



## PACIFIC COAST AIR MUSEUM

Winter 2025

### President's Message

Welcome to a new year! Another 365-day journey around the sun has concluded and we begin again. New challenges and new opportunities will arise throughout 2025. We at PCAM look forward to introducing more people to our lovely organization, continuing to restore those aircraft in need of a facelift and fresh new look, and seeing progress on our Butler Hangar. I thank the members of my Board of Directors who saw fit to re-elect me as your President. I plan to continue what brought me to the dance and help PCAM elevate to new heights. 2024 is now behind us. It was a successful year to be sure, a year to be proud of, and a legacy we all hope to continue into 2025. Because of all our volunteers, this place runs as smoothly as it does. That said, we are always looking for more help. Cheers to all, let's get it started once again. Happy New Year!

Dana Hunt

### Flight Wing

By Lynn Hunt

For the past 10 years PCAM has been a training ground for Windsor High students participating in their STEM program with a focus on Aerospace and/or Aeronautical Engineering. Our contribution was to help them meet a graduation requirement of 30 hours off campus and working in a related field. Our approach has been to include them in whatever tasks the Flight Wing was involved in at that time so the experiences varied from class-to-class but always related to aircraft maintenance, construction or repairs. This always provided ample opportunities to demonstrate the necessity for sound engineering principles and applications.

This year we were contacted by another group from Windsor High to inquire if we would be willing to accept vocational candidates interested in aviation. The proposal specifically involved two individuals interested in Aviation Technology as a chosen field. As it turns out, one could argue that our weekly list of activities are actually better aligned with this more general definition while the engineering candidates enjoy and appreciate a chance to get close to the final product and get their hands dirty but are not really tasked with learning much of the engineering principles at work for them. So the biggest impact on us would simply be can we accommodate two more bodies in our classroom. Our immediate response was "of course."

This addition will raise our head count to seven, provided they all show up. We are sticking to Thursday evenings from 5 pm to 7 pm. We are sticklers for adhering to the time schedule. One additional request involves our two vocational candidates who are learning English as a second language and will most likely benefit from the assistance of someone with Spanish language skills. I am looking to recruit one such individual.

This is a great opportunity for PCAM to grow an already successful program. It also provides us a better opportunity to fill a need within our community. I will be looking to our PCAM family of volunteers for help.

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### PCAM Value Statements

**Integrity:** Demonstrate daily the highest levels of honesty and strong moral principles.

**Accountability:** Be accountable to our members, our patrons and our community.

**Customer Service:** Strive to achieve the highest levels of service and satisfaction.

**Achievement:** Become a recognized and valued asset to our community.

**Education:** Complement local institutions with unique learning opportunities.

**Innovation:** Constantly evolve the museum, the stories it tells and how it tells them.

**Diversity:** Create a climate of respect that is supportive of a diverse organization.

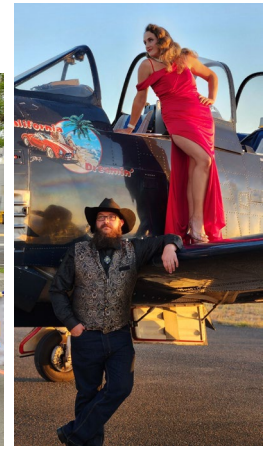
### PCAM Mission Statement

"To educate and inspire both young and old about our aviation heritage and aerospace technology, to preserve historic aircraft and artifacts, and to honor veterans."



## 2024 Year in Review

A look back at the year that was 2024 in pictures! Enjoy these time capsules that offer more words than this little newsletter can withstand!









## Elections and Awards

This year, we had three outstanding candidates for positions on our Board of Directors. Two were re-running and one was running for the first time. Ballots were sent out and the members of PCAM decided to re-elect both Sarah Kerkhof and Tony Bassignani to their second three-year term as a Board of Director. In December, with Gary Greenough ending his second term, the Board appointed the third candidate, Todd Graham to his first term. Todd brings his skills from the business world to our team as well as his many volunteer hours helping with the car show. He will provide vital insight as we step into a new and challenging year. We thank our members for their participation in this year's elections.



Sarah Kerkhof



Tony Bassignani



Todd Graham

## AWARDS

Every year, we do our best to say thank you to those who went the extra mile. With so many answering the call for help and putting in so many hours, we included more awards this year. New to this award season were the Board of Directors Appreciation Awards. These were given to individuals who the board decided were their MVPs for the year. Each board member nominated one person. President Hunt chose two to make it an even 10 awards. Nominations are as follows:

Dana Hunt nominated Chris Brown and Don Callen  
Gary Greenough nominated Justin Rains  
Tony Bassignani nominated Paul Doto  
Janet Doto nominated Anne Guymer  
Fred Guymer nominated Jim Cook  
Billy Kerkhof nominated Gary Casassa  
Sarah Kerkhof nominated Barney Hagen  
Megan Sweeley nominated Lynn Hunt  
Greg Thomas nominated Alan Chensvold

Other awards given out were:

The **Most Spirited Newcomer** Award went to Loren Davis  
The **Above and Beyond** Award went to Mary Lavezzoli  
The **Rented Mule** Award went to Paul Heck  
The **Ruptured Duck Award** (a new award for this year) went to Bob George  
The **President's Award** went to David Kinzie

Our **Volunteer of the Year** was absent at the meeting and will be awarded later.



