



# PTEROGRAM



The Official Publication of the  
Coast Guard Aviation Association  
*The Ancient Order of the Pterodactyl*

Sitrep 3-25 Fall 2025

AOP is a non profit association of active & retired USCG aviation personnel & associates

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### 49th CGAA Roost Plans Set for Houston



Planning for our 49th Ptero Roost honoring the CO, Ptero CAPT Anthony Guido, Aviator 3989, and the men and women of Air Station Houston, is near completion and the Roost Committee has put together a spectacular week for us in Houston, Texas from 28April - 1 May 2026 at the South Shore Harbour Resort.

The Roost will include all our traditional events

and some great excursions to Johnson Space Center, Kemah Board Walk, and Clear Lake / Galveston Bay Lunch Cruise.

We also will Honor the memory and legacy of CAPT Frank Erickson, USCG Helicopter Pilot #1 at a wreath laying ceremony at Galveston County Memorial Cemetery.

New for 2026 will be our first ever stand alone Career Transition and Job Fair day.

The Roost will conclude on Friday at a fantastic Fly in / BBQ at Air Station Houston. Some venue scheduling details have required us to push registration 8 December. The latest information can be found on the CGAA Website at <https://aoptero.org/2026-roost/>. We will also announce registration opening on and details through an ALPTERO.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in Houston! Please contract the Roost Operations Center if you have any questions - [tony.hahn@aoptero.org](mailto:tony.hahn@aoptero.org) or 703.220.6582



### Ptero AMTCM Michael Ethridge, P-6535, Becomes the 17th Enlisted Ancient Albatross

On 29 August (the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans) at Air Station Elizabeth City, the Coast Guard celebrated the passing of the Enlisted Ancient Albatross title, recognizing aviation excellence and leadership across generations. The outgoing/retiring Enlisted Ancient Albatross, AETCM Shawn Burns, officially transferred the distinguished honor to Ptero AMTCM Michael Ethridge. Their ceremonial exchange solidifies the continuity of leadership, expertise, and service within the Coast Guard aviation community.



AETCM Burns (L) passes the Ancient Al 'garb' to AMTCM Ethridge. CG photos by PA3 Matthew Thieme and SN Madilynn Herrell.

SEE ANCIENT AL CEREMONY ON P. 9

## DUES CURRENT ? — Please CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL

Your mailing label includes the DATE to which YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE AOP DUES ACCOUNT is AOK. IF THE DATE READS June 2025, PLEASE PAY AGAIN NOW TO REMAIN IN GOOD STANDING.

Check out page 23 or the website <http://www.aoptero.org/htm/newmbr.html> for the renewal application and current dues.

**MOVING???** Please let us know. Send email to: [Zach.Wiest@aoptero.org](mailto:Zach.Wiest@aoptero.org) & [communications@cgaviationassn.org](mailto:communications@cgaviationassn.org).

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*Enlisted Ancient Albatross*

MCPO Michael Ethridge

-ex officio



## A Message from 2551 (CGAA/AOP President):

Fellow Pteros!! Happy Thanksgiving!

In the last Pterogram, I referenced the letter we sent to ADM Lunday, Commandant, outlining our concerns and offering support. In this issue we've included a copy of that letter (See P. 18), along with the response we received from RDML Mike Campbell. You'll find Admiral Campbell's letter an interesting and informative read. The Coast Guard is growing ...in size and in its impact. It's clearly a very busy time within the halls of CG Headquarters, and I think we can look forward to substantial progress in aviation capabilities, as well as changes within the organization.

Through the change, our Association continues to recognize aviation excellence among the ranks of those currently serving, and continues efforts to preserve and promote the history of Coast Guard aviation. Your Board of Directors, all volunteers, give very generously of their time and energy in support of our mission. Many who aren't on the board also volunteer their time and talent to support everything from managing our membership database to reviewing Hall of Honor nominations to coaching the Academy flight team...and much, much more. The Association runs on the work of well over 20 volunteers. One of them was my dear friend Paul Langlois, CAPT, USCG (ret.), Aviator 1954, a member of our Board of Directors. Sadly, as we noted in an ALPTERO earlier this year, Paul passed away after a long and courageous fight. Paul was an inspiration to me and to so many others, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to attend his memorial service in August.

