

USS Midway OI Division

Scope Dope News

10th Anniversary Edition

DING DING . . . DING DING . . . SCHOOLBOY'S OI DIVISION, CIC OFFICERS,
RADARMEN, OPERATIONS SPECIALISTS AND OTHERS ARRIVING



2009 Reunion, Orlando, Florida, April 23-26

“Re-up for ‘McPhail's Navy’ – It's a Three-Day Tour”

Editor's note: Now hear this . . . this special edition of the *Scope Dope News* is designed to give you an overview of what to expect at the Orlando reunion next year. The Midway won't be there, but our reunion group's founder, **Ron McPhail**, will. Join us in honoring him for all he's done for the group. And be prepared to have some fun, too!

Celebrating the theme embodied in the headline above, the occasion of the sixth biennial reunion of the USS Midway OI Division Reunion Group is drawing closer, with only a few more details to iron out; overall, things are falling into place. Our focus will be to honor our reunion group's

founder **Ron McPhail**, who brought us all together starting in 1998, a full decade ago. So this is also a celebration of our reunion group's **Tenth Anniversary**. “Re-upping” in the context of our reunion theme means: 1) to give it your all to attend the reunion honoring Ron's accomplishments over the many years he ran our reunion group, 2) to have a “good time by all” and enjoy the company of our shipmates, their spouses, and guests, and 3) to visit some of the attractions in the Orlando area, which are many and include the nearby community of Winter Park, where Ron and his wife Mary live.

Following are pertinent details on the reunion as of mid-October 2008. Some of this may change but probably not. The reunion will be held at the **Residence Inn Marriott** in Altamonte Springs, Orlando, Florida, which checks out as a “Four-Star” hotel in all aspects. For those of you manning computers, if you can see through all the skunks and bogies on your screen, you can view the Resident Inn website at:

<http://www.residenceinnaltamontesprings.com/>.

The reunion is scheduled for **April 23-26, 2009**, with check-out the 26th. And if you’re planning on a longer stay, the group discount rate of **\$94/day** for a studio king and **\$149/day for a pent-house suite** will be extended for 3 days before (4/19) and 3 days after (4/30) the reunion. Reservations can be made through the hotel (407-788-7991) or the Marriott reservation line (800-331-3131) requesting the Altamonte Springs Residence Inn and using the function name USS Midway Reunion. Co-hosts of the reunion are **Jim Hayter** and **Clay Sponseller**, with able assistance from **Bill Kruper** and **Joe Reiter**.

We’re urging members past and present to attend because we want a good turnout for Ron’s celebration. So far, 27 members have said they are coming to Orlando, but we know we can do better (and the economy is looking brighter by the day). Chances are if you are present or past member of this reunion group, Ron recruited you. We owe him a lot, so we keep trying. Again, indicate your positive intention about attending the reunion to Jim Hayter or Oscar Granger (see their contact information in the “Masthead” on the last page of this newsletter.)

To celebrate Ron, we plan to have a lot of fun, including holding a combination **This Is Your Life Ron McPhail** and a **Roast of Ron** at the reunion dinner, as well as putting on a “live” skit with the working title of **McPhail’s Navy Meets the USS Midway**. Couple this with an open-mic

session in which we can spin some tall yarns about Ron, and you can well imagine what the dinner will be like, especially if the full cash bar does the booming business we expect it to. This promises to be like a night to remember, like a night on the town in Olangapo, Subic Bay, with the exception that we’re all about fifty years older now. (And the fact the real good nights on the town, we **don’t** remember.)

This celebration will take place at an upscale event facility called **Maison & Jardin**, a few miles from the hotel. Normally such a place would be out of our league except for a special event like this. Plus, Jim found us a real good deal, dinner price **\$40/person** with a choice of three entrees. When you receive the reunion registration form in November, you’ll be able to make your dinner choices. We understand that at this stage of your lives how important eating has become to you, maybe taking over as the number-one thing you like to do. Well, okay, maybe number two . . .

All of this and more will be offered at the reunion, plus the Burks in Orlando are looking for a tour for us. (See the article in this newsletter about Gary and Sandy Burk “on the ground” in Orlando, scouting out things for us.)

Our Illustrious Leader – A “Few” Years Back



Do You Remember When . . .

