



"THE FLEET'S FINEST"



NEWSLETTER #21

APRIL-MAY 2006

ALOHA! The Patrol Squadron ONE (VP-1) P-3 Orion Pioneers (POPS) is a group of Navy veterans, and their Families, who served in VP-1 during & immediately after its transition from the SP-2H Neptune to the P-3B Orion between the years 1969 to 1974.

**Current Officers:**

**President** Louis Tafoya, 6411 Avalon Road NW, Albuquerque, NM 87105 (505) 836-3189 ljtafoya@msn.com  
**Vice President** Robert Giddings, 1453 Emerald Court, Oak Harbor, WA 98277 (360) 279-2228 oceanfather@comcast.net  
**Secretary** Kenneth (KB) Sherman, 89 Adams Road, North Grafton, MA 01536 (508) 839-5277 asa66@charter.net  
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**Internet Information Coordinator/Webmaster** Kenneth (KB) Sherman, 89 Adams Road, North Grafton, MA 01536 (508) 839-5277 asa66@charter.net  
**2007 Branson Reunion Chair & Helpers** Bill Johnson, Lou Tafoya, Rich Haglund  
(Bill Johnson, 2637 Capstone Drive, Montgomery, AL 36106 (334) 272-9009 billpatty@charter.net)

**HOW TO JOIN**

To join VP-1 POPS, complete the attached Membership Information Form and send it to our Secretary, KB Sherman. You may elect to send your Dues Payment check with the form, or send it directly to our Treasurer, Richard Haglund; if you send the check to Richard, ensure that you include a memo stating that the membership form was sent to our Secretary. Upon your joining, you will be sent a copy of the master roster of all your squadron mates from the 1969 – 1974 era that have been located. This roster also includes the names of squadron mates known to have passed away. On the active mailing list you will be sent future newsletters and any other pertinent information concerning the group. Current membership dues are \$15.00 for a two year cycle. Biennial VP-1 POPS dues are normally assessed in January of each even numbered year.

If you have not yet renewed your membership, please send the Dues Payments to our the Treasurer, Richard Haglund, for the 2006 – 2007 biennium. For all (new/old members), please send the Member Information Form to our Secretary, KB Sherman.

**HOW TO RENEW**

As 2006 looms large in the rear view mirror, your VP-1 POPS Board is actively preparing and planning for 2006-07. Much thought, energy and effort is being exerted to provide yet another two years of eventful reporting, organizing and securing a great Branson reunion.

As we march into the next biennium, it is time to remind you that this is the part of the cycle where dues come up, and from that financial infusion we keep the operation moving forward. The cost has remained fixed at \$15 for two years; a relative bargain considering that the same \$15 will buy you only 5 gallons of gas at the pump! Please make checks payable to VP-1 POPS and mail them to me at the above address.

If you have any changes to your snail, or e-mail address since the 2004-05 biennium or wish us to use a different snail, or email address, please complete the attached form and follow the procedures above.

I NEED YOUR INPUT FOR OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER. SEND IT TO ABOVE ADDRESS, SNAIL MAIL OR E-MAIL.  
THANKS. LOUIE

**Note: This form may be reproduced and send to legible buddy's you know!** (REV. DEC 2005)

## VP-1 P-3 ORION PIONEERS

### MEMBER INFORMATION FORM

Please send the information requested below to VP-1 POPs for administrative records. If you do not want your address information to appear on the master roster please so state and it won't be published. Ditto for phone numbers and e-mail addresses – if you don't want them listed please so state. Send the completed form via snail-mail to **VP-1 POPs, c/o Ken Sherman, 89 Adams Rd., North Grafton, MA 01536-2101**. Or, send the information via e-mail, responding by item number, to **ASA66@CHARTER.NET**.

1. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
(first) (middle initial) (last)
2. MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
(street or po box) (city / town) (state) (ZIP)
3. RESIDENCE: \_\_\_\_\_  
(street ) (city / town) (state) (ZIP)
4. SPOUSE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
(first) (middle initial) (last)
5. TELEPHONE: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_
6. E-MAIL ADDRESS(ES): \_\_\_\_\_
7. WEB PAGE URL: \_\_\_\_\_
8. BIRTHDATE: \_\_\_\_\_ 9. RANK OR RATE IN VP-1: \_\_\_\_\_ 10. DATES SERVED IN VP-1: \_\_\_\_\_
11. SIGNIFICANT BILLETS/ASSIGNMENTS IN VP-1: \_\_\_\_\_
12. FLIGHT CREW(S) SERVED IN: \_\_\_\_\_ 13. NICKNAME(S) KNOWN BY IN VP-1: \_\_\_\_\_
14. IF RETIRED MILITARY, DATE RETIRED: \_\_\_\_\_ 15. RETIRED RANK OR RATE: \_\_\_\_\_
16. CURRENT OCCUPATION / EMPLOYER: \_\_\_\_\_
17. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN & WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING SINCE YOU LEFT VP-1?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE USE THE REVERSE SIDE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, REMARKS, COMMENTS, OR QUESTIONS