Sadly, we also note the passing of Sergei Sikorsky, son of Igor Sikorsky, the inventor of the first practical helicopter. Sergei was instrumental to the Coast Guard's efforts during World II to develop the use of the helicopter, and remained an avid supporter of Coast Guard aviation throughout his life.

We have a new Enlisted Ancient Albatross, and I offer our congratulations to Master Chief Michael Ethridge on his designation as the 17th EAA, relieving Master Chief Shawn Burns on August 29 in Elizabeth City. Master Chief Ethridge currently serves as AMT Rating Force Master Chief, and I'm looking forward to meeting him in Houston.

Speaking of Houston, we're getting ready for another Roost. I hope you're setting aside April 28 through May 2, 2026 in your schedules to join fellow Pterodactyls for the 2026 Roost in Houston, Texas. Roost registration will be open in December.

## Taps

We regret to report that the following members have recently logged their last flight:

RADM Louis Zumstein, 691, 6/29/24

Mary C. (Mackinnon) Haas (spouse of James Haas, 842), 12/11/24

William Ladd, 1218, 3/12/25

Carolyn Beard (spouse of Ptero Tom Beard, 1104), 3/14/25

Earl Oneal, P-2182, 4/15/25

Hugh Dayton, 1082, 4/23/25

Charles Burch, 1526, 6/24/25

Pam Ladley (spouse of Ptero Art Ladley, 724), 6/27/25

Robert Luse, ADC, 7/4/25

Kenneth Blackman, P-6364, 7/6/25

Thomas Frischmann, 1010, 7/25/25

John Dagostino, 2298, 7/28/25

Edward L. Murnane, 857, 7/29/25

Kathi Callahan (spouse of Ptero RADM Dave Callahan, 2408), 8/11/25

Donald Potter, Jr., 2646, 8/29/25

Sergei Sikorsky, P-3289, 9/18/25

Daniel Shorey, 1148, 10/31/25

Brigitta (Kitty) Winchester (spouse of Ptero Don Winchester, 1352), 10/8/25

## New CGAA Members Since 5/31/25. Welcome Aboard!

Eric Majeska	Life-Regular	3938	Levi Rusch	Life-Regular	4485
Matthew Carlton	Life-Regular	4252	Adam Mayernick	Life-Regular	4811
Benjamin Hannon	Life-Regular	4792	Jason Vaughn	Life-Regular	P-6495
Jake Rettig	Life-Regular	4590B	Adrian Widner	Life-Regular	P-6498

See New Members on P. 16

PTEROGRAM is published three times annually as the official publication of The Ancient Order of the Pterodactyl which perpetuates recognition of USCG aviation history and its personnel. Reproduction of Pterogram for further distribution is authorized & encouraged.

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## AirSta Corpus Christi MH-65E Aircrew Honored for Flood Response by Secretary of Homeland Security

On 11 July, Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem presented military medals to four Coast Guard aircrew members for their heroism during catastrophic flash flooding at Camp Mystic in Kerr County, Texas on July 4, 2025. The ceremony recognized the courage, judgment and devotion to duty demonstrated by the aircrew members in the face of danger. "This is what the men and women of the Coast Guard do," said Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem. "The selfless courage of this crew embodies the spirit and mission of the Coast Guard."

Heavy rainfall caused the Guadalupe River to rise 26 feet in 45 minutes, sweeping away cabins and stranding more than 200 campers at Camp Mystic. In response, Coast Guard members launched into action, battling heavy rain, near-zero visibility and rough terrain to save lives.

During the ceremony, Noem lauded the aircrew, stating their actions embody the highest ideals of service and sacrifice. She emphasized their extraordinary efforts ensured many lives were saved that day, and presented awards to:

LT Ian M. Hopper, Aviator 5062, aircraft commander, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross: "As the Aircraft Commander aboard MH-65E CGNR 6553, LT Hopper was the first to launch into the storm. He battled extreme precipitation, near-zero visibility, and treacherous terrain, at one point losing visual reference and narrowly avoiding disaster before executing a harrowing instrument flight."