(excerpts from reunion members who remember the first time Ron contacted them about forming a reunion group)

"I don't remember all the nuances that got the organization started. I know Ron got in touch with me early on and we both started looking for members. At that point, there was no reunion group, just a list of contacts we were working with to see if there was any interest in developing a reunion group. As we found more and more guys, there was unanimous support for a get together and that's when Ron suggested Branson. From all the addresses we'd gotten from guys across the country, Branson seemed to be relatively central, in order to enable as much participation as possible. Pretty much, the rest is now OI history."

Oscar Granger

"It was a quiet Sunday afternoon in Reston, Virginia, when the phone rings--'Is this Jim Hayter?' (I am already thinking this has got to be a telemarketing call), but then Ron asks 'did you serve on the USS Midway?' and he then had my complete attention. We probably talked for half an hour about good times (and bad) on CVA-41, what are you doing now, and who do you know that served with you in the early 60s?" I wasn't much help, but to Ron's credit he just kept digging and the result is over 100 people he has found that have the common bond of being OI Division people on the USS Midway. I did not make the first few reunions, but I have done the last two in San Diego. Until I was there sharing beers and stories with my former shipmates, it didn't strike me what a debt we owe to Ron for his time and effort in reuniting all of us. Strangely enough, I have never physically met Ron McPhail, but I will in Orlando in April 2009, and I will be sure I thank him for what he has done for us."

Jim Hayter

I received a letter from Ron - short and sweet. "If you are the Clayton Sponseller who served on the USS Midway from 1963-1965, please call me. If not, sorry for bothering you." It was a name I had not thought about for a very long time but I couldn't wait to make that call. What fun, I could talk to Ron and he couldn't tell me what to do! Ron and I had some great laughs over the phone and what a surprise to find out he lived barely an hour or two away. We immediately made plans to get together. I didn't ask for directions to his house...cause I didn't want him to tell me what to do. My wife and I have not missed a reunion since and I am grateful to Ron for helping me

reconnect with a great group of guys who I appreciate more now than I had the wisdom to 40 years ago. And yes, Ron too."

Clay Sponseller

"In my case it was an e-mail from Ron asking me if I was the same Dave Payson who was on the Midway during the '63-'64 West-Pac cruise. I was thrilled. I didn't remember at first. But I did what we all did when we got his e-mail or his letter or his phone call that first time: I looked him up in my Midway cruise book. Sure enough, after I saw his picture, I remembered him all right, our LPO, already sporting a chevron, a first-class RD. This was in 1998, and all those Midway memories from the early 60s came flooding back to me. Today they call it 'Midway Magic,' and that's a good name for it. I remember how excited I was to answer his e-mail. From the very beginning he had me telling him sea stories, a pattern that was to continue for many years to come, mostly in the sea story section of the OI Division website, run by Ron. It's amazing how he found us, using the computer, the telephone and the U.S. mail. He was a man on a mission. And he's left a lasting impression on us all."

Dave Payson

"As for my first-post Navy encounter with Ron McPhail, it goes back to about a year before our initial reunion in Branson, MO. One fine day I was surprised to receive a letter from Ron explaining his interest in forming a reunion group with the men who served aboard the USS MIDWAY in OI division and CIC. I was immediately interested and spent about a half-hour on the phone with him. It didn't take long for my interests to grow and soon found myself caught up in helping Ron locate former members of our group. I can well remember the exhilaration we shared when I talked to him about how I found Chief George Fowler, who was living way up in Canada, and former OI division officer Lt. Ken Thorsen, then from Minneapolis. Ron and I shared many such triumphs, each one a cause for celebration. To this day I still search for former crew members even though the list grows shorter and more difficult as time passes. A million thanks wouldn't be enough to this man who took on a tremendous challenge and put our group together, but I still say it . . . Thanks, Ron."

Bill Kruper

Sitting in the Editor's Chair . . .

I don't normally interject myself into this newsletter using the very personal pronoun "I," but as you've probably noticed by now this is a special edition of *Scope Dope News*, in which we are honoring our founder Ron McPhail and urging members to show up in Orlando next year for that very purpose.

So book your flights and hotel rooms now. Rent your car. Peel your dress blues out of your sea bag. Do whatever it takes to get to Orlando for the reunion. **YOU ARE NOT GOING TO WANT TO MISS THIS ONE!**

Sitting in the editor's chair, following Ron as newsletter editor after he spent a decade on the job, is a very humbling experience for me. It reminds me of that famous political line (modified slightly here to fit the current situation), "I have met Ron McPhail, and you, Dave Payson, are no Ron McPhail."