## Veterans and Oral History

### Jerry Griffith, US Air Force



Airman 1st Class Jerry Griffith served in the US Air Force 4177th Bomb Wing of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) from 1961 until 1964.

He was born in St Louis, MO in 1941. When he was 6 years old, the family moved to Bakersfield, CA where Jerry attended school through high school graduation. Not having specific career aspirations, he and three friends decided to enlist in the Air Force in December of 1960. By January 1961 they were on a train to Lackland AFB, TX. Jerry noted that upon arrival, his eye-opening experiences began, especially when they reported for duty at the "Green Monster," the large green indoctrination and supply building on the base. The four friends were all assigned to the same barracks and went through Basic Training together. Upon completion of Basic, they were given aptitude tests to determine where they would be assigned. His friends scored high in "administrative" and Jerry scored in "mechanical," so at that point they parted ways.

When asked what type of aircraft he wanted to work on, Jerry choose B-52s. So, he was shipped off to Amarillo, TX to attend classes on the B-52 systems. In Amarillo he learned how quickly the weather could change in the Texas panhandle. During one Commander's Call they experienced sunshine, rain, a tornado, snow, more rain and the return to sunshine within a two-hour period. That was a significant contrast to weather in Bakersfield.

Jerry's B-52 training proved to be quite extensive. Upon its completion, Jerry was reassigned to Larson AFB at Moses Lake, WA. He was assigned as a "rigger" which included changing tires, egress repair (e.g. ejection seats), fuel cell work, etc. Whenever the B-52 aircraft would return to base, the crew chief would note deficiencies, including tire problems, and Jerry would perform such tasks as removing and racking the tires, detaching them from the magnesium rims (which required unfastening 36 bolts), and installing the new tires. This also involved addressing the "segmented rotor brakes." It was at Larson AFB where Jerry learned refined techniques for working on these planes. In retrospect, Jerry believes that helping his electrician father with projects in his youth and running the auto class in high school developed his mechanical skills that the Air Force recognized, refined, and fully utilized.

Jerry served during the Cold War era when SAC Chrome Dome missions were conducted from B-52 bases. The aircraft remained on continuous airborne alert armed with thermonuclear weapons. They would fly routes that put them in position to attack strategic locations in the Soviet Union if ordered to do so. Each mission lasted 24 hours, requiring that the B-52 refuel midair from KC-135 tankers. Frequent long flights typically ended with some component or system failure that Jerry was called upon to repair. Since Boeing was nearby, and the B-52 was a Boeing-manufactured aircraft, they were able to quickly acquire parts. On occasion, the base would call a "COCO Alert" where both the B-52s and the KC-135s would be called to take-off position for potential deployment. These drills required crew and staff to scramble into a state of readiness.

In 1963 and throughout 1964, Jerry was reassigned from SAC to MAT (Military Air Transport) where he worked on C-130s at McGuire AFB in New Jersey.

In December of 1964 he was asked to go on assignment to Guam. Not interested, he requested a discharge. Once released from the Air Force, he went to Daly City, CA and stayed with his uncle. He found a job at Market Garage in San Francisco. But after meeting his future wife, who lived in Santa Rosa, he relocated again to eliminate his long bus commute to visit her on weekends. He began working as a mechanic at Talmadge "Babe" Wood Cadillac dealership in Santa Rosa until 1976 when a strike occurred. Deciding not to participate in the strike, he went to work at Cal Trans until his retirement 20 years later. He spent the last six years as the Petaluma region field mechanic taking care of 365 pieces of equipment.

Throughout his career, Jerry's motto was "*If it's broke, I can fix it.*" He certainly did that in all of his jobs over the years, and still does to this day. He acknowledged and thanked the Air Force for helping to hone his mechanical skills that served him well in the military, in private industry, and with the State of California. Thank you, Jerry, for all of your contributions in each of these endeavors.

## Steven Lash, US Navy

Petty Officer 3rd class Steven Lash served in the US Navy for three years during the Vietnam War. A California native, Steve grew up in Southern California. After attending two years of college, he developed the wanderlust to travel around Europe, North Africa, Israel, and Scandinavia for one year, putting 13,000 miles on his car. Over the years he's visited 88 countries.

When he returned to California from his one-year trip and attempted to resume his college education, he learned had lost his student deferment. Instead he was extended an "invitation" to join the Army (draft). Instead, Steve decided to enlist in the US Navy.



He attended basic training in San Diego and was then assigned to the USS *Vega*. A scheduling conflict caused him to miss the ship's launching in San Diego, resulting in a flight to Japan where he joined the crew. He made four Pacific Ocean crossings during his time on board, going from Alameda to Asia and back. Steve noted that the highlight of these trips was when the announcement was made that they were crossing under the Golden Gate Bridge. It solicited an aroused response from the seamen as they celebrated their return to the US.

The *Vega* was a Rigel-class store ship that delivered refrigerated items and equipment to ships in the fleet, and to remote stations and staging areas. It served during the entire Vietnam War, where Steve was located for much of his 3-year hitch between 1965 and 1968 (including during the TET offensive). Most of the replenishments took place at sea, taking hours to transfer the cargo via high line to carriers and other ships. The *Vega* also carried 3-inch/50-caliber guns since they were shot at in an attempt to deter their missions. Unfortunately, no ear protection was provided to the crew, affecting Steve's hearing over the years. He was also exposed to Agent Orange for which he receives a small compensation for health-related issues from exposure while his ship was in port and was enveloped by a windswept cloud of the defoliant.