LT Blair O. Ogujiofor, Aviator 5103, co-pilot, was awarded the Air Medal: "LT Ogujiofor launched on the first Coast Guard aircraft to conduct rescue operations. She expertly coordinated all communications, aerial deconfliction,



Proud recipients AMT3 Reeves (L), LT Ogujiofor, AST3 Ruskan, and LT Hopper with Secretary Noem.

and obstacle avoidance while leading a formation of two medevac helicopters through narrow valleys with limited visibility. Upon successfully landing after three perilous attempts to reach survivors, she deconflicted the flight paths of 12 helicopters in the immediate area to evacuate survivors."

AST3 Scott C. Ruskan, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross: "As the Rescue Swimmer aboard MH-65E 6553, Petty Officer Ruskan launched on the first Coast Guard aircraft, making three perilous attempts to reach survivors. Facing rising floodwaters and unstable terrain, he volunteered to remain on the ground at a critical moment in the rescue operation, putting his own safety at great risk. As the sole first responder at the chaotic Camp Mystic evacuation landing zone, Petty Officer Ruskan overcame crippled communications and dangerous conditions to triage survivors. He expertly coordinated the evacuation of 169 people, working with a dozen rotary-wing aircraft from the Department of Defense, federal, and state partners across two landing zones."

AMT3 Seth N. Reeves, was awarded the Air Medal: "As the Flight Mechanic aboard MH-65E 6553, Petty Officer Reeves's swift actions proved essential to mission success. Respond-

ing to the urgent call, he identified a mission-critical aircraft malfunction in the designated helicopter and, with no time to spare, expertly prepared a second aircraft, ensuring the timely launch of the rescue effort. Facing extreme precipitation, near-zero visibility, and rising terrain, he vigilantly assisted the pilots, utilizing ground maps to navigate below the cloud layer and keep the aircraft clear of obstacles."

"In the face of devastating floods in Texas, this Coast Guard aircrew's courageous actions saved lives and reaffirmed our vital role in protecting American communities," said Adm. Kevin Lunday, acting Coast Guard Commandant

Continuing the Coast Guard's work as America's maritime first responder, the combined efforts of this aircrew, working in coordination with federal and state partners, resulted in the rescue of 18 people and supported the rescue of 169 others. (CG Press Release)

AST3 Ruskan and AMT3 Reeves received meritorious advancements to PO2 at a Congressional reception in Washington, D.C. on 23 July.



## Mr. Sergei I. Sikorsky, Beloved Ptero and CG Aviation Champion, Passes Away

On 18 September, former AMM2 Sergei I. Sikorsky, USCG (P-3289), passed away at age 100. Sergei, the son of helicopter pioneer Igor Sikorsky, had his first flight when he was about eight years old while sitting in his father's lap in an S-38 seaplane. About the VS-300, Igor's first helicopter, Igor said that '...the vibration was fierce, control was marginal, and stability was non-existent.' Sergei said he was a VS-300 'grease monkey' and he spent many hours maintaining it after each flight. The VS-300

had several pilots, including Charles Lindberg, all trained by Igor while standing

next to it on the ground while the trainee was hovering the helo. The VS-300 accumulated 102 hours and 32 minutes of flight before it was retired. Another of Igor's sayings was that '...the reputation of a helicopter is because of the people who fly them and maintain them, not the manufacturer.'

Sergei was extremely proud of his service in the Coast Guard (1942-45) and his collaboration with then-LCDR Frank Erickson, Aviator 32, in the development of the helicopter rescue hoist at Air Station Brooklyn in 1944. Sergei called the hoist 'the missing link between the

air and the ground.' He is survived by his wife, Elena. See related stories in Pterogram 3-09, 1-15, and 2-16. RIP.



## Ancient Al #28 Letter to Pteros



Greetings, fellow Pteros!

