



**HMM-163
USMC COMBAT HELICOPTER
& TILTROTOR ASSOCIATION
REUNION 2016
JACKSONVILLE, FL
AUGUST 25 – 28, 2016**

**Squadron Bulletin 1
February 2016**

My Fellow Marines,

As you may have noticed in the header of this bulletin, our association has changed its name to incorporate the V-22 Osprey into our organization. Our squadron has changed over from the H-46 to the V-22 but also has H-53 and H-1 helicopters attached for deployments.

This August we are returning to the Sunshine State for our reunion. For some of you, it will be a short drive and for others, like me, it will be several hours on a plane. Either way it is a trip worth making. The chance to see comrades from the past is always rewarding, and as we get older there are fewer and fewer to tell *the real war stories*. Someday we will have to write them down for posterity.

You should have received your *Reunion Packets* from Popasmoke by this time. Since I have been writing and rewriting this for quite some time, I have received mine with the quarterly *Popasmoke* news letter. In any case, if you haven't received yours by the time you receive this bulletin, you should get it in the very near future. You can also get the registration forms on the Popasmoke web site or as a last resort contact me and I can mail or e-mail a copy to you.. As with recent reunions, Armed Forces Reunion, Inc. will be running the show and association registrations will be handled through them.

This bulletin is to briefly bring you up to date on the squadron's plans and provide you with the form needed to register with the squadron. This form also has a place to sign up for our Squadron Dinner, and order Squadron Reunion T-Shirts.

For those of you that are new or have not previously attended a Popasmoke reunion, I will summarize what goes on so that you will have some idea and feel more comfortable when you arrive. You will get detailed information on the Association scheduled activities when you receive your registration packet.

I should emphasize that you will need to register with both Popasmoke and HMM-163 depending on what activities you wish to participate in during the four days. In the remainder of this bulletin I will lay out what you can anticipate from each. I highly recommend signing up with both groups.

Association Activities

Registration/Check In

Upon arrival you will need to check in with Popasmoke at the registration area. This area is open Wednesday afternoon for “Early Bird Registrations” for those arriving prior to the Thursday official start of the reunion. Most Popasmoke staff and Squadron Coordinators arrive Tuesday or Wednesday to get the lay of the land and finalize arrangements for their Hospitality Hootch and Squadron Dinner.

We will plan to open our Squadron Hootch on Wednesday as soon as we can run a supply mission. I intend to obtain our supplies some time on Wednesday. We have two of our member’s wives volunteering to act as Hootch Coordinators to help keep the Hootch running smoothly: Debra Rivers and Anne Rask. This is a new step and an improvement we are making based upon suggestions presented at the last reunion. This idea was suggested by the two women that volunteered and all the coordinators agreed completely with it. Hopefully it will continue into the future, and some of the other wives may feel similarly inclined to lend a hand and be part of the team.

Once you arrive and are settled, try to come by our Squadron Hootch for a cocktail and some socializing. It will be cheaper than the hotel bar or room service and you will likely run into some other squadron members. Also you can pick up any t-shirts you may have ordered. Bill and Penny will see that they are available for distribution. I will have provided them with a complete list of the orders.

You will want to complete checking in with the Association as soon as possible so that you are free for more fun activities. At registration, you will receive your ID badge and tickets for meals and tours which you purchased. As mentioned, regular registration starts on Thursday and is open during normal work hours on that day and Friday. It will be quite crowded Thursday morning so get there early and get it done. There are field trips scheduled to start that morning. You will need to be registered as soon as possible to pick up your field trip tickets for any activities you may have selected.

The registration area will be located on the 3rd floor at the Conference Center in the hotel. It is manned by personnel from Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. and usually set up with several lines in alphabetical order so it gets processed expeditiously but you will still need to allow time if you are leaving on a field trip that morning..

Goodie Bags

Following registration you will be able to pick up a free “Goodie Bag” containing numerous items displaying the reunion and Popasmoke logo. In the past the Goodie Bags included mugs, t-shirts, and other items worth keeping as a remembrance of the event. I personally have a shelf in my home office that has most of the items collected from Goodie Bags at past reunions. They bring back great memories and you will become very attached to them. All registered participants receive a bag. The Goodie Bag area has always been in close proximity to the Registration Area.

