

“FILES AND PROFILES” FROM THE DISTRICT

“The Dixie District” District 17

April 2007 Issue

MEET OUR DISTRICT
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**DANNY
TOMPKINS**



D/Lt/C Danny Tompkins, JN

As we used to say in the South, back when the South was southern, I was born and raised in Montgomery AL. After being asked repeatedly not to return to the University of Alabama, I joined the Alabama National Guard 20th Special Forces Group. I was a member of that group for eight years, made about 65 military jumps (along with about 70 sky diving jumps) and left as a 1st Lt.

I graduated from Huntingdon College in Montgomery with a degree in accounting. I left the next day and moved to Atlanta and began working with a CPA firm. As many of us have, I have changed direction a few times. About twenty years ago I started a company that administers employee benefit plans for small and medium size employers. I am now in the process of winding down my participation in that endeavor as I turn it over to my son.

I met Margie in Atlanta the first year we were here. We have four grown children, all living in

Atlanta. Two are married. We have two grand darlings and three great inherited grand kids.

My love of the water began when my family spent our entire summers on Chawtahatchee Bay outside of Destin FL in the early 50's. Believe me, there was nothing in Destin in the 50's. We had to go up on the highway to use the phone. My sister and I lived in the water all summer. Later I worked as a deck hand on charter boats when I was in college.

From then until about ten years ago, I did not have the opportunity to get my feet wet. About then, Paul Marsal introduced me to USPS. I joined, began taking some classes and went to some membership meetings. At one of those meetings, I questioned why something was being done the way it was. Well, you know how that goes; the rest, as they say, is history.

I will say being involved with USPS has been a great ride. It just doesn't get any better than the year I had as Squadron Commander. I had the best XCOM and member support anyone could have. We accomplished a ton and had fun (M.Herron). The best part is that it has gotten better every year since then.

I can't say when I first became involved with District. I have been attending District meetings beginning in 1996. I do remember when the hook was set by the current District Commander. How many others out there have similar scars from hooks set by that same person? Seriously, it has been a great experience and she is a great mentor.

I see our role at the District level as being in transition just as USPS is in transition. If the District is to remain relevant, we must, more than ever, be the conduit for what is happening at the National level and how it can benefit the squadron members. And believe me, there are huge changes being made in every area of the organization. But they have to be communicated and implemented at the local level. And as important, if they don't work at the local level, we need to be communicating that back to National.



These next few years are going to be very dynamic times for USPS. Let's all get involved, at the National Level (Norfolk VA – Sept. 07), District (Jackson TN – Oct 07) and most important, with your friends at your local squadron level.

Jacksonville National Meeting From "First Timers" Perspectives

Have you ever had your "Mom" say that "It might be really nice if you. . ."? Well, our "Mom Janis" sent three of us an email that read in part "I thought it would be a super duper idea for the three of you to evaluate from a First Timer's perspective the meeting in Jacksonville." And we all know that we have to humor "Mom".

Three of us represented the Atlanta Squadron at the USPS Annual Meeting in Jacksonville. Actually more members from Atlanta had planned to attend, but work conflicts pared our numbers down to three First Timer's – Patti Price (our new SEO), Carol Jordan (Our new AdMin Officer) and Margaret Sherrod (our new Past Commander) – and a couple of seasoned meeting pros who we saw in passing from time to time. We knew this event would be a really big



Margaret Sherrod

gathering, so we had done some homework on the USPS website and arrived late Thursday afternoon at the conference headquarters hotel with copies of the preliminary schedule and the conference venue layout in hand. Since we really wanted to get copies of the final schedule and our voting credentials first thing, we headed to the main conference area to find the "registration desk".

This initial foray at the conference was not particularly successful but we learned some things and made connection with others members from D/17 while looking at one of the displays.

