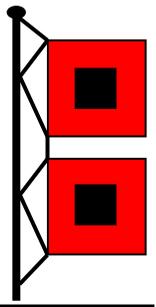


# HURRICANE HUNTERS NEWSLETTER



Publisher E.R. Eaton

Volume No. 16

Issue No. 1

Summer 2021

## From The President's Desk

This is probably the hardest post I have ever had to write to the Organization. Because of circumstances beyond my control, it has come time to dissolve the Organization known worldwide as The World-Famous US Navy Hurricane Hunters.

The Covid-19 pandemic has taken its toll on us all. Because the pandemic was the cause of the cancellation of the 2020 reunion and the fact that the majority of the members send their dues in with their registration, more than half of all members failed to pay their 2020 dues. As of today, fewer than twenty people have sent their dues in.

Gentlemen and ladies... The Organization cannot exist with no cash input.... And I'm just guessing here but, the lack of dues this year means not enough members have enough enthusiasm to support the continuation of the Organization

Therefore: The Officers and Board held a meeting and decided it was best of have a dissolution of THE WORLD-FAMOUS U.S. NAVY HURRICANE HUNTERS.

The 2019 reunion was the last reunion of the squadron.

I wish that circumstances had been different. This Organization has been a vital part of me for 20+ years. It has been my Honor and Privilege to have been elected President and served for almost 12 years.

Again: it is with a very heavy and sad heart that I make this announcement. I wish things had been different as I know that many of you plan a vacation around the reunion. It is your pleasure to greet, meet, and enjoy the company and friendship with people you have known for 50+ years.

Fair Winds and Following Seas  
Be kind to one another

Ennis R. Eaton  
President  
US Navy Hurricane Hunters

## Final Issue Of The *Hurricane Hunters Newsletter*

*By Paul Tilson, Editor*

A dwindling membership and even smaller attendance at recent reunions has led the officers and directors of Hurricane Hunters, Inc. to the sad decision to dissolve the corporation that for more than forty years, since the de-commissioning of VW-4, has sponsored our annual reunions and published the *Newsletter*.

As a result of this decision, this will be the final issue of the *Hurricane Hunters Newsletter*.

Several previous issues of the *Newsletter* are posted on the Navy Hurricane Hunters website at [navyhurricanehunters.com](http://navyhurricanehunters.com). With the dissolution of Hurricane Hunters, Inc., it is not certain at this time if the website will be taken down or become one of those things that lasts forever on the internet. To be on the safe side, those interested should probably go to the website and download all those items and articles they may want to keep for future reference.

Over the years, we have passed along articles, generally associated with Naval Aviation and most contributed or written by your fellow hunters, that we thought would be of interest to our readers, and in this, our final issue, we will present a few articles we have accumulated as well as other items of interest. We hope you enjoy them.

## Walt Walter's Christmas Flight In Antarctica

By H.J. "Walt" Walter

*Editor's Note: Shipmate "Walt" Walter was a founding member of our organization as well as the original editor of our Newsletter. During his illustrious career besides hunting hurricanes, he has flown aircraft on-and-off the ice in Antarctica, authored several novels and a comprehensive history of the Navy's involvement in hunting hurricanes, been a competitive firearms instructor and competitive shooter, and Director of the National Rifle Association (NRA). It seems right that our first editor should grace us with a tale from his past.*

This was my mission on December 25th, 1971.

I was assigned to deliver Christmas presents to two stations in Antarctica, Byrd Station and Brocton Station. Byrd Station was about 1000 miles from McMurdo Station and manned by about 20 Navy personnel. Brocton station was only about 300 miles from McMurdo located on the Ross Ice shelf, was manned by 2 navy personnel and was a weather station. Both stations were below surface level.

The crew mounted our trusty LC-130 Hercules and decided to fly out to Byrd station first and then land at Brocton Station on the return leg to McMurdo. The forecast weather was zero/zero with ice fog but because the weather changes rapidly we went anyway hoping for a change.

After approximately 3.5 hours in the air we were painted by the Ground Control Radar unit at Byrd and advised the weather was in fact actually zero visibility and clouds on the ground, fog. They asked if we wished to make an approach. Since it was Christmas we opted to do so. On final approach we descended below glide path and set up a rate of descent of 200 feet per minute. GCA kept us on course and as we approached minimums of 100' and ¼ mile we saw nothing. We continued our approach and quickly touched down and brought the aircraft to a stop but not before we ran off the skiway at about 3000' remaining. The GCA directed us with compass headings and guided us alongside the GCA unit. The temperature was about -50°F and GCA told

us we were making contrails on the ground. Once alongside the GCA unit they used guide ropes to get out and back to the unit. We gave them their mail, which included all their Christmas presents, a case of beer and then traded them 2 large bottles of peanut butter for some filet mignon. After this exchange GCA once again gave us compass headings out to the takeoff end of the skiway where we made an uneventful takeoff headed for Brocton.

On our approach to Brocton the weather was the same as Byrd Station, zero/zero. Using the sun for navigation we plotted the sunline through the station location and made a descent to Brocton. The station had no visible structures above the ice except for a few weather instruments and communication antennas. As we approached the station, we setup another 200' per minute descent and maintained a heading toward the station. Touchdown was accomplished short of the station and this time the navigator gave us headings to approach the entrance. We stopped about 20' short of the entrance and notified the weathermen to come up and get their presents. They were in shock that we had made a zero/zero landing just to deliver their presents. They had not had any visitors in about a month so we felt it was our responsibility to make their Christmas bright. We gave them their presents, half a case of beer and a large jar of peanut butter. Once the plane was buttoned up, we just added the power and made a zero/zero takeoff.

