



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

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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:**

We cancelled the member's meeting that was scheduled for Saturday January 29<sup>th</sup> due to a severe snowstorm across much of New England on that date. We covered the January agenda in February.

David Banagis passed away recently. Some of you may remember him. He was a member of the Patriot Squadron for a few years but dropped out. He used to show up at the museum from time to time. He was stationed at NAS South Weymouth between the late 1950s and early 1970s. A few years ago he published his Navy memoirs, a book called "Twenty-Three Days at Sea". It is an interesting book and worth reading since it covers his time at NAS South Weymouth. You can check it out at <https://www.authorhouse.com/en/bookstore/bookdetails/474756-Twenty-Three-Days-at-Sea>

On Saturday December 4<sup>th</sup> twenty-one Patriot Squadron members and guests met at the Abington Ale House restaurant on Route 18 in Abington, MA for a holiday luncheon. We could not do this in December 2020 due to restrictions on public gatherings in Massachusetts in reaction to the "Wuhan Flu". The two photos on the following page show most of the people who were present at this event.



Your newsletter editor recently had a feature article about CDR John Shea published in the Association of Naval Aviation's Wings of Gold magazine. This article is reproduced on the two pages that follow.

## In Remembrance

### Commander John J. Shea, USNR

tribute & photos submitted by Marc J. Frattasio, AW1 USNR (Retired), ANA Patriot Squadron



*LT John Shea, USNR c1930 (U.S. Navy photo from author's collection)*

CDR John J. Shea, USNR, is an important part of the history and heritage of NAS Squantum, Massachusetts, the birthplace of the Naval Air Reserve.

John Joseph Shea was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on January 13, 1895. A devout Catholic

with a strong sense of duty and a patriotic love for his country, he volunteered to serve in the Navy during the First World War on June 11, 1918, just a few days after he graduated from college.

He successfully completed flight training, was commissioned as an

Ensign, and was designated a Naval Aviator in 1919.

After Shea was honorably released from active duty in 1921, he joined the U.S. Naval Aviation Association, a group of veteran Navy pilots from the Boston area who wanted to continue flying.

Members of the Association petitioned to use the abandoned First World War seaplane base in the Squantum section of nearby Quincy to establish and operate a reserve aviation training program for the Navy. On August 15, 1923 the old base at Squantum was re-activated and commissioned as Naval Reserve Air Station Squantum.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Jack Shea was a highly visible and active figure at Squantum. It was largely through his initiative that Squantum was expanded from its starting point as a seaplane base in 1923, to a seaplane base with a turf airfield, capable of operating landplanes by 1930, and then finally becoming a modern Naval Air Station. This transformation was accomplished just in time for NAS Squantum to serve on the front line of the Battle

of the Atlantic during the Second World War.

In 1940, LCDR Jack Shea was activated as part of a general call-up of Reservists in response to the Second World War starting in Europe, and in March 1942 he was transferred to the aircraft carrier USS Wasp (CV-7) as Assistant Air Officer.

LCDR Jack Shea was killed in action on September 15th, 1942 when USS Wasp was hit and sunk near the Solomon Islands by torpedoes fired by the Japanese Imperial Navy.

When last seen by his shipmates, LCDR Shea was helping to fight raging fires on the carrier's wooden flight deck. His Navy Cross citation reads, in part, "Lieutenant Commander Shea disregarded the danger from the fires, flying debris, and exploding ammunition to carry on his fight." He was posthumously promoted to Commander and was awarded the Navy Cross and Purple Heart.

He was only 43 years old when he died, and he left behind a wife and four-year-old son. CDR Shea became famous after a letter he wrote to his son, John Shea Jr., also known as "Jackie", was printed in a pamphlet



*USS Wasp (CV-7) burning and listing after being torpedoed, Sept 15, 1942 (U.S. Navy photo)*

Today, CDR John J. Shea is remembered and honored through the continued existence of Shea Memorial Drive and the Shea Memorial Grove Park on old NAS South Weymouth. The CDR Shea memorial plaque has been relocated to in front of the flagpole at the Shea Memorial Grove park, and the Patriot Squadron strives to ensure that CDR Shea is remembered through our Shea Naval Aviation Museum. It is worth noting that Claudette Shea, widow of John Shea Jr. of "Letter to Jackie" fame, is a member of the Patriot Squadron.

by his sisters Cecelia and Dorothea, public school teachers in Boston. The so-called "Letter to Jackie" was subsequently reproduced in newspapers and magazines across the country and served as an inspiring morale-builder during the early months of the war in the Pacific, at a time when things were not going so well for the United States.

