



## **ANA PATRIOT SQUADRON - SHEA NAVAL AVIATION MUSEUM QUARTERLY MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER**

**PO Box 30**

**Pembroke, Massachusetts 02359**

**[inquiries@anapatriotsquadron.org](mailto:inquiries@anapatriotsquadron.org)**

**[www.anapatriotsquadron.org](http://www.anapatriotsquadron.org)**

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Welcome to the latest edition of the ANA Patriot Squadron and Shea Naval Aviation Museum Quarterly Members' Newsletter. This newsletter is distributed via e-mail on or about the first day of March, June, September, and December. The purpose of the newsletter is to help familiarize members who can't attend our monthly meetings with what's happening within the squadron and at the museum and perhaps inspire everyone to take a more active role in this organization.

### **RECENT NEWS:**

The end of September marks the passing of a sad anniversary. Twenty-five years ago, on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1997, the Navy abandoned NAS South Weymouth for civilian redevelopment. Looking back, it is hard to believe that NAS South Weymouth and all the various commands and activities that were hosted there such as HML-771, HSL-74, MASS-6, VMA-322, VP-92, VR-62, etc., have been gone for at least a quarter of a century. But that's the situation. To commemorate this grim milestone, a brief history lesson is appropriate.

When the Navy abandoned NAS Squantum in late 1953/early 1954 (the reserve program was relocated to NAS South Weymouth in early December 1953 but Squantum was not actually closed until January 1954), there were no provisions made to preserve any aspect of the history of the base. NAS Squantum was a place of great historical significance. Not only was it the second Navy flight training base commissioned after NAS Pensacola, it was also the place where the Naval Air Reserve was established in the early 1923.

Old NAS Squantum languished in deteriorating condition, but more-or-less intact, for several decades. When the property was finally redeveloped in the 1980s into the Marina Bay condominium community, the old base was totally obliterated. Today, there is absolutely nothing on the site to inform residents or visitors of its military history.

When the BRAC mandated the closure of NAS South Weymouth in 1995, there were still many veterans in the area who had been involved in relocating the Navy and Marine reserve program from NAS Squantum to NAS South Weymouth. These people were mindful of what had happened to NAS Squantum when the site was redeveloped, and they wanted to ensure that the same thing did not happen to NAS South Weymouth. They made arrangements to include a provision in the BRAC law closing NAS South Weymouth that obligated the master developer of the property to provide a venue on the site, in perpetuity, for a military heritage museum to commemorate both NAS Squantum and NAS South Weymouth, provided there are volunteers to tend it. The local chapter of the Association of Naval Aviation, the Patriot Squadron, stepped up to provide the volunteers. This is how the Patriot Squadron became associated with the Shea Naval Aviation Museum.

You'd think that a quarter century should have been enough time to establish the Shea Naval Aviation Museum at Union Point, a situation that although it has come close to happening, has not actually happened yet. Those of us who have been involved with the Patriot Squadron for many years know that the situation regarding the property, and especially with the series of master developers, has been problematic. The first two master developers, one after the other, did little or nothing on the property for about fifteen years. The third master developer had a great start, and initially benefited the Patriot Squadron and the museum in its temporary location in many ways, but they soon developed financial problems and left the project. The current master developer, though they show great promise, has made no visible progress in the two years plus that they have been on the project.

During the first fifteen years or so since the base closed, the master developers of that time allowed the Patriot Squadron to use what had been the weight room in the former base gymnasium, the Shea Fitness Center, as a "clubhouse" for meetings and as a storage area for artifacts until such time that a venue could be provided for the museum. The so-called Southfield/Union Point "Welcome Center", the red barn-like building adjacent to the Shea Memorial Grove, was intended to be the museum building and was to have been turned over for that purpose after the master developer finished using it to sell off all the property on the old base. That was the plan.

Since nobody could tell us when the master developer would be done using the "Welcome Center" building, the Patriot Squadron decided to organize its collection as best as possible in the space available in the Shea Fitness Center weight room and use that space as a temporary museum. The Shea Naval Aviation Museum was first opened to the public in this temporary location on the last Saturday in October 2011. This temporary museum, despite its limitations, proved successful, and so it was opened on the second Saturday of the month as well. A regular program of guest speaker presentations and other events were quickly added, which increased the popularity of the museum.