The flight back to McMurdo was without incident and we were pleased with what we had accomplished. Just another day of fight in the Antarctic.

## Source for Do-It-Yourself Squadron Memorabilia

A company called EZR Shop offers custom made caps, name tags, shirts, shadow boxes, mugs, face masks, just about anything you can think of; you just design it yourself. They can be found at: <https://ezrackbuilder.usamm.com/rack-builder/home> and called Monday through Friday from 0600 to 1700 Pacific Daylight Time at (877) 653-9577.

*(Continued on Page Three - See "Source for Do-It-Yourself Squadron...")*

## Source for Do-It-Yourself Squadron Memorabilia

(Continued from Page Two)

Front and back examples of a VW-4 cap as well as a USS America (CVA-66) and USS Thomas Jefferson (SSBN-618) are shown below.



When you contact EZR Shop, you can inquire about what other insignia are available for caps or shirts.

### HURRICANE HUNTERS, INC.

A non-profit Florida corporation 501.c.19

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Newsletter is published three times annually. Association dues are \$25.00 annually payable on January 1<sup>st</sup> or thereafter.

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Green Cove Springs, Florida 32043

## TAPS

*It is with a heavy heart that we report the passing of our members that are now on Eternal Patrol.*

James G. Grisham 03/17/2021 VW-4 1968-1972 He was a Radioman with the squadron. Reported by his wife Paula Alden with no other information

Gilbert G. Wagi, AGC 07/13/2020 He served in the Navy from 1964 to 1984 and retired as a Chief Aerographer's mate.

Herb Cover, AG 12/14/2020, a victim of COVID-19. He served in the squadron from 1972 until decommissioning in 1975. Reported by ATC J D Miles.

Alfred N. Fowler, Captain 01/14/2020 He was a well decorated pilot with both VP-23 and VW-4 He was the author of a book entitled "Hurricanes to Antarctica." Reported by his daughter Janine Sellers.

Ron Barnes 11/12/2020 Reported by his wife Mary Ann Barnes. <http://www.klaassenfuneralhome.com>

## MOVE OVER, 'KERMIT' AND 'MISS PIGGY' NEW KING AIR 350CER JOINS FLORIDA-BASED NOAA RESEARCH FLEET

January 5, 2021 By David Tulis

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Air Operations Center hangar with Lockheed WP-3D Orion "hurricane hunter" mainstays Kermit and Miss Piggy is getting a tad crowded after the recent addition of a new Textron Beechcraft King Air 350CER research aircraft badged as N67RF.

A new Textron Beechcraft King Air 350CER joins the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration aircraft fleet based at Lakeland Linder International Airport in Lakeland, Florida. Photo courtesy of Textron Aviation.

Anticipated missions for the extended-range, twin-turboprop King Air include photographic surveys

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## NEW KING AIR 350CER JOINS FLORIDA-BASED NOAA RESEARCH FLEET

*(Continued from Page Three)*

after earthquakes, oil spills, blizzards, tornadoes, floods, and named hurricanes. The \$11.8 million addition to the Lakeland, Florida, fleet doubled NOAA's King Air resources that are tasked with coastal mapping, snow and soil moisture surveys, and emergency response missions. The agency has operated one King Air 350CER since 2009, and the aircraft registered as N68RF was instrumental in providing key infrastructure damage reports after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico and Fernando Luis Ribas Dominicci Airport in 2017.

The new King Air is configured with Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A turboprop engines and Hartzell four-blade propellers, a Collins Aerospace Pro Line Fusion digital avionics suite with touch-screen controls, an optional cargo door for enhanced mission flexibility, and a pair of optical glass sensor ports for aerial research.

Standard specifications call for a 35,000-foot ceiling, a 2,400-fpm climb, a cruise speed of 245 knots, and a useful load of 6,033 pounds. The extended range version of the aircraft can "collect critical information while remaining airborne for 7 to 8 hours depending on fuel and payload," NOAA reported. Normal aircraft configuration includes seating for two pilots, a sensor operator, "and 1-2 additional crew members, depending on the amount of sensor equipment installed."

The King Air's two large downward-facing glass ports can support a wide variety of remote sensing systems including digital cameras, multispectral and hyperspectral sensors, topographic and bathymetric light detection and ranging (LIDAR) systems, and gamma radiation detectors, the administration noted. The dual-sensor port modification allows simultaneous data collection from multiple sensors and enhances the aircraft's research capabilities. The glass plates in the sensor ports allow the cabin to remain pressurized but can be removed "and the aircraft operated unpressurized, if required for science," NOAA said.

"We are honored the King Air 350CER aircraft continues to be the aircraft of choice to fill a variety of critical mission needs for NOAA," said Bob Gibbs, Textron Aviation vice president of special mission sales. "The aircraft's custom sensor port modification, combined with its extended range performance features, makes it a powerful and reliable platform to carry out the agency's unique missions during critical times."



*Photo courtesy of NOAA*

*NOAA's Beechcraft King Air 350CER N68RF prepares for takeoff.*

NOAA moved into the Lakeland Linder International Airport facility in 2017 and is expanding the existing operations building from 99,000 square feet to 156,043 square feet to accommodate additional aircraft and other improvements.

In 2019, the agency ordered a \$40.7 million Gulfstream G550 that would enter service in 2022 after modifications to support hurricane and tropical storm forecasts, atmospheric research, and other missions.

The special-mission fleet is rounded out by a de Havilland DHC-6-300 Twin Otter, a Gulfstream IV-SP high-altitude jet, and a Gulfstream Turbo Commander AC-695A that has seen service since 1984 and could soon be retired.

A fleet of aircraft are parked inside the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Air Operations Center hangar at Lakeland Linder International Airport in Lakeland, Florida.