In August, I had the privilege to preside over the Silver Ancient Albatross Change of Watch ceremony and retirement of Master Chief Shawn Burns the 16<sup>th</sup> Silver Ancient Albatross,

and was honored when Shawn asked me to do his last salute as an active duty member. It was a humbling experience. Thank you Shawn and congratulations on your retirement! To Master Chief Michael Ethridge the 17<sup>th</sup> Silver Ancient Albatross, welcome to the ancient team and I look forward to working with you, again! Master Chief Ethridge and I first served together at Air Station Clearwater, he as a new 3<sup>rd</sup> class petty officer, and I a young LT and Engineering Officer, where we had the opportunity to spend many hours flying and maintaining the mighty Jayhawk aka 'Big Iron' (See photo P. 9).

While in Elizabeth City, Ptero CAPT Catherine Carabine, the Airsta CO (Aviator 3694), took me on a tour of the unit where I had the opportunity to present a newly qualified aircrewman with his wings and the coveted leather jacket.



ATTC MH-65 Trainer (& below)



Elsewhere in the field, I ran into Ptero CAPT (ret) Kurt Carlson (Aviator 1884) at AirSta Cape Cod during the Base Cape Cod Change of Command. He presented CAPT Masson, the incoming Base CO who promoted to CAPT during the ceremony, with O6 insignia. CAPT Carlson and CAPT Masson served together at AirSta Cape Cod from 2010-2014. CAPT Carlson was a career aviator and had a relationship with Ptero VADM John Carrier (Aviator 1877 and Ancient Albatross #23).

The O6 insignia that CAPT Carlson gave to the newly minted CAPT Masson was insignia handed down from VADM Carrier – an aviation legend.



In September I spent a couple days at the CG Academy for the annual aviation week, met with cadets, and attended the CGA Cadet Aviation Clue Legacy Aviator Dinner. What a great event put on by the CGAA New London Chapter! The future prospective CG aviators are

in good hands and fortunate to have some of our best aviators mentoring the new generation – Ptero CAPTs (ret) Chris Lutat (Aviator 2686) and Phil Volk (Aviator 1644), CGA Aviation Club Advisors and Cadet Flight Team Assistant Coaches, and CG Astronaut #2, CAPT (ret) Dan Burbank (Aviator 2672), the CGA Mechanical Engineering Professor of Practice, CGA Aviation Club Advisor and Cadet Flight Team Acting Head Coach (See photos on P. 8)



From there, I went over to ATTC and met with CAPT Mark Lay, the CO (Aviator 3544) who I had served with at AirSta Clearwater. There have been a lot of changes at ATTC over the years with significant improvement to aircraft trainers, including the addition of a C-27 airframe, and the use of virtual technology to train in the proper application of paint on aircraft surfaces.



RADM List & Chris Lutat

Out on the west coast, I spent some time with the Sector/Airsta San Diego CO, Captain Rob Tucker (Aviator 3661), and XO CDR Mike Ross (Aviator 3924A). In addition to a bit of wardroom hangar flying, I presented a Sikorsky Rescue Award to LT Ben Taminger (Aviator 5157), and recognized a number of enlisted crew members for their aviation professionalism.





**CAPT Tucker & RADM List at Elmer Stone's (Aviator 1) statue at AirSta San Diego.**

From there I went up to Airsta Ventura and met with the XO CDR Min Kim (Aviator 4413). Airsta Ventura is our newest Air Station and what a change for aviation – new facilities from the ground

up! The pilots and crew are wrapping up the transition from MH-65's to MH-60's pending the delivery of their last MH-60. The facility is amazing and proudly boasts "FLY USCG" on the roof of the hangar to the chagrin of Naval Base Ventura.



It is a fantastic time for Coast Guard Aviation as the Coast Guard continues to invest in both infrastructure and aviation assets. The Facilities Design and Construction Center (FDCC) recently awarded a \$68.9 million contract for design and construction of two new membrane tension hangars and associated facilities to support HC-130J operations at Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii.