The men and women associated with NAS Squantum never forgot Jack Shea. On July 20th 1946 the airfield on the base was officially named "Shea Field" in his honor. After NAS Squantum was closed in January 1954, the CDR Shea memorial plaque was relocated to NAS South Weymouth, the airfield was named "Shea Field", and the main road through the base was renamed Shea Memorial Drive.



*CDR Shea's widow Elizabeth and son "Jackie" at the dedication ceremony for the memorial plaque at NAS Squantum, July 20, 1946 (U.S. Navy photo from author's collection)*

If you are not already aware of it, the ANA Patriot Squadron is the Boston area chapter of 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 join the national group, we do encourage people to do so. The quarterly Wings of Gold magazine is, by itself, well worth the cost of Association of Naval Aviation membership. You can check them out at [www.anahq.org](http://www.anahq.org).

### **COMING UP:**

September 2022 will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the closing of NAS South Weymouth. No promises, but a reunion event is under consideration for that month, perhaps in conjunction with the local reserve patrol squadron alumni group, the VP Association. A decision to go forward or not with a reunion event will be made before the June issue of this newsletter is ready for distribution.

### **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 on Union Point needs to be repainted and the signage at the park needs extensive restoration work or replacement. In the past, the aircraft was repainted by Patriot Squadron members with military experience painting aircraft, but these people are no longer active with our organization.

Some touch-up work was performed on the aircraft’s markings a few years ago by a work party organized by your newsletter editor. This was effort was never intended to be any more than a temporary cosmetic fix to help keep the aircraft presentable for a few more years. The old aircraft looks OK from a distance, but up close you can see how the finish has deteriorated. The problem is most severe on the upper surfaces, away from public view, where the paint has been eroded by direct exposure to the sun and is flaking off in sheets.

Regarding the three large wooden signs at the park, elements of their structure has been severely damaged by rot over the years and all the signs require extensive repair/restoration, stripping, and repainting or replacement. Again, several work parties were organized by your newsletter editor over the past few years to sand down and touch up the paint on these signs. As was the case with the

touch-up work on the aircraft, the work performed on the signs was never intended to last and was merely a temporary expedient measure to try to keep them presentable for a little longer.

Well, the time has come to do something of a more lasting nature. The aircraft, in particular, is the centerpiece of the Shea Memorial Grove park. Its one of the few tangible reminders of old NAS South Weymouth at Union Point. In addition, the A-4B is an aircraft that was operated and maintained by both the Navy and Marines. Its something that's seen by thousands of people who pass through the old base on Shea Memorial Drive every day. Until the Shea Naval Aviation Museum gets back on track, the A-4B is really all that's left of the military history and heritage of old NAS South Weymouth at Union Point. We have an obligation to ensure that it remains presentable.

Member Frank Ward has been talking to R. J. McCauliffe Painting, the company that recently repainted two similar-sized display aircraft at Hanscom Field in Bedford, MA. This is a veteran-owned business that operates out of Lowell, MA. Your newsletter editor has seen the two repainted aircraft at Hanscom Field and they did a very good job. The price that the company quoted Frank Ward to repaint the A-4B at the Shea Memorial Grove is \$8,000 to \$12,000. This quote includes the following:

- Protect the worksite to include all landscaping
- Power-wash all surfaces of the plane and pedestal to remove debris
- Remove all decals from the plane
- Sand the entire plane
- Repair loose sheet metal as needed
- Power wash plane again
- Prime plane and pedestal with a primer tinted to the finish coat
- Apply two coats of DTM Paint (direct to metal) finish paint
- Apply decals and paint lettering according to specifications and historical information. Paint scheme shall match existing layout.
- Paint application includes remarking the aircraft with matching stenciled identifications.
- We will protect all plant life around the plane by covering them and power-washing the plane with a biodegradable solution.

This seems to be a very good deal. Your newsletter editor reached out to the VP-93 alumni group, which maintains a P-3 Orion at the Selfridge Military Air Museum a few months ago regarding their aircraft, which they were (at that time) making preparations to have a contractor repaint. The company engaged by this group to repaint the P-3 provided an estimate of about \$40,000 to repaint the A-4B. Its not clear if the quote includes travel and living expenses (the company is located out of state).