When the ship was moored off ports, Steve would perform Shore Patrol duties in places like Saigon, Da Nang and other coastal locations, requiring that he carry a weapon. He would also pick up mail and acquire movies to entertain his fellow shipmates, reportedly the most popular of his duties among his shipmates. Additionally, he served as the Captain's "M1C phone talker," relaying messages from the Captain to various ship stations. However, his main function was as a Personnel Officer. While working under two Personnel Men (PM) and two Yeomen, one of his main functions as a personnel officer was to type all of the required forms. His prior typing skills from college served him well in this function. The *Vega* crew comprised over 200 personnel, requiring him to perform a significant amount of typing.

During his three years on the *Vega* Steve visited six or seven countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Japan, and the Philippines in addition to his time in Vietnam.

When he left the Navy, he returned to college. A minimal GI Bill (\$134/month) helped him finish undergraduate school and attend graduate school where he majored in Public Health. He entered a career as a Health Inspector in Los Angeles County for years, and later moved to Sonoma County where he served in the same capacity for 13 more years. Humorously, Steve noted that they never wore pants with cuffs unless they wanted to bring home an "unwanted guest" because some of the places they inspected were riddled with cockroaches.

Many PCAM volunteers may recognize Steve from his attendance at HDT lunches, often bringing his Navy gray 1944 Willys WWII jeep. He has also participated in many local veteran parades including Petaluma and Cotati, wearing his Navy Blue uniform and generously carrying many veterans through the parade route.

For his service during the Vietnam War, and for supporting other veteran activities over the years, PCAM appreciatively acknowledges Steve's willingness to share his stories.



## Sean Martin, US Air Force



Another familiar face around PCAM is volunteer Sean Martin. Born in Santa Rosa on Nov 26, 1958, Sean served with the US Air Force Strategic Air Command (SAC) as an E4 Crew Chief from June 1977 until June 1981.

Growing up in West Sonoma County, he attended Monroe Elementary, Comstock Junior High, and Piner High Schools. He enrolled in the US Air Force under the “delayed enlistment program” because he wanted to take advantage of the Veteran Administration (VA) program that paid 90 percent for continuing education benefits. He used these benefits to finish earning his pilot certificate. He accomplished this in short order because he had already been working toward his license by flying his father’s Stinson 108-3 Voyager conventional gear airplane *similar* to the one in the photograph below. His love of aviation had begun very early in life.

Sean’s goal was to try to get into the Air Force Academy, but he fell short which is why he decided to enlist. He originally reported to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas for Basic Training. From there he was sent to Chanute AFB, a now decommissioned base in Rantoul, Illinois. There he was schooled for 12 weeks to work on large aircraft in an Organizational Maintenance Squadron (OMS). He

acknowledges that most of his true education was on-the-job training at this duty station. On his second day of training, his tech sergeant, also from Santa Rosa, told Sean that he knew his mother and that they used to ride horses together. Small world! This coincidence was contributory to the tech sergeant taking Sean “under his wing.” During training, Sean worked on B-52s, mostly doing airframe work including hydraulics and pneumatics.

From Chanute, Sean was assigned to Dyess Air Force Base, near Abilene, TX. He was assigned to the crew of O-676 that worked on the first B-52 D model Stratofortress which was instrumental in shooting down a Russian MiG in Vietnam in Operation Linebacker in 1972. The crew (and Sean) were proud of that fact. During his last year in the Air Force, he again served as crew on this same plane. He also served as an observer on pole alert duty, participating in flights that were often 7-10 hours long. During his time off, he continued working on earning his commercial and instrument pilot ratings. On two occasions Sean was on aircraft deployed to Great Britain, and on another occasion to Loring AFB, Maine. They also took their B-52 to airshows at March and Beale AFBs.

Once Sean made Senior Airman, he became a Crew Chief. At that point he flew with the aircraft on each mission. Sean’s aircraft also went to Guam for military exercises, but (unfortunately) he didn’t participate in that mission.

As a Crew Chief, he always carried a radio with him. When an alert was called, regardless of where he was on the base, he had to drop everything and quickly get to his aircraft. Access required knowledge of a special number, and if he didn’t know that number, he wasn’t allowed to get to the aircraft for security reasons. This once prove to be problematic for him, resulting in Sean “getting his butt chewed.” It never happened again.

During WWII Sean’s uncle served in the 96th Bomb Group in the European Theater and ended up in the 96th Bomb Wing. Coincidentally, Sean was part of the same bomb group years later.

Some of the most memorable flights Sean made were on low level missions. They flew under the radar to reach target sites in the desert of Utah. They flew so low that the B-52’s engines generated a “rooster tail” of sand behind the aircraft. Midair refueling was also memorable.

When his enlistment was up, he considered extending. But his wife, Marie, also in the military, wanted to leave. So he left the Air Force. Because he had earned his commercial, instrument and multi-engine pilot ratings while in the military, he used these ratings to fly commercially for a short time in Texas. However, most of his flying after moving back to California was strictly “for fun.” This including flying an AT-6, Aeronca Sedan, Cessna 180, Cessna 182, Cardinal 177, A36 Bonanza, Cessna 210, and Cherokee 180. In addition, he continued to fly his father’s Stinson. He earned his seaplane rating in 1996. While he currently isn’t flying, he hopes to purchase another aircraft in the near future so he can motivate his grandchildren to also become pilots.