1. Keep an eye out for people you already know. They are frequently your best source of information (especially if they arrived early) until you get your bearings. It is also helpful to know who to look for, who else is coming. And don't be shy about asking strangers for help. If all else fails try the Membership or First Timers booth; they want you to feel welcome and will help in any way they can.
2. Booths manned by USPS staff may close early, so plan your arrival well in advance of "closing" time. Sometimes they also run out of handouts (like the final schedule) later in the day but have a fresh supply early in the day.
3. Even if you arrive a little late, go ahead and scope out the venue to locate the meeting rooms,

information booths and displays, restrooms, etc. you want to revisit later.

Don't count on the information booths and displays (including the Ship's Store) to be around after about 1000 on Saturday.

As it turned out, we were able to confirm



Carol Jordan

Friday's schedule since we already knew where the registration table was, first thing in the morning we easily obtained our voting credentials at the "Voter Registration" booth and copies of the schedule at the "Activities Registration" booth (not to be confused with the "hotel registration" desk.)

We had decided to stay at a nearby hotel we were familiar with from an earlier Atlanta Sail and Power Squadron cruise. This didn't seem to be a drawback. Besides saving on the room and parking, we had a chance to plan our day at a leisurely early morning breakfast (included with the room). It just required that we take along everything we were likely to need during the day when we headed to the conference hotel.

We found it worthwhile to attend one of the "First Timer's Orientation" sessions, where helpful information was provided by the Membership committee. By doing this on Friday, instead of Thursday afternoon, it cut into attending one of the departmental meetings we wanted to attend. We might have gotten similar information by visiting the Membership/First Timers booth.



Patti Price with the Cougar

One of the challenges was deciding which open sessions to attend on Friday. Patti focused on the Education department sessions; Carol focused on the Administrative department sessions; and Margaret focused on the strategic sessions. Had we had more squadron members there we could have covered

more of the sessions. Some of the departmental sessions, like the Treasurer Department, however, were closed and occurred earlier in the week. But all in all we came away with a good understanding about what was available to our squadron.

All of the departmental presentations we attended were packed with useful information. There was plenty of time to ask questions and you could always talk to the speaker after the presentation to discuss specific local issues or concerns. Most sessions were informal enough that you could come and go to attend other sessions or look at the displays.

We did not sign up for any of the USPS sponsored activities or special luncheons. Instead, we got out and walked to the Jacksonville Landing and enjoyed several lunches overlooking the St. John River.

The Annual Meeting on Saturday has a lot of pageantry and speeches with annual reports and recognitions by all the major committee chairs. It is a long and drawn-out affair, but it is an awesome sight with nearly 1,000 USPS members in attendance, most in the prescribed uniform of the day (Uniform "D", white slacks and shirt). Being more casual, we attended in Atlanta Sail and Power Squadron polo shirts and felt right at home.

While most of the vendors and speakers were asked to keep their remarks brief (using "Ernie's time" versus "regular time" or "fast time"), the program went on and on. Luckily all of the members from a district were seated together so we had our D/17 friends nearby to keep us awake. The initial governing board meeting lasted less than 30 minutes and went according to schedule. But the Annual Meeting had to be recessed early so that the afternoon Governing Board could be convened to swear in the newly elected national officers, committee chairs and representatives. The Annual Meeting was to be reconvened at the dinner later that evening.

The voting business of the Annual Meeting, for the most part was dispatched in faster than "Ernie's time", some in the waning minutes of the afternoon. The only contentious proposal was the three-year waiver of the testing requirement for USPS membership. After the result of the regular vote was challenged, a lengthy count was held and the motion carried with over two-thirds voting in favor of the motion. This applies at the national level and each squadron may choose to implement this waiver or not. A subsequent vote also waived for two years the membership transfer fee so current family members can become additional active members at no additional fee.

So that's our story, Mom. Thanks for making us do our homework and let all our members know that attending a national conference is a good learning experience as well as a fun one, too.

P/C Margaret Sherrod, JN

Lt/C Patti Price, AP

Lt/C Carol Jordan, P

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In Memoriam



"Sometime at eve when the tide is low,
I shall slip my mooring and sail away."