Association Meals

Your association registration has provisions for signing up for two large dinner events. Each is worth attending and helps get into the spirit of the event.

First there is an opening ceremony with a buffet dinner Thursday. This always has a significant number of members from each squadron. There is opening ceremonies and

welcome aboard presentations by the Association Board of Directors, and announcement concerning the reunion.

Secondly, there is a provision to sign up for the closing banquet on Saturday evening. This event is a sit down dinner with assigned reserved tables for each squadron. There are cash bars strategically placed around the perimeter of the banquet hall, so you are never too far from liquid refreshment. There is always entertainment and dancing to an orchestra at the Saturday banquet. Our Hospitality Hootch will of course be available after the banquet. In the past, many of our members have tried to assist us by ensuring that no liquid refreshment remains on Sunday morning.

Field Trips

The Association normally arranges for special tours and/or events each day of the reunion. They focus on points of interest around the area as well as museums and military service sites. These tours have an additional charge to cover transportation and any entrance fees which may be involved. Some of the field trips include lunch. These excursions are always interesting, informative, and fun. Most members participate in some if not all of these activities.

You are, of course, able to set up your own field trips if you desire. The concierge at the hotel can assist you with any special desires you may wish to do on your own. These could include sporting events by the Jacksonville professional teams, shows, theater, etc.

The Association planned field trips for this reunion are as follows:

- Thursday – St. Augustine Tour – Departs 0900 hours. Lunch on your own, returns to hotel 1500 hours.
- Friday – Lunch Cruise – Departs 1030 hours, returns 1300 hours – Lunch is included.
- Friday – Amelia Island Shopping Tour – Departs 1000 hours. Lunch on your own, returns to hotel 1500 hours
- Friday - Golf Tournament NAS Jacksonville - 0800 to 1500 hours (see below)
- Saturday - USMC Static Display - More information at a later time.

Golf Tournament

A golf tournament will be held on Friday. There is a minimal additional charge for this activity but that information is not available at this time.

All tours and events are planned so that they return to the reunion hotel in time to get ready and participate in any evening activities including the Squadron Dinners on Friday evening,

Full details and signup information for any of these activities are contained in your Registration Packet.

Squadron Activities

As you should be aware, we have squadron coordinator volunteers. These individuals start planning activities a year before the actual event. Our squadron coordinators are

also available to assist you prior to the reunion and during the reunion should you need help with anything.

A list of coordinators and their contact information is attached to this bulletin. Feel free to contact any one of them if you have questions, or need assistance with anything before or during the reunion.

HOSPITALITY HOOTCH

The squadron will be maintaining a Hospitality Hootch during the reunion. The Hootch is set up and opened by the coordinators on Wednesday and is shut down on Sunday morning. It is open all hours that the hotel permits and is well supplied with *refreshments*. It is unfortunately necessary for the squadron to charge \$1 per drink on an honor system to defray the cost of stocking the Hootch. It is good to know that we have never refused refreshments to anyone for lack of funds. As I mentioned, it operates on an honor system and *there are no Hootch Police*. We do not take checks or credit cards and we have never refused refreshment because someone forgot their wallet.

Each squadron in Popasmoke has a hootch, however some squadrons double up in a hootch because of lower attendance and a need to spread the cost over more participants. Since our squadron always is in the top two or three in attendance and has been number one several times, we have always had a hootch to ourselves. We will not know our hootch assignment until some time in June 2016. It is important to get you association registration in by that time so it is included in the head count for hootch distribution. We were informed that there will be 16 Hootches available so we are almost assured of having our own.

Our hootch is always open to your personal guests and friends from other squadrons. It is a good place to bring friends from other squadrons. We maintain an adequate supply of *refreshments* and usually find it necessary to run resupply missions during the event. If we are running short of an item please let one of the coordinators know. Members have also taken the initiative themselves and used funds from the Honor System collection to conduct a resupply mission. This is perfectly acceptable but we ask that you advise one of the Hootch Coordinators you are doing so since there may already be a plan in place to do a resupply and we do not want to purchase double.

The Hootch is the main central location for contacting and meeting other squadron members and also the place where you can usually get the latest information on any changes in plans by the association or squadron. We will have a designated spot in the hootch where we will post any notices to inform the squadron members.