For 18 years Sean owned a specialty drywall supply business, serving as a dealer of drywall, plaster, metal framing, exterior coatings, roofing materials, and insulation. He owned the former Wright Brothers Supply business. He further expanded the business to two other locations, and eventually sold all three businesses which did \$20 million in business during his last year of ownership. He felt it was time to relax and enjoy his family and life more.

Sean is now an active volunteer at PCAM, lending his talents to help improve the museum assets.

Sean is very proud of the four years he served in the Air Force, and “would do it all over again.” PCAM is also proud of Sean’s accomplishments and his lifelong service to the military, the construction industry, and now to our museum. Thank you, Sean.



## Alfredo “Al” Ramos, Jr., US Navy



The familiar smiling face of a man of wonderful humor who frequently supports PCAM activities is that of Alfredo “Al” Ramos Jr. Born on Nov. 5, 1956, in New York City, NY, he is now easily recognized by the accent he retains to this day. He lived in the Spanish Harlem district of Manhattan, Queens, the Bronx and on Long Island, experiencing several diverse cultural environments. His grandparents originally came from Puerto Rico where they owned a pig farm.

Al served with the US Navy from February 1974 until 1978 where he earned the rank of E4 Petty Officer Third Class Petty. He then served with the Army National Guard from June 1980 until June 1983 where he achieved the rank of E5 Petty Officer Second Class.

In school Al excelled in athletics and did well academically in spite of language challenges. However, he decided to leave high school prematurely because of pressure to change his last name which he believed deprived him of his cultural heritage. At the age of 17, while in his senior year of high school, he decided to enlist in the military, against the wishes of his parents who eventually signed for him

He enlisted with a friend under the “buddy system” in hopes they would stay together. While their first choice was the Air Force, they ended up joining the US Navy. Both scored well enough to make the same Basic “A School” (where sailors go to received technical training in their selected military occupational specialty or MOS).

However, in class the Sergeant made an arbitrary decision as to where the attendees would be sent. To their chagrin, they were separated and sent to different boot camps. Al was sent to Great Lakes Naval Training Center outside of Chicago, IL in February. His first experience was being handed a shovel to clear the snow. He likened his early experiences to that of prisoners being incarcerated and meeting other prisoners for the first time. On the second day, five of the inductees “disappeared,” presumably because of the harsh conditions. Al maintained a good attitude in spite of the fact that some of the inductees had been forced to enlist in lieu of going to prison. Eventually they all became a “brotherhood.”

At Boot Camp they attended classes on seamanship and military law and also participated in athletics. His class never won any educational awards, but did win the “A flag” for athletics, largely because of their prowess “in the pool.” Their company commander was only an E-5, which puzzled Al since other companies had Chiefs (E-6 and E-7s) as commanders. But this commander was a “tough cookie” and made his recruits toe the line. Boot camp was 10 weeks long. From there Al moved on to his “A school,” where he was assigned to be a Gunners Mate. Since Al wanted aviation, he appealed this assignment. This backfired, resulting in his being assigned to the fleet “unrated.” This meant he “belonged to everybody” on board ship. His first assignment was on the USS *Constellation* in the Philippines. Once aboard, it hit Al “like a ton of bricks” that he didn’t know anybody but was going to be there for a long time. Fortunately, he got some early support to help him acclimate.

Shortly after being assigned to the ship, he and a group of sailors were taken to a quonset hut to address disgruntled shipmates, largely because of inconsistent treatment along racial lines. At the age of 17 this proved to be an eye-opening experience as vitriolic exchanges took place during the sessions. The purpose of these sessions was to avoid an impending race riot on board the ship. Fortunately, the intervention worked because Al doesn’t recall any further problems while he served two years on the *Constellation*.



His initial assignment was as an E2 in the engine room. He recalls this as a hot and dirty job. So he continuously appealed to be reassigned to the flight deck and finally prevailed just before the ship crossed the equator. This allowed Al to participate in the "Crossing the Line" Shellback initiation ceremony. He was a pollywog and had to spend time in the "coffin" filled with rotten food. Then he rubbed his face in King Neptune's belly and underwent further gross initiation rituals that shall remain undisclosed.

Al started his flight deck work as a "blue shirt" doing the "grunt" duties. Finally he got to go to his "A School" in Lakehurst, NJ, the home of the Hindenburg disaster. After eight weeks of schooling, he returned to the Constellation as an E-3 Petty Officer Aviation Boatswain's Mate. That allowed him to begin working with F-4 Phantoms as a handler. While on the Constellation, they participated in Operation Midlink. They were the first to go into the Persian Gulf serving as the "carrier" vessel during that operation.