Ron sold the newsletter job to me in his usual low-key fashion, I remember, calling me one day a year and a half ago and telling me the job was mine if I wanted it. I gulped twice and said OK. At that point he was recovering from a heart attack and it had become clear to him, I think, that he couldn't go on with the job; vision and respiratory problems wouldn't allow it.

Now, as I write this in October of 2008, I do so with the very first issue of the OI Division newsletter open in front of me, edited and produced by Ron in July of 1998. So this current issue is very special for that reason, too--it's the tenth anniversary of the newsletter and for all practical purposes the tenth anniversary of our reunion group as well.

Interestingly enough, Ron called that first issue "Midway Magic News," scooping the San Diego Midway Museum group's catch phrase by a good ten years.

But the energy, enthusiasm, and high spirit that energized him to find us all around the country and then to organize us into a cohesive and successful reunion group are all very evident in that first issue. Listen to the very first words he wrote, quoted verbatim here: **To all landlubbers, sea lawyers, old salts, old swabs and other scavengers of the seven seas, greetings from Central Florida.**

Now where do you suppose he came up with that line? Us "old swabs and other scavengers" were sold on him right away. The man always had a way with the Navy lingo, the salty talk, especially when it pertained to the thing thing we had most in common, like the USS Midway. *The man spoke our language.*

He goes on in that very first paragraph of the first newsletter to give us his mission statement, concise and focused. **As promised in my communications with each of you, I'm putting out this first newsletter. I intend to try and put one out at least every six to eight weeks, with all the latest information I have about locating the members of OI Division and CIC Officers that served aboard during the 1963-64 and/or 1965 Westpac cruises. In late June I started to send out letters and Emails in the locating effort. To date I have sent 504 letters and I lost track of the Emails at 300. Last October before the idea of a reunion had come about, I had located RD1 Norman Zehms, RD3 Oscar Granger and RD3 John Evans. All had indicated that a reunion would be nice if enough members could be located.**

Amazing stuff! 504 letters he sent out, he said, and he lost track of the Emails he transmitted at 300! Talk about messages in a bottle! The energy of the man as he went about the business of tracking us down!

And not only did he find us, with the help of found shipmates like Oscar and Bill, he went right to work organizing us into a “cohesive” group of “old salts.” Less than a year after that first newsletter, the newly formed OI Division reunion group met in Branson, Missouri, in May of 1999. Twenty-seven of Ron’s top recruits showed up rarin’ to go, and they had a blast! In his typical no-nonsense fashion, here’s how Ron described it in the newsletter following the Branson reunion: **Well, you folks that missed the reunion, sure did miss a great time.** Then he went on: **I arrived in Branson, Tuesday the 4th to make sure everything was ready for the reunion. Dennis Willis had beat me there.**

Now that’s vintage Ron McPhail for you! He sounds disappointed someone beat him to Branson. Way to go, Dennis!

So now the newsletter job is mine. In a way I feel like I’m just holding the job down for Ron. I’m on my fourth issue. Ron put out 33 issues while at the same time running the whole show, including planning and hosting these reunions, which the latest bunch of us trying to organize this one have found out what a big job it is. He found us by the many hundreds once he got the idea in his head that we could do something like this. And whether the many Midway veterans he found across the country joined the reunion group or not, he touched their lives in a very positive way.

This is true for me. This is true for all of us.

Dave Payson,
Editor, *Scope Dope News*

The “Accidental Tourists”

Gary and Sandy Burk of Orlando, Florida, never intended to be our “man on the ground” there. It just turned out that way. A month and a half ago, the editor sent an email to new member Gary Burk, thinking he could scout out the local terrain to help us with our reunion entertainment planning. Gary, it turns out, wasn’t there because he was on a trip to Minnesota. But his wife Sandy was. We were in luck, for no one can plan a reunion better than a wife! Since Gary wasn’t returning home for a couple of weeks, Sandy got busy checking out the the Orlando/Winter Park area, sending us scouting reports on local attractions. She confirmed, for example, that Maison & Jardin, the site for our reunion dinner, is a first-class establishment. She also sent us several tour options and other good info. By then, Gary had returned home and both of them reconnoitered the Winter Park area, which culminated in them mailing us a package of things to do in Winter Park, including a brochure on the scenic boat tour. Winter Park sounds like a lot of fun, with all kinds of entertainment possibilities. Now we know why Ron has been “hiding out” there all these years. Currently, the Burks are on one more “mission impossible” for us--to find us that one perfect tour that our members can sign up for in advance on the reunion registration form we plan to mail out in November. It’s a tough challenge for Gary and Sandy, because how do you satisfy a bunch of barnacle-encrusted Midway vets (and their mates) who still have oil and the grit from the Midway on their shoes from walking her decks at the last two reunions? But if anyone can find us something, it’s the Burks, on the ground in Orlando.