Once in a while someone comes along, enters our lives and leaves after making those of us left behind know that we are the better because of his being our friend.

One such person is **Bill MacMillan**. I met Carol and Bill when the three of us were rather new in the Power Squadron. We took classes and studied together, went boating and to rendezvous, saw Carol work through the squadron chairs. . . then saw Bill begin working through the squadron chairs. Before Bill finished the chairs, he and Carol decided they wanted to sail off into the Wild Blue Yonder. And that they did! They spent many months aboard their 42' Brewer *Skylark* enjoying the east coast before cancer reared its ugly head.

He was not only a gentleman, Bill was a gentle man. He was a true friend and we will miss his presence among us.

Now the Supreme Commander has called Bill to sail with Him in eternal calm waters, forever free from the storms and tempests of mortal life.

Our thoughts and prayers are sent to Carol and to their family during this time of sadness.

Bill's *Last Horizon* was in Stuart, Florida
15 February 2007.

Cooperative Charting 2007

As your District Chairman, I attended two seminars regarding the changes occurring for USPS Cooperative Charting. First of all, the geodetic survey service in which many members participated is over. USPS will not be participating in that endeavor any more. However, Cooperative Charting is still alive and well and a lot of USPS members, particularly in coastal areas are still doing



a great job helping out NOAA. As far as District 17 is concerned, our Cooperative Charting activities have been very slight for a few years and I attribute that to the new computer submissions rather than paper forms. (At least that is my excuse). The benefits for the coastal boaters and the public at

large, of obtaining charts electronically, have been proven to be highly popular.

Now the good news is that the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers will eventually have river charts available electronically; this is where we can help speed this process along. In my latest conversation with Duane Morrison, who is a member of the Electronic Navigation Chart Data Team of the Corps, we discussed that the best possible way for our qualified members to aid the USACE is to give precise latitude and longitude positions of the current buoys (both red and green) of our river systems, using a specific format. This can be accomplished using an Excel Work Sheet, simply plugging in GPS data (e.g. Use WGS 84 on your GPS and record information in this order DDMMS.S). Include the date and time the information was gathered and e-mail it to me for further processing. Be sure to include for my information your name, certificate number, squadron, time and miles spent gathering this information.



Another area we can participate in soon is the "Boating Guide to America", but this is not fully on line and accessible yet. The guide is coming soon, and with a valid certificate number one will

be able to update all kinds of information on various waterways. I will let you know as soon as this becomes available and will be happy to help anyone get started with these activities. Please feel free to contact me at dlgrotjan@aol.com

P/Stf/C Don Grotjan, SN



Commander's Comments

Last year, we had Spring. This year we are dealing with Winter slipping directly into Summer with temperatures soaring into the highs 80s. High temperatures + no rain = pollen, and lots of it!

So why don't we abandon our houses for the weekend and go straight to the boat? To stay inside a building with this weather is pure torture. Never mind that floors need mopping, windows need washing, and income taxes are looming in front of us, we need to be on the water.

Congratulations are in order to **Dick Raymont**, our district newsletter editor. Not only did he win the *Distinction in Journalism Award* for the Huntsville newsletter *Scuttlebutt*, he also secured the award for the district newsletter.

Our district website guru **Jeff Wise** is also due congratulations. Not only did he win the web award for the Atlanta Squadron, but for the district site, the *Award of Excellence* was granted.

Distinction in Journalism Awards also went to the following squadrons and their editors:

Atlanta – *Waterlog* – Lisa Herndon
Johnson City – *Dockside News* – Wilson Whitehead
Knoxville – *Now Hear This* – Janene & Bob Allen
Oak Ridge – *The Agonic Line* – Veronica O'Hearn

Website Awards were granted to the following squadrons and their web masters:

Huntsville - Tom Hamilton
Vulcan – Steve Langston

With boating activities on the water just ahead of us, think about rafting up with a nearby squadron or hosting a picnic with another squadron.

The more we get together, the more fun we have. Till next month,



boat safely and have fun. *Commander Janis*