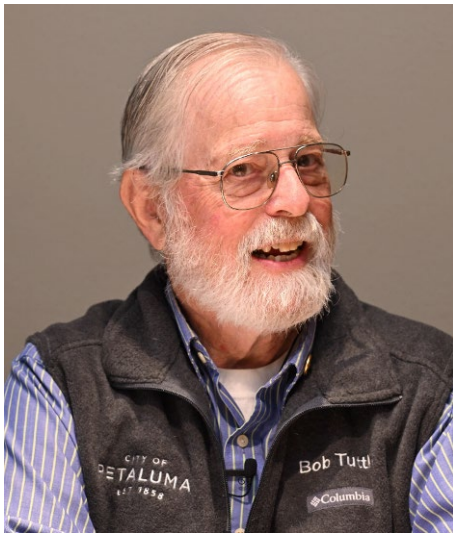
Subsequently he was temporarily transferred to the USS *Enterprise* while the Constellation was being retrofitted for F-14s. The Enterprise was home ported in Alameda (CA). From the Enterprise, he was assigned to the USS *America*, stationed in Norfolk, VA. He participated in a 9-month cruise before he was discharged. He separated from the Navy in Philadelphia.

While in the Navy, Al took firefighter training in San Diego and again in Philadelphia. This ultimately contributed to his later career as a Fire Chief. However, Al had already decided to enlist on the Army National Guard working with the Helicopter detachment. He worked as a crew chief on Huey helicopters, which afforded him the ability to do some flying. On occasion he got to fly under the Brooklyn Bridge, around the Twin Towers, and over Martha's Vineyard and Fort Drum (NY).

After leaving the Army National Guard, Al looked into the Veteran Readjustment Act program, and discovered that the Veteran Administration had a fire department. So he put in for a firefighter job, and because of his prior experience was hired. When the Coast Guard Support Center where he worked for six years was closed, he looked for other Coast Guard Base firefighter jobs. He was selected for the job at the Coast Guard Center at Two Rock in Petaluma, CA. While there he became the first Hispanic Fire Chief in the entire Coast Guard. For his work there, Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey gave Al and his fire department staff a Congressional commendation for the excellent work they did to provide training in rural communities and at local volunteer fire departments.

Currently Al shares his expertise (and great humor) as a volunteer with the Pacific Coast Air Museum. For that and his many notable contributions in the US Navy, the Army National Guard, and the fire fighting profession, we are most appreciative and thank Al for a lifetime of public service.

## Robert "Bob" Tuttle, Jr., US Navy



Born in Oakland, CA on December 30, 1946, Robert "Bob" Tuttle Jr. is a man of many talents and experiences, including serving as the current videographer for the PCAM Oral History Team. Bob served in the US Navy from March 1965 until March 1971 achieving the rank of Aviation Electronic Technical Navigation Petty Officer Second Class (AETN2).

He attended grammar school through high school in Daly City, CA. While in the 5th grade, he began playing the trombone, and continued playing through high school, including in the jazz band. They played concerts and marched at various events. Bob also built race cars for drag racing, starting out with a 1950 Chevy he bought for \$50 at the age of 14.

Toward the end of high school, Bob worked for Stone Flying A gas station as a mechanic, and Manny's Flying A afterwards. He also worked for printers doing drafting and off-set printing while continuing to play in "The Swing Kings." One night he was forced to work late, causing him to miss band practice, which resulted in his getting kicked out of his beloved jazz band. So he decided to join the military. He requested "Naval Air" which required serving two years of active duty and four years of reserve.

Boot Camp was in San Diego. While Tuttle was there, the Navy was looking for musicians to play in the Drum and Bugle Corp. Bob immediately volunteered, allowing him to resume his music. Because of his prior experience, he was assigned to lead the brass section of the band. Two weeks later, he was leading the entire marching band. So most of his time in Boot Camp was spent marching and playing music, with virtually no time spent on typical boot camp drills. Instead the band often played at events and marched in parades.

Before leaving Boot Camp, one of Bob's bandmates asked him to call his sister Marilyn when he got home. He did, they went out on a date, and eventually they married.

From Boot Camp, Bob was sent to Electronics school at the Naval Base in Millington, TN. One of his first projects was to build an AM radio. Having worked with soldering in the past, he found this easy. Asked to extend his enlistment for a year, he was sent to Radar School, still in Millington. One day, while out for a run, his speed was noticed, so he was asked to join the Navy's track team. Their main objective was to "beat the Marines" at the mile, which they never had done. When Bob succeeded in placing first, the Commanding Officer was very happy. This paid dividends later when Bob was asked to join a private jazz band in Memphis (this time playing the tuba) which required getting time off base in the evenings. The Commanding Officer generously approved Bob's request, likely to show his appreciation for Bob's success in "beating the Marines." On the first evening Bob joined the band, he was shocked to learn that he was not only the youngest person in the band (at the age of 19), but that the next youngest person was 68 years old. Additionally, there weren't any music stands on the stage, so when the band began playing, he had to determine the key in which they were playing, and improvise as they went along.

Once Bob finished Radar school, he was told he was being sent to another school, that was "a secret." When he arrived, there were five other students, and the instructor told them they were attending the Navy's first airborne computer school for large aircraft. Most of the students had never heard of a computer. They learned that it was linked to the Navy's LORAN (LONG RANGE Navigation) a radio navigation system that uses radio signals to calculate a receiver's position) and TACAN (Tactical Air Navigation) designed for naval aircraft to acquire moving landing platforms, so it was a navigational computer that obtained information from existing systems to do "true positioning." Their first test flight navigating entirely by computer was a success.

Before receiving "flight status," he attended counterinsurgency training. During this training, he also learned how to navigate and to trap and kill his food. Then they participated in "day evasion" drills that conditioned them for potential capture. Out of over 100 participants, Bob was one of only five candidates who made it to a predetermined location without getting captured.