SQUADRON DINNER

Friday night, August 26, 2016 is left open by the Association for each squadron to have their own Squadron Dinner. These dinners are arranged by the squadron coordinators prior to the reunion. Every attempt is made to make these dinners a memorable event and one of the highlights of the reunion. So far every Squadron Dinner that I have attended has been a unique experience and enjoyed by all. We supply transportation to

and from the location when needed. We plan it to run starting with a departure from the hotel at 1730 hours and a return at about 2130 hours. This timing is done so that anyone desiring additional local night life will have time available for such activities following the dinner.

This year we have arranged to have our Squadron Dinner at *The River City Brewing Company*. The restaurant is directly across the St. John's River from the Hyatt Hotel where we are headquartered. We are planning to have a *St. John's River Taxi* pick us up

near the hotel and drop us at the restaurant which has its own landing. I have been advised by local Marines that the restaurant has an excellent reputation for the quality of the food and service and is often used by military organizations holding parties.

You can sign up for this event on the enclosed Squadron Registration Form. You will need to designate the number of people attending in your group and also the total number of each entrée choice (one per participant). We have attached a menu for your review. The meal will also include salad, beverages and desert. A cash bar service will be available for your convenience. The squadron can only accept reservations for dinner up to two weeks before the event and all dinner reservations must be paid for in advance. We will be required to supply head counts, numbers for each entrée, and payment three days prior to the event. I plan on visiting the restaurant on the Wednesday prior but it may be necessary to pay them prior to my departure for Florida.

I encourage you to register as soon as possible and also make your hotel reservations early (you can always cancel up to 24 hours in advance if necessary). Sometimes the designated hotel may fill up and members are sent to additional hotels in the area. We hope this does not occur but make your reservation early and be sure. I have my room confirmation already.

FIELD TRIPS

Should you wish to conduct your own self guided tours or book a tour through one of the local companies, the hotel, concierge in the lobby is available to assist you. The web site for the hotel also has a number of interesting suggestions for tours and site seeing.

Personally, I have found the trips set up by the Reunion Organizers to be excellent and extremely convenient with pickup and return to the association's schedule.

SQUADRON T-SHIRTS

As in the past reunions, Bill Halvorsen and family have designed a Squadron T-Shirt for this reunion. You may order one or more on your Squadron Registration form. All orders must be paid for at the time of ordering. We will not be purchasing additional shirts beyond what are ordered and paid for in advance. So you will not be able to buy a squadron shirt at the reunion.

If you are requesting shipment of your shirt order prior to the reunion, there is a \$7.00 shipping charge for each shirt sending them USPS flat rate postage. This service is provided only for members not attending the reunion. All others will pick their order up at the Hootch when they arrive in Jax.

I know that no one likes to buy anything sight unseen. I am sure you are wondering what the shirts look like. As in the past, no one but Bill and his family know until the reunion. He does not even reveal the design to his fellow coordinators. I have some from every

reunion I have attended and have never been disappointed. Personally I believe it is worth getting several and wearing them during the reunion. It shows pride in your squadron and lets other HMM-163 people spot you in a crowd.

CONCLUSION

This sums it up for Bulletin #1. There will be one or two more bulletins prior to the event. Additional bulletins will only be sent to members returning their registration forms with an Administrative Expense donation. So many things can happen during the two years between reunions that we cannot afford to send subsequent bulletins to members that have not responded; Even if you are not attending, a smaller donation to assist with our

admin. expenses is greatly appreciated and will assure you of receiving all the Squadron Bulletins for 2016 and being on the mailing list for the 2018 Squadron Reunion.

The coordinators are all hoping you can all make it to Jacksonville. It is inevitable that we end up with less and less people attending as we get older, but that makes it more important than ever to re-establish the bonds between us as Marine Combat Helicopter and Tiltrotor veterans.

SEMPER FIDELIS

**Bernie Gordon
Head Coordinator
HMM-163 USMC CHTA**

Enclosed:

- **Squadron Registration and Ordering Form**
- **Contact list for HMM-163 Squadron Coordinators**
- **Squadron Dinner Schedule & Menu**