Contract actions were also completed aimed at accelerating delivery of new MH-60 medium-range recovery helicopters and HC-130J

long-range surveillance aircraft as funded in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). In addition, the Coast Guard placed a \$14.3 million order for delivery of 13 General Electric T700 engines for its MH-60 helicopter fleet, delivery of three AN/APY-11 multi-mode radar systems, valued at \$13.9 million, to be installed on future HC-130Js during the Minotaur missionization process, and procured two modernized Long-Range Command and Control Aircraft (LRCCA) with related supplies and services from Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation.

These are exciting times for CG aviation as the Service invests in the future of Coast Guard aviation.

On the operational front, too much to add but a couple of achievements to note, LCDR Ryan Major an unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) aviator based in San Angelo, Texas, became the first Coast Guard aerial vehicle pilot to earn his wings -designated as Coast Guard MQ-9 Aircraft Commander (P. 17); and the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) achieved its 1,000th counter-narcotics interdiction - a significant milestone in HITRON's 26-year history! (P. 8)

The Coast Guard's pilots and aircrews are the best in the world and they continue to achieve remarkable results for our Service. Eddie Rickenbacker, a World War 1 fighter pilot said it best "Aviation is proof that given the will, we have the capacity to achieve the impossible."

Semper Paratus!  
RADM Carola (CJ) List  
Aviator # 3198



## Enlisted Ancient Al #17 Report to Pteros



Greetings all. I'd like to start out by saying I'm extremely humbled to be the 17<sup>th</sup> Enlisted Ancient Albatross. Please allow me to introduce myself to those that don't know me.

I'm Michael Ethridge. I currently serve as the Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT) Rating Force Master Chief (RFMC). I entered basic training in March 1996 and graduated from Aviation Structural Mechanic (AM) A-school in February 1998. I was a Flight Mechanic on the Mighty MH-60 Jayhawk (AKA – "Big Iron") but my AET counterpart and former friend Nick

Thomas says the MH-65 is a better aircraft. All kidding aside, I have a deep appreciation for all the aviation assets, the missions they perform, and the expert Technicians who maintain and crew these amazing machines.

I am extremely privileged to follow along in the steps of my predecessors. It's an absolute honor to represent the CG aviation community; past, present, and future! I would like to thank CG-711 and the Coast Guard Aviation Association for sponsoring this time-honored ritual. Also, I'd like to thank Enlisted Al #16, AETCM Shawn Burns, for his mentorship while passing along this honor. Look-



ing through the list of members in the CG Aviation Association took me down memory lane. There are many names of pilots, aircrew, and mechanics that I have worked with and that had lasting impacts on my career and life in some way.

Since the ceremony on August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025, I had the honor of meeting with the CG Aviation Engineering students. This See "Enlisted Ancient Al" on P. 16

## PTERO CAPT LES HIGH-- THE OLDEST LIVING COAST GUARD AVIATOR

By Ptero Past Prez George  
Krietemeyer, Aviator 913

At 101 years of age, and still counting, CAPT Les High (RET), Aviator 549, easily wins this monicker. Les entered the CG Academy as a member of the Class of 1947, but since the program was accelerated for World War II he graduated in 1946 and quickly married his childhood sweetheart, Carol, before leaving New London. Les served two short tours aboard CGC TANEY and CGC ACUSHNET and was then served as CO of Loran Station Kwajalein. He was then awarded a Flight Training billet at NAS Pensacola. He trained in T-34s, T-28s and S-2Fs and was awarded his WINGS OF GOLD in 1951.

His first aviation tour brought him to CGAS San Diego. He later served at CGAS Kodiak, CGAS Traverse City, and CGAS Bermuda. He flew every aircraft the Coast Guard had except C-130's and B-17's. During these aviation tours, he learned a lot about flying BUT he also learned a lot about how to be a GREAT LEADER. He felt he could contribute even more by teaching others about leadership and organizational structure, so he volunteered to take a billet at the Coast Guard Academy.