Upon completion of this schooling, he received orders to go to Agana, Guam. Before deploying, he went home to visit Marilyn, then boarded a plane to Guam via Hawaii. In Guam, he installed the navigational computer in several aircraft. His first (test) flight was with the Weather Reconnaissance Squadron Four on an EC-121 Lockheed Super Constellation that was conducting typhoon tracking. The Constellation was nicknamed the "Willy Victor" since the original Navy designation for the airborne early warning version of the Warning Star was WV, prompting the crews to adopt this nickname. The Willy Victor also conducted air sea rescue. It had an APS45 radar dome on the top and an APS 20 radar on the belly of the aircraft. These had a 500 mile diameter radar coverage. There were five Combat Information Control stations in a room that acted as tactical centers providing processed information for command and control for the battle space or area of operations. The Willy Victor had up to 38 crew members. Bob became the tactical coordinator for the flight crew. That title remained with Bob for the remainder of his time in the Navy. They flew their missions no higher than 10,000 feet, and sometimes as low as 1,000 feet. In flight they dropped sonobuoys out of the plane to measure water temperature in a typhoon.

During turbulent flights, they often experienced weightlessness. They learned that anything not tied down would become airborne, potentially becoming a dangerous flying projectile. Bob's squadron typically didn't fly into a typhoon unless it was at least a Category 2 with wind speeds of 96 to 110 mph (or higher). Their biggest challenge in a typhoon was encountering a wall cloud where a super downdraft and super updraft sheer occurred. In one instance the edge of a sheer tore the tip tank off of one of the wings. On the radar, a wall cloud shows up as a white solid line.

Bob's next flight was to Vietnam (in 1966). The flight took them from Guam to Olongapo in the Philippines, and on to Vietnam where they landed on a metal runway. The base was still primitive necessitating that they live in tents the entire time. They flew north of the Naval Fleet to an area on an East/West track between North Vietnam and Hainan Island. On this route, they searched for aircraft flying out of Hainan (MIGs), and also looked for PT Boats trying to penetrate the Fleet. They also helped with Air Sea Rescue, vectoring rescue boats to pick up pilots who were shot down. Hence they were connected to every single emergency channel and also to the "enemy" radio channels.

After 1-1/2 months, Bob returned to Guam where, again, he conducted typhoon tracking. Because in the interim he had developed a way to monitor radar without losing detail during the sweeps, the Commanding Officer made him the "official trainer" for the twelve crews. This meant more trips to Vietnam while training a given crew, and then returning to Guam to "fly typhoons." In 1966 there were 120-plus typhoons, in 1967 there were 168 typhoons, and in 1968 there were over 150 typhoons, which kept Bob and the crews very busy. During every mission, they made two penetrations, flying into the typhoon to take readings, exit to transmit the data, circle the typhoon, and then fly in again to take another series of readings before finding a place to land. Given all of the auxiliary fuel tanks on the plane, they could fly up to 25 hours, with the typical mission being 20 hours. They would fly these missions every other day. Bob estimates that he had over 10,000 flight hours with 5,000 of them in territory north of the DMZ.



As Bob approached his discharge date, the Commanding Officer approached him and suggested having him assigned to China Lake Naval Weapons Research. While interested, Bob declined in order to preserve his marriage. Although he had finally left the Navy, the recruiter advised that he was still in the reserves, and was told to report to NAS Alameda to attend weekly sessions. He was hired at Electronic Services since they were looking for someone with a Top Secret Crypto clearance, which Bob had, because they were working on ships with the type of equipment Bob had worked with. He worked there for two years, and subsequently for several other high technology companies over the years utilizing many of the talents he acquired while in active Naval service.

As an early adopter of technology during the Vietnam War, a person who always sought to improve ways to do his job, and someone who helped keep the Naval fleet and pilots safe, PCAM thanks Bob for his noteworthy service, for sharing his story, and for his current contributions as a valuable volunteer.

## **Kenneth “Ken” Woolery, US Army**

Kenneth “Ken” Woolery’s story is one full of hardships and challenges. Born in Las Animas, CO on April 5, 1928, his family moved to Kansas where they were homesteaders. He was the last born of 10 children. When Ken was five years old, his father was killed while attempting to rob a bank. In order to support the family, his mother moved them “to town” where she got a job. One day the dam above the town burst, flooding the entire town. So Ken’s mother again moved the family, back to Colorado. These were difficult times, as America was in the midst of the Great Depression. Two of Ken’s brothers obtained work with the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) helping to put food on the table. Ken remembers being hungry all of the time, so this money helped.



In 1942 two brothers enlisted in the US Army, further helping the family financially since they sent much of their paycheck home. A few years later the entire family moved to Long Beach, CA where other brothers worked in the ship yards. Admittedly a poor student, Ken got a series of odd jobs including driving a truck. He married, but then received a draft notice from the US Army as America was now involved in the Korean War. Classified 1A in spite of a pinched nerve in his back, Ken was sent to Camp Roberts, CA for basic training. Ironically, while being fitted for boots, a doctor gave him orthotics which cured his back problems. After basic training, he boarded a ship for Korea. The seas were angry from a typhoon, causing the ship’s propellers to pitch out of the water and forcing the sailors to strap themselves to their bunks. Eventually they landed in Japan, where they boarded a train full of rats and mice. After reaching their destination, Ken was assigned to the US Army 2nd Division, which was sent to Korea.