In June 2017 the then current master developer asked the Patriot Squadron to "temporarily" close the museum and put the collection in storage so the Shea Fitness Center building could be renovated and returned to its original purpose as a gymnasium for Union Point residents and others. The master developer showed us plans that they drew up for a new museum building adjacent to the Shea Memorial Grove park, which was to have been relocated near the Route 18 entrance into Union Point. The new building was supposed to be ready for occupation by the museum within six to nine months at that time. This subsequently became nine to twelve months, and then it became twelve to eighteen months. Then, suddenly, the master developer had financial problems and left the project.

The Shea Fitness Center was not only never renovated after the museum vacated the premises, it was rendered unfit for occupation. The heat was not turned on and the water was not shut off during the winter months after we left. The pipes froze and burst, and the interior of the building was severely damaged. This is the reason that we were not able to go back into the Shea Fitness Center.

In early 2020 a new master developer was selected to take over the Union Point project. The COVID-19 panic hit almost immediately afterwards. This has, so we have been told, prevented the new master developer from purchasing land from the previous master developer's creditors and getting the Union Point development, which has been stalled for the past five years, back on track. And, this leaves the Patriot Squadron and the Shea Naval Aviation Museum in the current state that we are in, which is waiting for things to get organized at Union Point so we can approach the current master developer about getting the museum back in operation.

And so, for those who might not know it, that's how we got to where we are at today!



On Saturday June 11<sup>th</sup> Patriot Squadron members Rita Cavanaugh, Faith and Marc Frattasio, Mary-Jean Hickey, Robert Michaelski, Joe Muise, and Bill Sargent tended a fund-raising sales table at the Columbian Square Festival held at Weymouth High School. The Columbian Square Festival was one of several public events organized over the past few years by the Weymouth 400 Committee to help commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the city of Weymouth. This event proved to be much more successful than anticipated, for the Patriot Squadron, as we made over \$1,000 in sales there. This was by far the most financially successful public event that we have ever attended. A surprisingly large number of people approached our table to ask us how things are going

with the museum. So, even though the Shea Naval Aviation Museum has been closed for five years, it is still very much in the public eye.

Speaking of the museum, a kind local woman (name unknown, unfortunately) recently approached Bill Sargent and donated a practice (inert) 2.75 inch unguided rocket to the Shea Naval Aviation Museum. This type of rocket was fired from pods installed under the wings of various types of aircraft based over the years at NAS South Weymouth during the 1950s and 1960s. The rocket is presently being stored along with the rest of the museum's collection; until such time that we can reopen again.



During late May our membership director, retired Vice Admiral Wally Massenburg, represented the Daedalian Society and the Patriot Squadron in presenting awards to outstanding JNROTC and JMCROTC cadets at several high schools located around Massachusetts. Here is Wally presenting an award certificate and medal to a cadet at Oxford High School. Oxford, MA was the last high school in the awards program. For the record, the Daedalian Society was originally restricted to First World War pilots only. In later years the group's requirements for membership were revised to allow all military pilots to join.

Member Robert Michaelski recently donated a full-sized POW/MIA flag for the Shea Memorial Grove. The flags displayed on the yardarm at the park, which are constantly exposed to the sun and weather, wear out on a regular basis. We very much appreciate Robert's very thoughtful donation.

### **COMING UP:**

As you all should know, the Patriot Squadron is the Boston area affiliate of a national group called the Association of Naval Aviation. The "ANA" in ANA Patriot Squadron stands for the Association of Naval Aviation. Although we do not require Patriot Squadron members to also belong to the national group (there are some exceptions among the group's leadership) we do encourage people to join. The Association of Naval Aviation is a great organization itself and its quarterly magazine, "Wings of Gold", is worth the price of membership alone. The Association of Naval Aviation is holding a new membership drive in September. That month, and for that month only, all new members will get two years membership for the one year membership price. The membership drive is being organized as a contest, and the local chapter that gets the most new members to sign up will receive \$150. Not much, of course, but every little bit helps, right? If you should choose to become a member of the Association of Naval Aviation in September, be sure to indicate that your ANA Squadron Number is "47 – The Patriot Squadron". Go to <https://www.anahq.org/membership/become-a-member>. **Again, the special deal is only available to new members who sign up in September.**

Late in the summer the Boston area chapter of the Marine Corps Aviation Association has a reunion and lobster bake at the 4<sup>th</sup> Cliff Military Recreation Area in Marshfield, MA. This year the reunion and

lobster bake will be held on Saturday September 10<sup>th</sup> from about noon to 3 PM. It so happens that John Margie, who is a member of the Patriot Squadron as well as the Marine Corps Aviation Association, is in charge of running this event. Many former members of VMA-322, HML-771, MASS-6, the MARTD, and other USMCR commands that were at NAS South Weymouth and/or NAS Squantum over the years show up there. It's a really good time, and all Patriot Squadron members are welcome to come, regardless of whether you were in the Marine Corps or not. Your newsletter editor and his wife Faith have been going for many years and have always had a great time. For more information, and to purchase tickets, contact John Margie directly at [jomargie@comcast.net](mailto:jomargie@comcast.net).

