

Seabee Club Newsletter

December 2013



Merry Christmas and a blessed new year to our extended Seabee family.
Steve Mestler, John Cuny and Bruce Hinds(L toR)

Hello Everyone,

For the past 10 years or more I've been communicating with the guy on the left in the picture above. We've talked on the phone and written countless emails, but we never had the chance to meet face to face. I got a call a few weeks ago that Steve was going to have a Seattle layover on one of his upcoming United trips. We'd talked recently and came to realize that we had a lot more in common than just owning the same kind of old flying boat.

Six degrees of separation is an interesting concept, but in the pilot world and most of us have experienced, it's a lot closer. We both purchased our machines the same month and year, March 2000, and here we are on opposite sides of the country, he runs the website and I'm doing these silly newsletters. The fact that we were, or I was an airline pilot and he still is, is not that much of a surprise, or that both of our fathers flew - no big deal. I flew for Continental, now United, who he's flying for, okay, or the fact that he had flown for Pan Am who my father flew for and I always wanted to, really? Then, I find out we grew up (not really) less than ten miles apart, as the Bee flies, and we were both lived less than 20 miles from Farmingdale and the Republic Factory!

We knew some about each other through our shared love for the Bee sisters, but it wasn't until last Friday that we were able to put the Long Island connection together with the help of John Cuny. I wrote a bunch about John last month and how he'd been entrusted to care for the Sanders Stockpile of Seabee Archives. When he heard that Steve was coming to town, he drove down to spend some time with us and bring some of

the treasures he's uncovered. So, as we're telling our stories, John was going on about a trip with Richie Brumm and how they landed in Northport Harbor to wait out some weather. "Well, that's the harbor I grew up (not really) on." Steve's expression was priceless. He grew up (not really) in Smithtown! Needless to say, it was a great day.

John brought along some of the things he'd found and spoke of all the treasures - It appears that Dick may have collected just about everything ever written on the Seabee. He even had an index card file of what appears to be every serial number. We have not compared the list of newsletters to what's available on the website but we suspect we'll be able to fill in some of the holes on the list. John's taken off for a month or more to go back and help get his bird back in the air. When he returns we plan on diving into this stuff. That's quite a Christmas present for the Club. Thanks John.

Help!

The Seabee family just lost one of the most dedicated individuals on the planet and one that many of you will remember as having always been there for you if you had a problem. Ken Thompson flew west just over a week ago after a nasty battle with cancer. Only those close to him knew of his illness which is what he wanted. Seems typical of Ken, since he never asked much of anyone, but he was always there for you.

I'd only met Ken on a few occasions at Clear Lake when we'd make the trip to Sonoma and he made us feel like we'd known him for many years. I do know that he flew in the service, but preferred the wrench to the stick when he got out and that he spent about 30 years or so dedicating his life to all things Seabee.

Many of you knew him well. I think the best thing we could do, would be for those of you that did know him would be to write a few lines or tell us a story. I'll compile your stories, comments, pictures, whatever you want to send. ET is supposed to be putting something together and Scott Henderson plans on doing something at the Fallon hangar when the weather warms up. In the mean time, I'll put your stuff together and do a newsletter that is a tribute to him. How about that? Let's celebrate his life!

Speaking of a celebration of life, I received a letter a few weeks back with an interesting request. I'd love to take part in something like this if it wasn't so far away. If anyone can help out you can coordinate through me or contact them directly. Either way, let us know if you plan to participate.

Dear Bruce,

I have a very special request I wondered if you could help me with. For years our family has been mesmerized by stories of how my Great Uncle Douglas Pierce flew B-29s in WW2, and even more so by an adventure he had with his own SeaBee, after the war. As outlined in the November 1985 issue of "The Vintage Airplane" magazine, in an article titled "Seabee Odyssey." Essentially, Doug, his roommate (Don Marburg) and his roommate's brother (Rolland "Joe" Marburg) decided to spend their summer of 1947 skiing in Chile. They sold their cars, borrowed \$6,000, and bought a brand new Seabee that they named "Joe Chileano." The story is



the stuff of legends, and something he's always been proud of.

