

Swifty Spotlight

The World-Famous
Purple Foxes



Issue #3

Summer 2020

All in the (Fox) Family

In May, LtCol Dan “Mumbles” Kaiser took command of our Purple Foxes in a COVID-appropriate ceremony (meaning no pictures and only immediate family could attend). What makes this Change of Command extra-special is that Dan’s father also served with the Purple Foxes in Vietnam. Rudy “Nails” Kaiser (1stLt 69) earned a Distinguished Flying Cross and a Purple Heart during his tour.

LtCol Kaiser enlisted in the United States Air Force in May 1993. Later, he earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of California, San Diego and was commissioned through the Marine Corps Officer Candidate Course (OCC) in August 2002.

LtCol Kaiser started flying in CH-46Es, and even flew (most likely) one of the same birds that his father had flown back in the 70s - they bore the same bunos! He was assigned to HMM-266 “Fighting Griffins” from Jan 2004 until the unit stood down to transition to the V-22 in June 2006. Deploying with HMM-266 to Al Assad AB, Iraq in support of OIF from Aug 2005 to Mar 2006, he ended up with close to 500 flight hours (of those about 300 are combat hours) in the CH-46. He transitioned to the MV-22B Osprey in June 2006 and was reassigned back to the Fighting Griffins to stand them up as VMM-266 in March 2007.



The Kaiser Family



Purple Foxes supporting BLT 1/7 in
Twenty-nine Palms, August 2020

...continued on Page 5

Pop A Smoke 2020 reunion has been cancelled and will be rescheduled for 2022. See Pages 2 and 3 for full details.

From the Editor

We hope everyone is doing well during these crazy COVID times. I was just about ready to send out this issue, when the Board of Directors of Pop A Smoke made the decision to cancel the October 2020 reunion in Sparks, Nevada.

In the interest of getting the news out, I've left some of the articles as they were. Pop A Smoke will plan their next reunion for 2022 and details will be announced later.

The Purple Foxes WILL be planning a 2021 reunion. Currently, it look like it will be held in the Oct/Nov timeframe in Hilton Head, SC. This reunion will be held along with our sister squadron HMM-263. Details to come.

This is the most current information as of today. To watch for further changes, you can visit our [website](#) or our [Facebook group](#) where we will post any news we receive.

Semper Fi,
Stephanie
corpsmankid@hotmail.com

Upcoming Events



Pop A Smoke 2020 Reunion
14-18 October 2020
Nugget Hotel & Casino
Sparks, NV

CANCELLED
Pop A Smoke holds a reunion every 2 years for all units of combat helicopter and tiltrotor Marines.

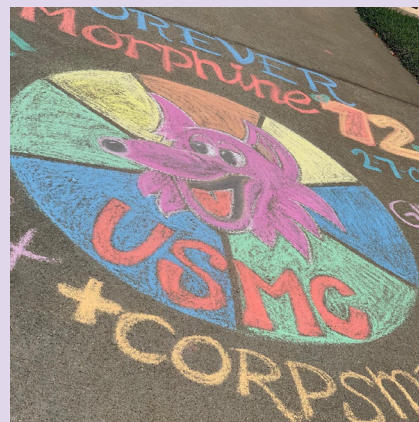
The Purple Foxes will have their own hospitality hootch within the hotel where you can catch up with fellow squadronmates and meet new Foxes. Come join us for a weekend of great fun!

Hotel rooms can be reserved now. Reserve yours today if you are even thinking of coming, as there is a limited number of rooms available at the discounted rate.

[Click here](#) to reserve your hotel room today! [Click here](#) to register for the Pop A Smoke part of the reunion.

See Page 3 for Purple Fox reunion information.

Swifty Sightings



On Memorial Day, Jon Jityen (Sgt 05-08) came home to this amazing artwork created by his daughters Jenny and Jaiden!

Have you seen Swifty around? If so, let us know about it at corpsmankid@hotmail.com.

Reunions

I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted their best, men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped raw, right down to their humanity - from "These Good Men" by Michael Norman.

HMM-364/VMM-364 REUNION - 2020



Should Pop A Smoke decide to conduct the 2020 reunion in October, the Foxes will also have our hootch/hospitality suite. It doesn't hurt to register now - if we cancel the funds can either be transferred to a future Purple Fox reunion or your funds can be returned. To register, print, complete, and mail the form from Page 4 to Walt Wise. Or, you may also sign up online [here](#). Come catch up with old friends and make some new ones!

POP A SMOKE REUNION - 2020



As of right now, the Pop A Smoke reunion has been rescheduled for October 14-18, 2020. The Board will decide towards the end of August/beginning of September whether or not the reunion will be a go/no go for this year.