DON'T FORGET TO SEND US A RECENT PHOTO

**Note: This form may be reproduced and send to eligible buddy's you know!**

Tentative Details For Branson Reunion  
(Note: The following was received from Bill Johnson)

I've been doing some preliminary work on the 2007 reunion. I have been in contact with the Branson Tourism Center which does reunion planning. They are putting together a proposal for me. Tentative dates, which can easily be changed this far in advance, are check-in/registration Monday Sept 17 for four nights and check-out/depart Friday Sept 21. The Tourism Center suggested that we avoid the weekends and the crowds; however, with school started I wouldn't think that the crowds would be a problem. I used an attendance figure of 100 as a ballpark guess. It takes a minimum of 20 to get group rates for the shows which shouldn't be a problem.

Here's a web site that I have been using: <http://www.bransontourismcenter.com>

You can also get all the shows at this site and Branson has lots of them.

A rough schedule would be:

Day 1 registration and a happy hour type reception.

Day 2 the Dixie Stampede show which includes dinner. Other shows are available during the day.

Day 3 Lunch and show on the Branson Belle Showboat which cruises the huge lake there. An evening show like Andy Williams or Shoji Tabuchi for those wanting more entertainment. Both of these shows are very good.

Day 4 business meeting, election of officers and next reunion site selection during the day then a farewell banquet Sat evening.

Day 5 check-out.

In our Newsletter later on perhaps we could list some possible reunion sites to be voted on and seek volunteers to host the next reunion. That method might give a better representation of sites and possible hosts and some lead time for the members to be considering where we meet next. I felt that it came off OK at our Maine meeting but the Pacific Northwest wasn't represented and thus had no input.

I have some information on how to fly in there; Springfield/Branson airport in Springfield, Mo is the closest airport.

I'll let you know more when I get the proposal.

Best regards,  
Bill

## Department of Veterans Affairs

### Disability Pension Benefits -- What Is VA Disability Pension?

If you are a veteran, go here: [www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Milsvdc/Docs/Pensoneg.doc](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Milsvdc/Docs/Pensoneg.doc)

Disability Pension is a benefit paid to **wartime veterans** with limited income who are no longer able to work. *(Sic) In so far as it can be ascertained, **service in a War Zone is not required, just service during wartime!** Louis Tafoya*

**You may be eligible if:** you were discharged from service under other than dishonorable conditions, AND you served 90 days or more of active duty with at least 1 day during a period of war time. However, 38 CFR 3.12a requires that anyone who enlists after 9/7/80 generally has to serve at least 24 months or the full period for which a person was called or ordered to active duty in order to receive any benefits based on that period of service. With the advent of the Gulf War on 8/2/90 (and still not ended by Congress to this day), veterans can now serve after 9/7/80 during a period of war time. When they do, they generally now must serve 24 months to be eligible for pension or any other benefit. But note the exclusions in 38 CFR 3.12(d), AND you are permanently and totally disabled, or are age 65 or older, AND your countable family income is below a yearly limit set by law.

### Family Income Limits (effective December 1, 2005)

If you are a Veteran. Your yearly income must be less than...

Veteran with no dependents \$10,579

Veteran with a spouse or a child \$13,855

(Veterans with additional children: add \$1,806 to the limit for each child)

Housebound veteran with no dependents \$12,929

Housebound veteran with one dependent \$16,205

Veteran who needs aid and attendance and has no dependents \$17,651

Veteran who needs aid and attendance and has one dependent \$20,924

Note: Some income is not counted toward the yearly limit (for example, welfare benefits, some wages earned by dependent children, and Supplemental Security Income)

**How Much Does VA Pay?** VA pays you the difference between your countable family income and the yearly income limit which describes your situation (see chart above). This difference is generally paid in 12 equal monthly payments rounded down to the nearest dollar. Call the toll-free number below for details.

**You Can Apply:** by filling out VA Form 21-526, Veteran's Application for Compensation Or Pension. If available, attach copies of dependency records (marriage & children's birth certificates) and current medical evidence (doctor & hospital reports). You can also apply on line through our website at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp>.