At the Coast Guard Academy, Les was selected as the Class Advisor to the Class of 1965. He was first a Navigation instructor and headed up the summer aviation training at CGAS Elizabeth City. He later moved up to being the Assistant Commandant of Cadets.

After the Class of 1965 graduated, Les

was chosen to be the CO of CGAS Savannah and, after one short year, he became the Project Officer at a new CGAS being established in Mobile, AL. This new facility was destined to become the future Aviation Training Center, which had always been a desire of his. The plan was to finally teach pilots about standardization and cockpit coordination. The new Air Station was opened "on time and under budget" and Les was assigned as the new XO for the unit. When his tour was up, he was off to be the CO of CGAS Detroit. A tour at the Naval War College followed and his next stop was as Chief, Training and Procurement in CG Headquarters.

During this tour he oversaw ALL CG training, and he made numerous improvements during his tenure. He teamed up with CAPT D.C. Thompson, Aviator 683, the Chief, Aeronautical Engineering Division, on a project which led to the establishment of the Aviation Technical Training Center in Elizabeth City, NC.

For his final tour, he was assigned as the CO of Reserve Training Center Yorktown, VA. While there, his staff nominated him for the prestigious Jarvis Award for exceptional leadership. He retired from the Coast Guard in 1975 with over 5,500 flight hours in 15 different types of aircraft. He remains in constant contact with all members of the Class of 1965 and other Coast Guard people he served with and for during his 29-year career. Les was inducted into the Coast Guard Aviation Hall of Honor in 2016, and Hangar One at ATC Mobile (the original Hangar) was named for him in 2025.

He recently visited CGC EAGLE when she arrived in San Diego and was given a special tour of the vessel and had a chance to talk with the Cadets and the new Superintendent of the Academy



He trained aboard CGC DANMARK, a sister ship of the Eagle, as a Cadet.

We all wish Les many more years of happiness and joy!



## Coast Guard Day Celebrated at Battleship Park in Mobile

By Ptero Past Prez George  
Krietemeyer, Aviator 913

On 4 August, the City of Mobile honored the United States Coast Guard with an impressive ceremony at Battleship Park. The ceremony featured the beautiful **FALLEN GUARDIANS MONUMENT**

which was established at the park by Battleship Alabama Commissioner/Captain George E Krietemeyer in 2015. The display features an HH-52, an H-19, a 40 ft patrol boat, a pulling boat, two small buoys and four plaques. It honors the 12 Fallen Guardians who died while performing missions in Alabama.

Mayor Sandy Stimpson read a proclamation declaring August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025, as **COAST GUARD DAY** in the City of Mobile. Over 100 active-duty personnel from the three commands attended the ceremony along with approximately 100 retired and civilian personnel. LTJG Josephine St Ledger was the primary planner and coordinator of the event along with retired CG CAPT Joseph Snowden, Deputy Chief of Staff to Mayor Stimpson.





# Proclamation

**WHEREAS**, The United States Coast Guard was established on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1790, when the first Congress authorized the construction of ten vessels to enforce tariff and trade laws and to prevent smuggling; and

**WHEREAS**, The first Coast Guard presence in Mobile was when the U.S. Revenue Cutter Alabama was assigned to the port of Mobile in August of 1819, has served in every U.S. Conflict earning 43 battle streamers; is the oldest continuous U.S. seagoing service; and

**WHEREAS**, The City of Mobile serves as the home for three major commands: Sector Mobile, Aviation Training Center, and the Gulf Coast Strike Team, in total representing over 600 personnel, in which twelve fallen Guardians gave their lives while performing Coast Guard Missions in Alabama; and