See Page 2 for details on signing up with Pop A Smoke and hotel room information.

HMM-263 REUNION - 2020



50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MARBLE MOUNTAIN, VIETNAM

DATE: September 24-27, 2020
LOCATION: Holiday Inn Resort
Galveston, TX
HOSTS: Jesse Ruby, Earling Rolfson

HMM-263 is celebrating their 50th anniversary of when they served at Marble Mountain (1969/70) and have invited their sister unit, HMM-364, to join them. Jesse and Earling are planning a great schedule of events at this beach resort, so they hope all can join them.

Special Request: Jesse needs to guarantee hotel rooms, so they need to get an idea of who is planning to attend. If you are thinking of joining them, please send an email to [jrubby532@yahoo.com](mailto:jruby532@yahoo.com) and let them know.

HMM-364/VMM-364 SQUADRON REUNION ACTIVITIES

**For the USMC Combat Helicopter Association Reunion (Pop A Smoke)
OCT 14-18, 2020, The Nugget Casino Resort, Sparks, NV**

1. List your name and years that you served in, or were attached, to HMM-364/VMM-364:

2. List your guest's names and their relationship to you (if there is one):

3. Registration Fee ----- \$250 each squadron member and each guest.
(This fee covers rental of the hospitality suite, beef, wine, soda, etc. Pop A Smoke
does not cover any of these costs for the individual squadron). \$ _____

CANCELLED

4. We will hold an "ALL HANDS MEETING" at 1000 hours on Friday, 16 October, in our hospitality Hootch at the Nugget. Topics for discussion will be future reunions, off-year reunions, and the possibility of getting some younger and/or active-duty Purple Foxes to join us. Please note: HMM-263 will be holding a reunion in 2021- dates TBD. Purple Foxes are invited to attend.

5. Our Friday (October 16, 2020) night squadron dinner will be at the Wild River Grille in Reno, NV. Happy hour will start at 1700 hours with a cash bar. The Truckee River Buffet

REFUNDS

For those that have paid for the 2020 reunion, here are refund details:

Pop A Smoke – The hotel will cancel all hotel reservations made in the group block, so no action is needed from you. If you made reservations elsewhere you will need to contact that hotel directly to cancel.

AFR will be processing refunds for all reunion activities paid, in the same manner as they received payment. They anticipate the refunds will be processed within the next two weeks.

Purple Foxes – Any funds paid to Walt Wise for the Purple Fox portion of the reunion can be refunded to you, or held for the next reunion. Contact Walt if you have any questions.

Walt Wise 720-340-9534 wwise364@comcast.net

All in the “Fox” Family (continued from Page 1)

VMM-364 was his first choice to command and he was extremely excited when he got command of the Purple Foxes. “Every now and then I still shake my head in amazement that I get to command the same unit my dad had flown in combat with over 50 years ago,” he said. “Growing up, I heard my dad relate his combat experiences in Vietnam with the CH-46 and the Foxes, flying missions into Khe Sahn, Ashau Valley, the Rockpile, Phu Bai, Marble Mountain, etc. and one, it inspired me to fly and two, it has inspired me to continue that excellence and maintain the legacy that has been hard won.”



During COVID, our Foxes have continued to fly in support of our fellow Marines and conduct unit level training (ULT) in order to prepare for deployment next year. They have tweaked the daily schedule to allow the maintenance shifts a sufficient “air gap” to prevent/minimize any possible contagion between day/night crews. LtCol Kaiser said, “During all this, the squadron has continued to knock it out of the park, maintaining the highest readiness for a non-deployed V-22 unit, which equates to 70-80% aircraft readiness while still flying over 200 hours per month with the month of June being a 300 flight hour month. The squadron has had its challenges over the last few months, but the Purple Foxes continue to display their high level of professionalism and continue the proud legacy of those who have gone before!”

“The squadron has had its challenges over the last few months, but the Purple Foxes continue to display their high level of professionalism and continue the proud legacy of those who have gone before!”



We welcome the Kaiser family and know our legacy is in good hands.

Now & Then...

Courtney Payne began his USMC journey upon arrival at Parris Island on February 7, earning his EGA on April 23, 1952. His career spanned 28 years, with deployments including Vietnam, Cuba, Korea and Japan.