### Related Benefits:

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Medical Care

If you are a widow of a veteran, go here: [www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Milsvdc/Docs/Dpeneg.doc](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Milsvdc/Docs/Dpeneg.doc)

For More Information Call Toll-Free 1-800-827-1000, Or Visit the VA Web Site At <http://www.va.gov>

# Rescue off China

## Crash of CG PBM-5G 84738

January 18, 1953



### Martin PBM-5 Mariner

Forty-one Martin PBM-5 Mariner seaplanes were used by the Coast Guard during the 1940s and 1950s for long range Search and Rescue missions in the U.S. and overseas. These aircraft each had a gross weight of 51,330 pounds with 2,670 gallons of fuel. Range was 2,240 miles at a cruise speed of 127 mph. The PBM was powered by two R-2800-34 18-cylinder Pratt and Whitney Double Wasp engines which produced 2100 horsepower each at take-off.

During the Second World War, the Navy tasked the Coast Guard to develop off-shore rough sea landing techniques for use in rescuing downed naval aviators and to pull survivors from the sea. The Martin patrol bomber became the aircraft of choice for this job. It was a big lumbering seaplane that could tolerate a lot of landing and take-off abuse in high seas. It also became the experimental aircraft for JATO (Jet Assist Take Off), a help for getting airborne in difficult conditions.

An officer, a former enlisted pilot, worked the problem throughout the experimental program and became one of the most experienced rough sea handlers in aviation history. His name was John Vukic and this experience was to pay off some years later.

From 1945 to 1969, U.S. Naval aircraft were involved in a number of aerial incidents with forces of the Soviet Union, People's Republic of China, North Korea, and Czechoslovakia. These incidents resulted in the loss of eight Navy aircraft and one Coast Guard aircraft, eighty-one Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard aviators

### Navy P2V-5 Shot Down

U.S. Navy Patrol Squadron VP-22 began its third tour of operations in the Korean theater conducting shipping surveillance of the China Sea on November 29, 1952. Less than two months later, on January 18, 1953, a Lockheed P2V-5 Neptune (BuNo 127744) attached to the squadron was shot down by Chinese anti-aircraft fire near Swatow, China and ditched in the





While enroute, Lt. Vukic intercepted a radio message stating that survivors had been sighted in the water, but that they were unable to pick up the rafts or any of the survival equipment which had been dropped to them from planes circling overhead.

The crash site was located, however upon a surface survey, Lt. Vukic found that the winds were running at 25 to 30 knots, seas were 8 to 15 feet high and steep with crests approximately every 150 to 200 feet moving with a speed estimated at 15 knots.

Several passes were made over the survivors who by this time were on a life raft which was only partially inflated. Four of the survivors were hanging on over the side of the raft. Noting the condition of the survivors and their perilous position, and not having any information on the arrival time of surface vessels in the area, it was determined that, in order to save the survivors, a landing was necessary despite the hazardous conditions of the sea and the fast approaching darkness.



According to the pilot, Lt. "Big John" Vukic, after arriving on scene, he noted that the seas were running 15-feet. Even though the survivors managed to climb into a raft he thought they must have been suffering from hypothermia. He decided to attempt an open water landing. With darkness setting in, he landed near the survivors. His crewman managed to pull these men on board while other crewman prepared a jet-assisted packs for each side of the aircraft to use for a short take-off. While the Coast Guard crew rescued all eleven in the raft, two other Navy crew, in a separate raft, were swept ashore and captured by the communist Chinese.

"There was a 15-foot sea and a 25-mile wind," Vukic remembered about the take-off. "Everything was rolling very well and I thought it was in the bag. And so I fired my JATO bottles to help my plane get airborne. Suddenly the plane lurched to the left." He saw the left wing float rise above the sea but the port engine seemed to be losing power. He quickly decided to ditch and made for the crest of a wave with the plane's hull. "My seat suddenly broke and that was the last thing I knew."



The PBM slammed back into the sea and broke up. Once again the Navy survivors were back in the water, at least, the seven that survived this crash. Vukic managed to escape as well and inflated a raft. He pulled two surviving Navy crew in with him. He said "We were so cold we didn't care who got us, just so they had a fire to keep us warm." Two others of his Coast Guard crew, Aviation Machinists Mate Joseph Miller and Aviation Mechanic Robert Hewitt, also managed to escape before the PBM sank.

These men were eventually rescued by the Navy destroyer *U.S.S. Halsey Powell* (DD 686) later that night. In all, 10 survivors out of 19 total (including five from the P2V) were rescued by *Halsey Powell*.



During the search effort a PBM-5 from VP-40 received fire from a small-caliber machine gun, and *U.S.S. Gregory* (DD 802) received fire from shore batteries. But the other five Coast Guard and four Navy crewmen perished. Apparently some of these nine men escaped the sinking PBM but were captured by Communist Chinese forces and executed as spies.

*U.S.S. Gregory* (DD 802) and *U.S.S. Halsey Powell* (DD 686)

The entire crew of the PBM-5G 84738 earned the Gold Lifesaving Medal. The five that died in the line of duty, earned the medal posthumously.

(Thanks to Bob Giddings for this look into the past).