In the interest of full disclosure, we have been told that the Boston chapter of the MCAS will present the Patriot Squadron with a generous check to put towards the A-4B Skyhawk repainting project at the upcoming lobster bake. It would be nice to have as many Patriot Squadron members as possible at this event to thank the MCAS people for their contribution, which is another reason for folks to go.

The Patriot Squadron has been invited to set up a fund-raising sales table at another Weymouth 400 event. This one will be held at the Weymouth City Hall on Saturday September 17<sup>th</sup>, with the rain date being the next day. We've accepted this invitation. If any members would like to help us set up and tend the table, plan on being at the City Hall at noon on the date of the event. Please note that we are obligated to keep the table open from noon to 7 PM. As you may recall, the Patriot Squadron took in over \$1,000 at the table we had at the Weymouth 400 Columbian Square Festival a few months ago. Due to the short notice, we're not going to be able to order too much to sell at this event. The exceptions are NAS South Weymouth blue command ball caps and triangular base insignia patches. These were big sellers at the Columbian Square Festival, and the vendors have committed to get them into our hands by September 17<sup>th</sup>. We were not able to get such a commitment from the t-shirt vendor and will attempt to sell off the existing stock of NAS South Weymouth shirts (for which we only have larger sizes left) and Shea Memorial Grove shirts (for which all sizes are available).

Although your newsletter editor was unsuccessful in getting enough interest to organize a formal reunion banquet to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closing of NAS South Weymouth on September 30<sup>th</sup> 1997, he is going to try to do something to recognize this important milestone. If time permits, he intends to present a public slide exhibition on the old base, ideally on the evening of Friday September 30 or perhaps on Saturday September 1st. This presentation, if it happens at all, could be done in person or virtually via Zoom. More details will be distributed to members as the date approaches and if this event is finalized. At this point, things are "up in the air".

A new movie called "Devotion" is scheduled for release to cinemas in November. The film is based upon the book by the same name. It is based upon the true story of Ensign Jesse Brown, the first African-American naval aviator, and Captain Thomas Hudner. ENS Brown was killed in action after his F4U Corsair crashed as a result of being hit by ground fire while on a combat mission during the Korean War. Brown survived the crash, but was pinned inside the cockpit of his aircraft. CAPT Hudner purposely crashed his Corsair near Brown, and attempted to get him out, without success. For his heroic actions, Hudner received the Congressional Medal of Honor. Tom Hudner was a member of the Patriot Squadron for many years, and on occasion would come to meetings to tell his story to the group. This film should be of great interest to all members of the Patriot Squadron. Watch for it. The trailer has been uploaded to YouTube ([www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). Check it out!

### **HELP WANTED:**

As mentioned in previous issues of this newsletter, the A-4B Skyhawk jet mounted on a pylon at the center of the Shea Memorial Grove at Union Point is in need of repainting and the major wooden

signage around the park needs extensive restoration work or replacement. In the past the aircraft was repainted by Patriot Squadron members who had military experience doing this kind of work, but these people are no longer active with us.

In the recent past we touched-up the markings on the old aircraft and we repainted the signs. These were stopgap measures intended to help keep these things looking presentable as long as possible. More comprehensive restoration work of a more lasting nature is now required. We have a verbal estimate for \$8,000 to \$12,000 from a local contractor who has repainted military display aircraft on Hanscom AFB. Members Bill Sargent and/or Frank Ward have met with representatives of the painting and sign contractors on site so they could make physical inspections of the aircraft and the signs. We are waiting for a written quote for repainting the aircraft but we have one from a sign painter, who has quoted us the sum of \$7,800 to remove all three wooden signs, replace or restore them as appropriate, and replace them in the ground at the park. We had estimated that it would cost no more than \$20,000 to do both jobs. Provided that the painting contractor holds firm with their \$8,000 to \$12,000 estimate, then our original fundraising goal of \$20,000 should be just enough to do both jobs, with basically nothing left over.

