. Now that we were no longer under attack my main concern was to rejoin the flight. As we had been flying at treetop level in and out of small valleys, we had to fly around a small hill to get to them. Coming around the hill we saw Ed Greathouse and Jim LYNNE low with the MiG lined up behind them. I fired a short burst and missed, but got his attention. He turned hard into us to make a head-on pass. Charlie and I fired simultaneously as he passed so close that Charlie thought that I had hit his vertical stabilizer with the tip of my tail hook and Charlie flew through his wake. Both of us fired all four guns. I could see pieces falling off the Mig. After he passed us he rolled inverted and hit a small hill. We briefly considered trying to cut off the other MiG, but were dissuaded by the voice of Ed Greathouse asking what we thought we were doing staying in the area when STRAUSS was reporting numerous bogeys inbound to our position. We took the hint and headed out low level to the Tonkin Gulf where we rejoined with our flight leader.

After debriefs all around, the politics started. Charlie and I were informed that we would get no recognition or awards for our MiG kill. SECNAV had been aboard three days earlier when VF-21 F-4 pilots had bagged the first kills of the war. Their awards were being held until SECNAV could get to Washington, announce it to the

President and present it to Congress with the plea for more funds for F-4 Phantoms to fight the air war.

Obviously, the success of primitive Skyraiders would undermine his plans. Unfortunately, someone had included our kill in the daily action report to MACV where it was read by COMSEVENFLT DET "C" who thought that it would be an excellent opportunity for Navy public relations. Indirectly Ngyuen Cao Ky, the new Premier of South Vietnam, and a Skyraider pilot, heard of it and recognized Ed Greathouse's name as one of the Skyraider instructors from the RAG. He then demanded our appearance for Vietnamese awards.

The next day we flew to Saigon for the Five O'clock Follies and were instant celebrities, since the news media did not yet know about the F-4 kills. They assumed that we were the first which made an even better story. We stayed at the Majestic Hotel in Saigon where we thoroughly enjoyed the lack of water hours and the availability of our favorite beverages. The next day we were guests of Premier Ky at the palace where we were awarded Air Gallantry Medals and honorary commissions in the South Vietnamese Air Force.

Upon arrival back at MIDWAY we were surprised to learn that there had been a change of heart and we would to be recognized at the same ceremony as the F-4 pilots. Since they had already been recommended for Silver Stars, Charlie and I got the same while Ed and Jim got Distinguished Flying Crosses.

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What a great story. Many thanks to Clint for sharing it with us.

### **Social Calendar:**

**Saturday, 28 March 2009-TBA**  
Dark Ages Party

For more information on any of our events, visit our web site [USNAAAA.com](http://USNAAAA.com).

### **Luncheon Details**

The luncheons are held at the Sheraton Suites Galleria Hotel Atlanta, 2844 Cobb Parkway – this is just across Cobb Parkway from the Cobb Galleria Convention Center near the intersection of Cobb Parkway (Hwy 41) and I-285.

### **Luncheon Calendar**

**Friday, 20 February 2009 – 1130**  
Monthly Luncheon – Sheraton

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**U.S. NAVAL ACADEMY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
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**Address Correction Requested**