At some point very soon, somebody is going to have to take action to repaint the aircraft and restore the signage at the park. In the past the Patriot Squadron has taken care of this, and unless something has changed in recent years with respect to the people who own the land on the old base, this is something that we will have to do again. It might be useful to approach whoever it is that owns the land that the park is on and see if they will take this on, but again, this has not been how the aircraft and the signage have been repainted in the past. This is something that the Patriot Squadron has been responsible for. It would be useful to have a better understanding of what the Patriot Squadron's "custodial obligations" really are with respect to the aircraft. But, again, this work has always been done by the Patriot Squadron in the past.

It would be nice if somebody in this group stepped up to the plate to organize a project to 1) raise funds to get this work done and then 2) manage the implementation to completion. A good

prerequisite step would be to approach the landowners on the base first to see if they would take this job on, but we'd have to discuss this among ourselves before approaching them and determine if abrogating this responsibility would cause us to give something else up that we might regret.

An attempt should be made to raise the money through a GoFundMe campaign tied to Facebook and other social media as well as through reaching out to local organizations such as the A-4 Skyhawk Association and the local chapter of the Marine Corps Aviation Association and also by placing signs (like political campaign signs) around the Shea Memorial Grove Park soliciting donations. Using Patriot Squadron funds for this purpose, although possible, would weaken our financial condition substantially. Your newsletter editor suggests a fund-raising goal of \$20,000. This should be enough to guarantee that the A-4B could be repainted and leave enough left over to have new signs made by a professional sign shop. The Patriot Squadron has a second bank account that was set up several years ago specifically for special fund-raising purposes and the GoFundMe campaign could be tied directly to this account to segregate funds raised for this purpose from general squadron funds.

Potential benefits of a public fund-raising campaign for the A-4 and signage restoration effort is 1) that it would provide an indication of public support (or lack of it) for the overall mission of the Patriot Squadron with respect to preserving the history of the old base, 2) it would provide a mechanism for people to become aware of the Patriot Squadron, and 3) it would give an opportunity for people to get involved.

Again, for such an effort to go forward we would need somebody to step up and commit to take this on as a project.

If there's anybody out there who would be interested in doing this, or in assuming a leadership position within the Patriot Squadron, please reach out to any member of the board of directors at any of our monthly meetings to express interest. Don't assume that just because somebody has been serving in a leadership position in this organization for many years means that person wants to remain in that position. If this organization is to continue, more people need to get involved.

The good news is that there is some interest within this group in at least raising the funds to get the A-4B painted. So far, with no organized fund-raising effort and through word of mouth only, \$3,000 has been raised for this purpose from a handful of Patriot Squadron members. We already have a segregated savings account for special fund-raising projects, separate from the group's CD and checking account, and the money raised for this effort will be placed in that special account. If anybody 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.

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.

## DID YOU KNOW?



NAS South Weymouth's VS-915 was one of several Naval Air Reserve carrier anti-submarine and patrol squadrons called up to active duty in 1961 for the Berlin Crisis and Cuban Blockade. Due to the proximity of NAS South Weymouth to the North Atlantic shipping lanes, VS-915 was the only activated reserve squadron capable of flying operational ASW and patrol missions from its home base. Detachments were also sent to Guantanamo Bay in Cuba to help patrol the Caribbean Sea

During the year or so that VS-915 was on active duty at NAS South Weymouth, the Grumman S2F-1 Trackers that the squadron operated wore the tail code "CS" to indicate that they were reserved for exclusive use by VS-915. Under normal circumstances VS-915 drew aircraft from a pool assigned to the reserve VS squadron training program on the base to support its drill weekend and annual training requirements. VS-915 shared these aircraft with up to six other reserve VS squadrons on the base. The pool aircraft, since they were allocated to NAS South Weymouth and not to the individual reserve VS squadrons, were marked with the base's identification code, which was "7Z".

When VS-915 was released from active duty in 1962 it went back to operating S-2 Trackers that were marked with "7Z" instead of "CS". This photo was taken during an air show on the base in May 1962.



## A WINDOW INTO THE PAST:



Prior to the reorganization of the Naval Air Reserve in 1970, the Navy and Marine Corps reserve units at NAS Squantum and NAS South Weymouth assembled as a group for a combined personnel inspection once a year. Usually an all-hands party was held on the base that night. This photo shows one of these combined reserve inspections held inside Hangar #64 (the so-called Neutrality Patrol Hangar) at NAS Squantum in the late 1940s or early 1950s.