We should also point out that a third contractor has entered the mix. This is a local company that would like to bid on repainting the aircraft and also restoring the signs as a package deal. Bill Sargent and Frank Ward are presently working with these people and we hope to get a written quote from them soon.

We'd like to thank the following Patriot Squadron members and other people who generously donated funds towards this effort since the last issue of the newsletter was distributed in early June:

- David Ayres
- Jim Barnes
- Joe Bayne
- Richard and Barbara Bowden
- Gary Ceresi
- Larry Cole
- Charlie Collins
- Mary Collins
- Patricia Condon
- Peter Crone
- Catherine Driscoll
- Robert Duetsch
- John Fox
- Paula Fulton
- Allan Gilman
- Carol Green
- Elizabeth Hanian
- Mary Jean Hickey
- Barbara and John Good
- Sandra Lombardo
- Dan and Barbara Murphy
- Robert and Beverly Petrelli
- Noreen Rowley
- Nancy Shaw

- Claudette Shea
- Helen Walsh

Many of the donors presented in the list are Fairing Way Residents who decided to help us through the efforts of members Rita Cavonius and Mary-Jean Hickey. Rita and Mary-Jean both live at Fairing Way, which as you may know is an over-55 community on the old base.

As of this writing we have just over \$18,439 in hand towards our \$20,000 goal, which is pretty remarkable when you consider that all the fund-raising up to this point has happened within the group and via word-of-mouth. Our original \$20,000 estimate was predicated on spending no more than \$12,000 to repaint the aircraft and \$8,000 to restore the signs. Since the only sign estimate we have come in just \$200 short of the estimate and we still have not received anything in writing from the first of the two potential aircraft painters, it is possible that we might come up short. Ideally, we should try to raise a little more money to account for this contingency.

If anybody else out there would like to contribute funds towards repainting the A-4B and the restoration or replacement of the signage at the Shea Memorial Grove, send a check to:

ANA Patriot Squadron  
C/O Marc Frattasio  
PO Box 30  
Pembroke, MA 02359

**Be sure to make all checks payable to “ANA Patriot Squadron” and write “A-4B Repainting Fund” on the check too. Do not make the checks payable to Marc Frattasio or any other member of the Patriot Squadron. They must be made payable to “ANA Patriot Squadron”.**

The ANA Patriot Squadron is a 501c3 non-profit educational corporation. As such all donations to this group should be tax-deductible as charitable contributions. The Patriot Squadron’s EIN for tax purposes is 04-3370127.

As indicated previously, we are looking for somebody to manage this project through to completion. Remember, most of the “heavy lifting” has already been done. If this group is to continue, more people need to take an active role in running the organization and its activities. This project would provide a good opportunity for somebody to step up and assume a leadership role within the group.

When the weather becomes cooler and wetter in the Fall we’ll have a brief few weeks window of opportunity to replace dead trees at the Shea Memorial Grove. The Jared Monti memorial tree needs to be replaced. Perhaps somebody out there would like to volunteer to replace this tree while the weather remains favorable to do so? Ideally, the Jared Monti memorial tree should be replaced before the middle of October to provide enough time for its root system to get established in the ground before the winter. Otherwise, we’ll have to wait until the late spring of next year. For the record, Paul Monti, Jared’s father, passed away on Friday August 26<sup>th</sup>. We owe it to the family to ensure that the memorial to Jared Monti is restored. If anybody would like to take this on, please let us know at an upcoming meeting or reach out to us via e-mail using the e-mail address presented at the top of this newsletter.

## DID YOU KNOW?



On September 30<sup>th</sup> 1997 the Navy officially closed NAS South Weymouth. Since the airfield had been closed the previous year, it was no longer possible for aircraft to land or take off from the base. Naval Air Reserve patrol squadron VP-92, which had operated from NAS South Weymouth between 1970 and 1996 and had been transferred to NAS Brunswick just before the airfield was closed, sent a P-3C Orion to fly over the base closure ceremony. Here is a photo of that aircraft, Lima Yankee Four Zero Nine, flying over the crowd assembled on the disused parking ramp area behind Hangar One at NAS South Weymouth on that sad and historic date.



A WINDOW INTO THE PAST:



Captain Robert Duetsch and his wife Susan at the NAS South Weymouth base closure ceremony on September 30, 1997. Captain Duetsch was the very last commanding officer of NAS South Weymouth. Among other things, he had Seabees build the Shea Memorial Grove park so there would be something tangible on the site to remind people of its military heritage after the base was redeveloped. Captain Duetsch is an honorary life member of the Patriot Squadron.