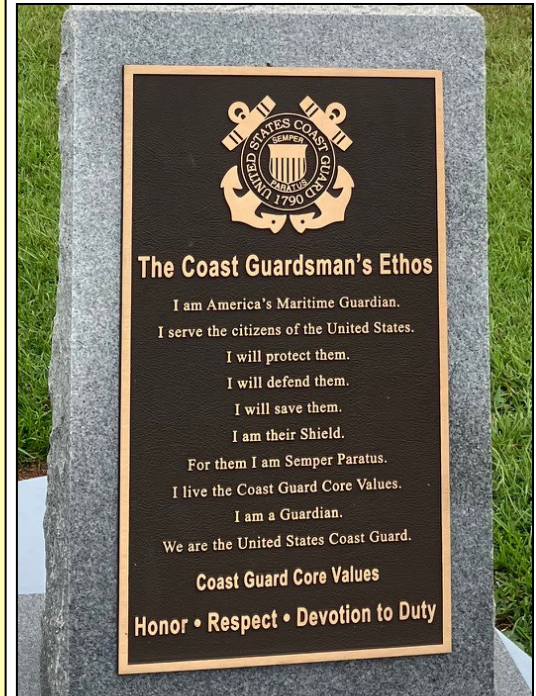
**WHEREAS**, The City of Mobile is proud to recognize two centuries of ongoing partnership and collaboration with the United States Coast Guard and twenty-three years as an official Coast Guard City.

**NOW, THEREFORE, I, William S. Stimpson, 108<sup>th</sup> Mayor of the City of Mobile, do hereby proclaim August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2025 as**

## Coast Guard Day in the City of Mobile

Done at the City of Mobile, Alabama,  
this 4<sup>th</sup> day of August 2025

William S. Stimpson, Mayor



### AirSta Houston Rescue Swimmer Receives Association for Rescue at Sea Award



The 2025 AFRAS Gold Medal was awarded to Aviation Survival Technician Second Class (AST2) James Chandler, Air Station Houston,

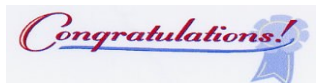
for his heroic actions that resulted in saving eight lives on the night of 28 May 2024.

Coast Guard Sector Houston/Galveston received an urgent distress call from a 40-foot dive boat 45NM offshore from Galveston, Texas. The vessel, operated by the

Texas A&M dive team with eight people on board, suffered a propulsion casualty and was rapidly taking on water in 30-knot winds that generated 8–10-foot seas. To complicate the situation, large bands of severe thunderstorms stalled over the area and were battering the vessel and its crew. Battling low ceilings, high winds, strong seas, and severe thunderstorms, Coast Guard helicopter CG-6570 and AST2 Chandler prepared for several challenging hoist evolutions that would be required to save all eight lives. After arriving on-scene, AST2 Chandler immediately noticed the deteriorating weather, dire situation of the vessel, and people on board. Due to the sea state, AST2 Chandler elected to be hoisted to the water and swam 50 yards to the disabled vessel to further assess the situation and prepare the survivors to be hoisted. Struggling with sea sickness and fatigue during the five-hour evolution, AST2 Chandler provided direction to the air crew and survivors to ensure the safe delivery and recovery of the rescue basket to the pitching

vessel. Upon reaching the helicopter's maximum weight and capacity limitations, CG-6570 was forced to return to shore to deliver survivors twice, thus leaving AST2 Chandler to manage the chaotic scene. His willingness to remain on the sinking vessel to provide assistance ensured the safety of those remaining should the vessel capsize. A second helicopter, also from Air Station Houston, arrived on scene two hours later to hoist the remaining people. Once all eight survivors had been rescued, AST2 Chandler was finally recovered from the churning seas and returned to Air Station Houston.

The other AFRAS Gold Medal nominees were AST1 Derrian Duryea, Air Station Cape Cod, and AST2 Michael Diglio, Air Station Clearwater.



## CG Academy Aviation Club Hosts Annual Aviation Career Week By 1/C Will Spada, Club President

Each year, the CG Academy Aviation Club hosts Aviation Career Week for the Corps of Cadets, with the goal of providing cadets with exposure to the aviation community and sparking interest in future CG aviators. This fall was no different. Over the course of five days, the Corps of Cadets participated in nine events highlighting the diverse opportunities within Coast Guard Aviation.