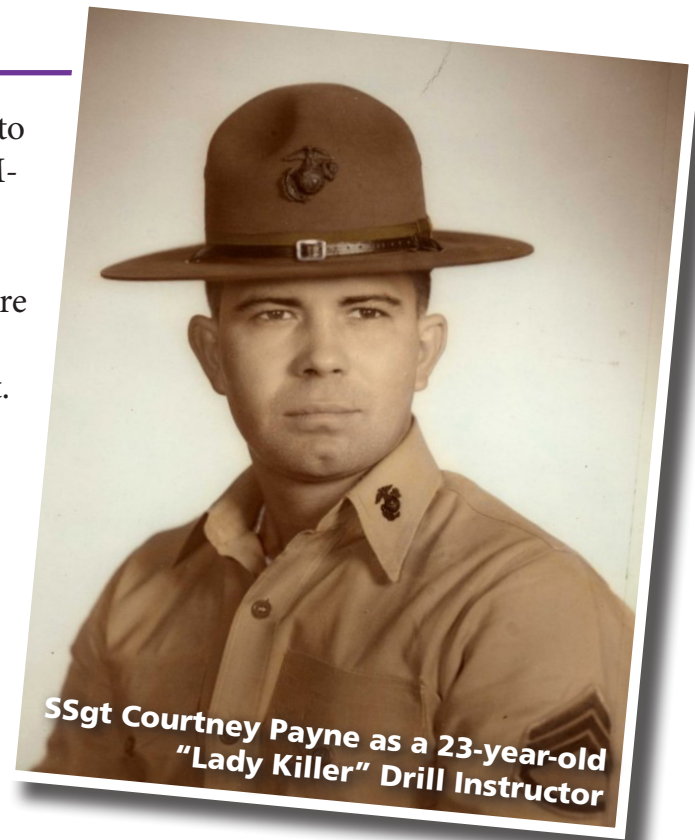
Although Courtney loved his Foxes (more on that to come), his favorite duty station was when he was the Maintenance Control Officer for VMFA-451, a fighter squadron flying Phantom F-4 aircraft. (We are sure that the rum wasn't the main reason he enjoyed this duty station.)

Throughout his time with the unit, he would observe the squadron under stress and saw how the Marines responded well, even when having to be in Cuba over one Christmas Eve/Christmas Day.

Courtney first went to Vietnam with HMM-163 for Operation Shu-Fly in July of 1962, where they were flying in supplies from Saigon at night.

His second tour is when he was stationed with the Purple Foxes in 1968, again as the Maintenance Control Officer (which he would be for his entire career) and as the head of the Recovery Team. During his tour with the Foxes, he received a permanent commission in 1969 as 1stLt. The squadron was fortunate to have a Marine with his background and experience.

Courtney served under Maintenance Officer, Major O.C. Baker, saying he was "the finest

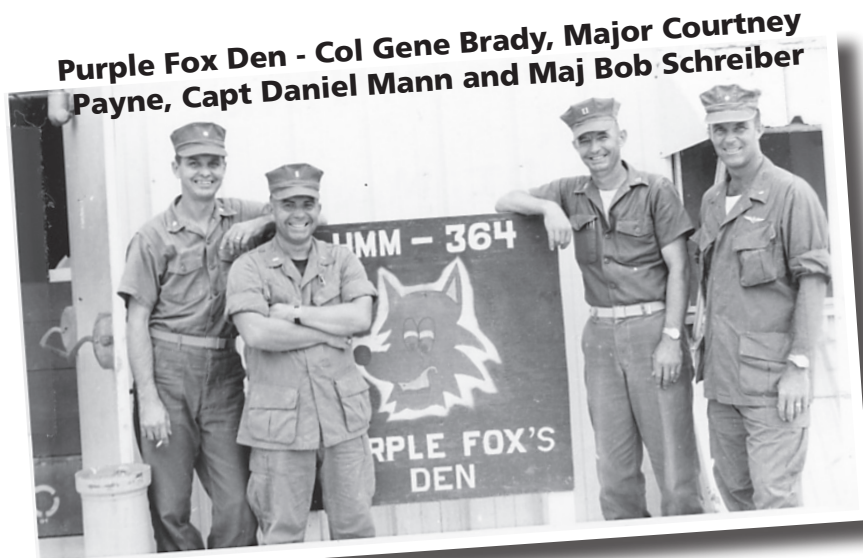


SSgt Courtney Payne as a 23-year-old "Lady Killer" Drill Instructor

Marine Corps officer I ever met. Under O.C.'s leadership, the men sacrificed everything."

In late summer 1968, HMM-364 was in a state of transition. "HMM-364 was assigned 22 CH-46D aircraft when I joined the squadron. At the time 14-16 on board was normal. The Navy Supply System was somewhere else that summer of 1968," Courtney said.