Midway Battle Efficiency Award from 1950

Jim “Boats” Kelly sent in this “E” award documentation along with several photocopies of the Midway Currents newsletter from 50s era. This was from a time when the Midway operated in the Atlantic, showing the flag in exotic Mediterranean ports. Thanks, Jim!

EACH ENTRY MUST BE DATED

NAME (Last)	(First)	(Middle)
KELLY	James	Eugene
SERVICE NO.	GRADE	FILE
325 25 71	SN	SN-0032-20
CLASS USN		
CURRENT SHIP OR STATION		
U.S.S. MIDWAY (CVB-41)		



COMMENDATION

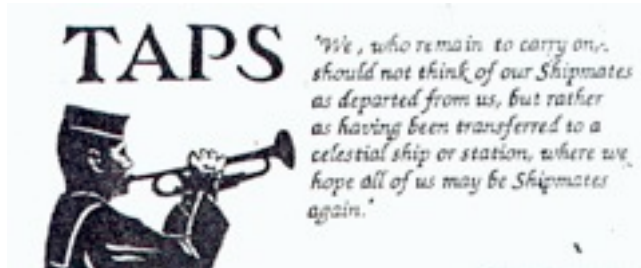
5 August 1950:

U.S.S. MIDWAY stood first in the competition for Battle Efficiency among the Carriers of the Atlantic Fleet for the competitive year 1950. In view thereof, the Chief of Naval Operations has awarded MIDWAY the Battle Efficiency Pennant. This award reflects commendable performance of duty and superior teamwork by every officer and man attached to the ship. For your part in this effort, and in the excellent result obtained, you are hereby commended.

F. N. Kivie
 F. N. KIVIE,
 Captain, U.S. Navy,
 Commanding Officer.

In Memoriam – Sad News

Shipmate John Jensen of Manistique, Michigan, died of cancer October 5, 2008. John, a longtime member of our reunion group, was aboard the Midway 63-66. He was one of our own, and he will be missed.



Two New Members On Board

Robert Butler, Sr - Lancaster, VA
(Served aboard 1945 - Plank Owner)

Joseph McKay - Sarasota, FL

Two new men have joined our ranks since the last newsletter. Like us, they sailed the high seas on the Midway. Welcome aboard, Men!

See You in Orlando!

April 23-26, 2009

USS MIDWAY OI/OS DIVISION MEMORABILIA NOW AVAILABLE



I have on hand a supply of hats, pins, ships patches and key rings for sale to reunion members at reasonable prices. There are two new hats being offered. One of them is a white visor style hat for the ladies that has USS Midway embroidered in script across the front. I'm told this open visor type is easy on hair-do's, something all women will appreciate. The other is a new style Midway hat, dark blue with light blue and gold trim. "41" on the visor and USS Midway in script on the front with Midway Magic and CV 41 on the back. I think these new hats are quite sharp looking. Please see the picture sheet and order form included with this newsletter.

My supplier tells me that the Navy hat styles will change frequently and many existing styles will be dropped without notice. So, it looks like we can look forward to changing styles from time to time. I'll try to include additional items as they become available or are requested. If there's something you would like me to offer or look for, please send me an email describing what it is and where you found it. These items should have a broad appeal to members.

Regretfully, we can no longer offer the small RD/OS radar bubble hat pin. Ron McPhail informs me these were made up special and are no longer available. I am looking for some sort of a replacement.

Is there anyone in the reunion group who is retired Navy and living near a Navy base? There are a couple items in our memorabilia supply that can only be purchased at a Navy base, and we could use your help.

If you're interested in ordering these memorabilia items, please specify the item(s) on the separate order form in this newsletter package and mail the form to me along with your check.

Bill Kruper uncabil@msn.com



RD bubble hat pin no longer available

"The Masthead"

**USS Midway OI Division
Reunion Group**

Published quarterly for and about former OI Division (and other) personnel, their times, and activities aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Midway*.

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