While in Korea, Ken was involved in the taking of seven hills. He vividly recalled climbing each hill and being shot at by an unseen enemy of North Korean and Chinese soldiers. The US troops fired their M1 rifles and threw hand grenades up the hills, but most grenades rolled back down, causing the men to scramble for safety.

The men dug foxholes for shelter and slept in them even during rainstorms. After his division suffered a set number of casualties, they were relieved of duty and moved to the rear, where they slept in pup tents and ate rations.

On occasion Ken’s group would go back into the hills to retrieve the dead. They found that the enemy had often stripped the bodies of all valuables.

Ken was eventually assigned to the motor pool, where he would pick up supplies and transport them to the troops. He remembers driving through areas of intolerable stench, where human feces were used to fertilize the vegetable crops. After observing these filthy conditions, he refused to eat fresh vegetables.

One day Ken noticed a jeep had broken loose and was heading uncontrollably down the hill toward a tent. He ran after it, trying to stop it, but unfortunately it ran over his foot during the effort. It injured his toe, severing the toenail and damaging the bone. But he was successful in stopping it before it entered the tent. In addition to this injury, Ken was hit in the neck by shrapnel. He also had a hole in his back, presumably also from shrapnel. Some of this shrapnel is still in his neck.

Eventually Ken earned enough points to return home as a Corporal. He was sent to Japan where he spent three months before returning to the States on the USS *Bexar*, a Haskell-class attack transport ship. They docked at Pittsburg, CA, and he was bussed to Camp Roberts, CA on the Monterey Peninsula. Army miscommunications reported Ken AWOL in Korea. While discharging at Fort Ord, CA he was still reported AWOL. Finally reconciled, Ken returned to his wife and young daughter in Compton, CA. Suffering from foot and hearing problems, and still carrying shrapnel, Ken was evaluated at the VA Hospital in San Francisco to determine if he was eligible for benefits. His request was turned down, so he appealed. The judge ruled in his favor, but he was still denied benefits. Thirty years later, his case was reviewed again and he was awarded a settlement of \$30,000 and receives \$832 every month. Justice was finally served. He was able to use the GI Bill to finance his first home.

In spite of the many challenges dealt Ken and his family, he honorably served his country and fellow soldiers during the Korean War. His brothers also served our country during WWII. PCAM thanks Ken and his dedicated family for their service, and Ken for sharing his story with the Oral History Team.

## Flown West - Bob Stratos

On Friday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, Bob Stratos passed away peacefully in his home. We, the PCAM community, are very saddened by this loss. Bob was a wonderful volunteer full of knowledge and drive, someone you were always happy to see on the museum grounds. Filled with knowledge and endless stories, Bob was instrumental on our helicopter displays. He was a driving force behind our H-34. In fact, it was his enthusiasm that convinced Lynn Hunt to donate the project to PCAM in the first place. With endless hours put into restoring both the Huey and the H-34, Bob and his partner Mary are a large reason why those displays look as good as they do today. With the displays being open as often as they could, there was always a good chance of getting to look inside these beautiful machines and admire the attention to detail that Bob worked so hard to achieve. As a gesture of thanks and gratitude, PCAM will be making two murals for Bob that will hang in each helicopter helping to tell his story and what he did for this museum. We wish you blue skies forever. We can never say thank you enough for all of your contributions to our organization. Rest easy, friend.





## Member Story

By Kathie Morgan

In November a very special visitor paid us a call. Ken Fink (CDR USN Ret) of Portland, OR, first visited Sonoma County back in 1986 when the EA-6B Prowler in which he was flying caught fire and plunged into the ocean just off Bodega Bay. Ken and his fellow crew members – Kenneth Lipscomb and John Greene – had to eject and parachute into the ocean and were speedily picked up by a fishing charter boat, the Merry Jane.

I was fishing aboard the Merry Jane that day, and I sold the black-and-white photos I took of the rescue to the Press Democrat, which in turn sold them to the Associated Press. Ken Fink, the navigator, and I exchanged contact information, and we have kept in touch ever since.

In 2014 Pacific Coast Air Museum took delivery of the same type of plane. When I read in the Press Democrat that it was on its way, I called the museum and was connected to Mark Fajardin. After hearing my story and learning of my curiosity to see the plane, he invited me over. I climbed into the cockpit and was surprised at how small it seemed. He pointed out a list of the plane's crewmen on the drop tanks.

In 2019, Bob Matreci helped me put together a members meeting program about the dramatic rescue of those three fliers. I sent Ken a report of the meeting, but by then – after more than three decades – correspondence between us had dwindled to Christmas cards at best.

What a treat, then, when he called to say that he and his wife Kathy were coming to visit! He had trouble finding me at first. Since we last spoke, I have a new mailing address, new phone number, and new email address. But he remembered that I had joined the Air Museum, so he called there and they contacted me. Learning the identifying number of our EA-6B, he checked his logbook and was delighted to learn that he had flown in the plane we have on display, as both a student and a flight instructor.