The unit moved from MAG-36 at Phu Bai to MAG-16 at Marble Mountain just before Christmas 1968. "The CO could be found anywhere and everywhere. He had a special relationship with the crew chiefs and gunners. He



Purple Fox Den - Col Gene Brady, Major Courtney Payne, Capt Daniel Mann and Maj Bob Schreiber

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Now & Then... (cont.)

would make sure his jeep was available every night so maintenance could go “find” what ever was needed.

“These kids were gloriously unselfish,” Courtney said. “The CO and XO (Maj Ed Graham) motivated them to the point that they would work night and day for them. They even would wear their leather flight jackets with the furry collar in the heat, so they could show off the Swifty patch. That’s how proud the men were of the unit. No other outfit gave as much as the men of the Purple Foxes.”



“ We are Foxes - we go on and on,
'till the shadow of life grows long.
And all we ask is,
one more verse of the Phu Bai song!

excerpt from The Fox That Flew

The members of the current command can be very proud of those who went before you. “Our Marines flew as scared and concerned as one might expect (an An Hoa medevac to the Arizona Territory could be a horrifying experience) but, fly they did, every day and night - somehow always pulling the rabbit out of the hat. They were, and still are, a band of brothers.”

After his retirement from the Marines, Courtney worked for Sikorsky Aircraft. Courtney now spends his days in Florida riding out hurricanes, reading, and catching fish in his pond.



Foxes in the News

Congratulations to Dean Davidge (Capt 68), for being named the Santa Barbara County Veteran of the Month!

Dean Davidge was 24 in 1967 when he arrived in Vietnam, where he made daily deliveries of food and supplies to troops in the field, evacuated wounded U.S. troops and helped in other emergency situations.

Read more of his story by [clicking here](#).



Did you know that one of our own is a Docent at the National Museum of the Marine Corps? Larry Britton (1stLt 68-69) served in the Marine Corps for 23 years and has been a docent at the National Museum of the Marine Corps since their opening in 2006 and has worked over 5,400 hours! [Click here](#) to see his “**Meet the Docent**” video.

What Else?

1

This is a newsletter about Foxes and for Foxes. What else would you like to see included? Send me your stories, ideas or more, at corpsmankid@hotmail.com.

2

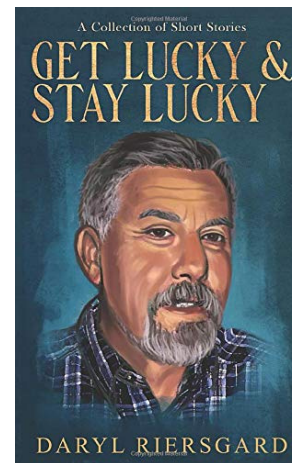
If you received this newsletter from someone else, and would like to be on our email list, please send your name, email address and rank/years as a Purple Fox or your affiliation with the Foxes to corpsmankid@hotmail.com.

Smoke Signals

Daryl Riersgard (1stLt 70-71) has written his first book “**Get Lucky and Stay Lucky**” now available on Amazon in paperback or for Kindle.

This collection of short stories covers many stages of Daryl Riersgard’s life, including a memorable and harrowing tale of being shot down over a mountain top landing zone in Vietnam—the fiery crash resulted in tearing the helicopter into two pieces.

Daryl gives thanks to his Vietnam buddies who twisted his arm to write down some of his stories. He says without that motivation, there may have been no book. [Click here](#) to get your copy today.



[Click here](#) to see more of this beautiful park and hear BGen Adams’ speech delivered at the Memorial Placement Ceremony on May 17, 2019, when 107 new granite bricks were added.

Do you know about the Marine Aviation Memorial Tower located in Veterans Memorial Park in Pensacola, Florida?

The Bell Tower is an original national memorial to honor all aviation Marines who died in the line of duty while serving with Marine Corps Aviation units. Dedicated in 2012, the bell was cast of molten brass, which also included 7 sets of Naval Aviation Wings representing those lost in Morphine 1-2.

Maintenance of the Tower is never-ending and we are thankful to **The Wingman Foundation** for all it has done to help keep the memorial in top shape. The current maintenance project is fixing the lighting in the eight benches around the Tower.

TAPS

Michael Phillips, Capt 68-69 ([passed July 26, 2020](#))

Michael Easton, Sgt 69-70 ([passed July 6, 2020](#))

Don McLaughlin, Sgt 67-68 ([passed May 21, 2020](#))

George Snow, Cpl 65-66 ([passed April 15, 2020](#))

We will post any new notifications we receive since the last newsletter issue.

If you have a name to add, let us know at corpsmankid@hotmail.com.