In September, my great uncle, Douglas Pierce died at the age of 90 (see <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/berkshire/obituary.aspx?pid=166776516>). There really aren't any words to express the character of this man, save to say that he was loved by anyone who met him. While a family funeral was held for him this past September, we will be having a memorial service for him at our annual Family Reunion on the weekend of June 20-22, 2014, at Lake Ashmere, in Hinsdale, MA. The reunion is held at "Camp Ashmere," (www.campashmere.org).

My reason for writing was to ask the impossible; that is, is there any remote possibility you could help us get a SeaBee flyby during the memorial service? I don't know what funding we could provide; but please let us know what it would cost. I don't know if I could promise your organization any memorabilia that might be of interest to your collection, though I could ask my cousins. I just know this would be powerfully meaningful to our family, and to a great man who flew this wonderful plane.

Any help you could provide would be appreciated and thank you for your part keeping this beautiful piece of history in the air.

Sincerely,

David Rucquoi
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I was curious to find out what may have happened to the Bee so I asked David about a tail number. They found something with the number NC6599K on it, so it would have been #872. It was de-registered from the FAA in 1956 and I can't seem to find any more information on it. Who knows, it may still be there! Lee, can you find out anything?

Safety

It's been nice to see some of the stories come across the Yahoo Discussion Group lately. Thanks to Ed MacLeod and David Lehman. David's experience with frozen brakes and ice is an eye opener! It might be a good idea to avoid water operations if the altitude you're going to climb to is below freezing.

Western Washington where we live rarely has below freezing weather. One year however we had been visiting friends for the weekend up in the San Juan Islands when we had freezing rain and then temperatures in the teens and 20's. The bee was a solid block of ice in the morning when we wanted to leave with no forecast for warmer temperatures. Fortunately for us, our friends knew someone with an available hangar. Even though it was not heated we were able to borrow a kerosene heater that might warm it up enough.

It took most of the day to gain access, move the sad looking block of ice to the hangar and get the heat going. It was obvious we would have to delay our trip until the

next morning. At some point during the night the heater ran out of fuel and even though there was a big puddle of water and ice on the floor, there was still ice on one side of the old girl. We refilled the heater and hoped for an afternoon departure. I had to get back to work and the forecast was for bitter cold all week.

After lunch the hangar was at a balmy 34 degrees and the Bee appeared clean so the decision was to get home ASAP. Everything seemed fine until we leveled off and I couldn't move the trim. Fortunately climb and approach trim are about the same, so it just requires about an hour of stiff arming the yoke for the trip home. I'm not sure what part of the trim froze. I think it may have been the trim cable where moisture may have gotten in the sleeve during the thawing process. Please be careful out there in the cold.

Stuff

I know I said I'd just run stuff once, but I messed up! If you're trying to get a hold of Louis in regard to the "Sea Tub" featured in the opening of the last newsletter, I posted the wrong email address. I'd transposed two of the letters; the link below should work now.

Sea Tub - Louis has owned this airplane for years and it's sitting on the ramp under cover in Chandler, AZ. He's willing to let it go for \$38K or a possible trade for a small flying or near flying



small amphibian fliberdejibet like a Volmer, Coot, Mariner, or whatever plus cash. Contact Louis Hudgin, 602-509-3751 or landlhudgin@msn.com

Thanks all for taking the time to read through all this. Feel free to call or write, offer comments, criticism and/or suggestions. Help us keep the Seabee alive. Seabee is always spoken here.

Bee Sea n'ya and have a merry Christmas,

Bruce Hinds

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PS For those of you that may not know, I'm on the Board of Directors at SPA and I'm always looking for feedback from members, past, present and/or prospective members.