We looked forward with great anticipation to his visit. What a surprise when he showed up with newspaper clippings and other memorabilia of that fateful day. Unfortunately we had only a few hours to visit. A few days might not have been enough. He had photographs of the salvaging of the plane and a copy of the Navy accident report, which found that the fire was started when a liquid oxygen converter exploded and ruptured a fuel cell.

When I learned that he had 60 flight hours in the very aircraft that we now have on display, I called Fajardin to ask if Ken might be allowed to write his name on the list of crewmen. No, not a good idea, Fajardin replied. It turns out that tourists from all over saw the list, which began as a roster of the plane's crew, as an invitation to add their own names, regardless of any – or no – history with the plane. Because of this, the drop tanks were removed in order to stop the "graffiti" the tourists were adding and to preserve the original crewmen's signatures.

But, as Ken had been an actual crewman on our plane, Bureau Number 158811, he was welcome to sign in a place less visible.

"Ken wrote his name in the port wheel well area, maybe a little bit forward," Kathy told me later.

Ken wrote not only his name but a brief history of his service therein: "60.1 hours, 29 flights, first carrier landing in this aircraft."

The planes here at PCAM all have stories to tell. I am happy to have played a part in this one.



Cdr (Ret) Ken Fink with Kathie Morgan  
Photo by Kathy Fink



Photo by Jim Mattison



## BLAST FROM THE PAST

More pictures for your liking. A sampling of years gone by. Allow the memory banks to get some exercise. Can you guess the year?





## Dates to Remember

### Member Meetings

January 15, 2025

February 19, 2025

March 19, 2025

*Hangar 2 Third Wednesday of the month 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.*

Entrance is near the old Dragonfly building. The first portion of the meeting is informational. Get the scoop on the latest happenings at the museum. Catch up with fellow members during the break, followed by a guest speaker presentation.

## Open Cockpit Saturdays

Open Cockpit Saturdays at the Pacific Coast Air Museum are a great activity for kids and family. We raise the canopies and open the doors to give you an unobstructed view inside a genuine fighter plane, attack plane, transport, or helicopter.

You can even sit inside some of our planes and see what it was like to be the pilot or crew! On some planes, the controls are still hooked up to the control surfaces. So if you move the stick or wheel, you can see the ailerons or elevator move! It's a great way to learn about how a plane is controlled.

Some of the docents who guide you into the planes actually flew these very same aircraft. They'll be happy to tell you all about it.

We have Open Cockpit on select Saturdays except January (because of the weather.) Check [www.pacificcoastairmuseum.org](http://www.pacificcoastairmuseum.org) for information regarding dates and which aircraft will be open.



Jim Mattison, crew chief and docent

## The Pacific Coast Air Museum's Platinum Sponsors

The Pacific Coast Air Museum thanks its Platinum Level Sponsors whose contributions help make our museum the thriving community resource it is! If you would like to find out about sponsorship opportunities with the Pacific Coast Air Museum, contact Doug Clay, PCAM Development Chair, 925-997-2774 or [dougclay@gmail.com](mailto:dougclay@gmail.com).



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*Santa Rosa*



## Pacific Coast Air Museum

### Location

One Air Museum Way, Santa Rosa, CA, 95403 [www.pacificcoastairmuseum.org](http://www.pacificcoastairmuseum.org) 707-575-7900

### Directions

Hwy 101 north to Airport Blvd. and go west. Turn left on North Laughlin Rd, right on Becker Blvd., then right on Air Museum Way.

### Hours

Visit our web site at [www.pacificcoastairmuseum.org](http://www.pacificcoastairmuseum.org) or call 707-575-7900 for more information.

### Open Cockpit Saturdays

One or more aircraft are open for close examination on the third Saturday of each month (weather permitting) and you can climb aboard some of them! For more info, phone 707-575-7900 or visit [www.pacificcoastairmuseum.org](http://www.pacificcoastairmuseum.org).

### Member Meetings

Third Wednesday of each month, 7:00 p.m. at Hangar 2 on museum property.

### “Straight Scoop” Newsletter

The PCAM newsletter, “Straight Scoop,” is published quarterly and is available online on the museum’s web site. Members are encouraged to submit articles for possible publication. Deadline for article submission is the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month prior to publication. All articles in the newsletter are covered by copyright. If you wish to submit articles or use any of the content, please contact Dana Hunt at [albaviper44@yahoo.com](mailto:albaviper44@yahoo.com) or 707-540-5758.

Be sure to advise the museum of any updates to your contact information by calling 707-575-7900 or email [admin@pacificcoastairmuseum.org](mailto:admin@pacificcoastairmuseum.org)

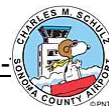
**Membership Renewals** Send renewals to Pacific Coast Air Museum, One Air Museum Way, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

\$50	Individual	\$250	Silver
\$100	Family	\$500	Gold
\$40	Seniors, Teachers, Students	\$750	Platinum
\$25	Veterans and Active Duty Military	\$1,000	Lifetime

The Pacific Coast Air Museum hosts many family-friendly and child-friendly events all year 'round. We host monthly member meetings, monthly Hot Dog Thursday lunches from April through October, and special events like car shows, guest lecturers and more!

Most events focus upon aviation and our collection of over 35 historic aircraft including military jets, helicopters, and other classic airplanes.

Members are encouraged to read the “Red Baron Flyer,” the quarterly newsletter of the Charles M. Schulz-Sonoma County Airport: <http://www.sonomacountyairport.org/red-baron->



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