Aviation Week began on 22 September by honoring the legacy of CG aviators who came before us. The day started with a *Workout to Remember (WOTR)* in honor of LTJG Morgan Garrett (CGA 2019), who tragically lost her life during flight training in 2020. That afternoon, Ptero CAPT Sean Cross, Aviator 3321, (CGA 1994), spoke during a *History Highlight Lunch* about the incredible history and heroism of Coast Guard aviators who served during the Vietnam War.

That evening, the Academy hosted the second annual *Legacy Aviator Dinner*, designed to foster connections between upper-class cadets and returning Legacy Aviators, both current and retired. Among those in attendance were:

Ptero RADM Carola List, Aviator 3198, Commander, Operational Logistics Command (LOGCOM), and current Ancient Albatross

Ptero CAPT (ret.) Dan Burbank, Aviator 2672, CG Astronaut #2, Professor of Practice in Mechanical Engineering, Aviation Club Advisor, and Acting Head Coach of the Cadet Flight Team  
Ptero CAPT (ret.) Aaron "Muddy" Waters, Aviator 3357

Ptero CAPT (ret.) Phil Volk, Aviator 1644, Aviation Club Advisor and Flight Team Asst. Coach

Ptero Chris Lutat, Aviator 2686, CGAA New London Chapter Coordinator, Aviation Club Ad-

visor, Flight Team Assistant Coach, and FedEx 777 Captain

Ptero CDR (ret.) Scott Jones, Aviator 3583, Professor, Dept. of Chemical and Environmental Sciences

Ptero LCDR Erin Warwick, Aviator 4646, Golf Company Officer, Aviation Club Advisor, and Cadet Flight Team Head Coach

AETC Andrew Champagne, Foxtrot Company Chief

RADM List shared insights into leadership and service, while the dinner provided an opportunity for cadets to network with accomplished aviators and learn from their experiences.



Cadets Dine with Legacy Aviators during Aviation Week. 1/C Will Spada photo

The next morning, RADM List addressed cadets and officer candidates, speaking about ongoing changes within CG Aviation and new initiatives arising from *Force Design 2028*.



Over lunch, engineering majors heard from Graham Harrison and LCDR Greg Bukata, Aviator 4474 of the Aviation Logistics Center, who discussed current projects and opportunities within aviation maintenance and engineering.

That evening, cadets joined AST2 Scott Ruskan virtually, who shared his firsthand experience from a high-profile SAR case at Camp Mystic, Texas, earlier this year.

Wednesday began early with a 0600 pool workout led by ASTs from Air Station Cape Cod. Later that day, cadets met with enlisted crews from Cape Cod—AMTs, AETs, and ASTs—who offered insights into their roles and experiences within aviation units. That evening, cadets attended a private screening of *Paratus 1450: The Anniversary Update*, featuring commentary from "Muddy" Waters about his experiences during Hurricane Katrina rescues.

Aviation Week concluded on Thursday with a panel featuring pilots from Air Station Atlantic City. Prospective cadets and CGA admissions applicants joined cadets for this event, which was also attended by CAPT Drew Behnke, Aviator 3720, CGA Director of Admissions.

The Academy Aviation Club would like to extend a sincere thank-you to the Coast Guard Aviation Association (CGAA) for their continued support in making this event possible each year. While Aviation Week is almost entirely cadet-led and organized, it would not be possible without the support of our local CGAA representatives, Chris Lutat and Phil Volk. The club also thanks Erin Warwick and Dan Burbank for their guidance as faculty advisors.

Aviation Career Week 2025 was a tremendous success, offering cadets an inspiring look into Coast Guard Aviation and the opportunities that await them after graduation.



## ALCOAST 420/25—HITRON'S 1,000TH INTERDICTION

Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) achieved its 1,000th counter-narcotics interdiction, a significant milestone in HITRON's 26-year history, showcasing the impact CG aviation has on protecting the US from maritime threats.

On 25 August, MH-65 CGNR 6539 launched from *CGC Midgett* in the Eastern Pacific Ocean for a suspected go-fast vessel. CGNR 6539 covertly located the vessel and observed the target of interest begin jettisoning packages. The helicopter, under the cover of darkness, moved alongside, conducted the appropriate Airborne Use of Force steps, and ultimately stopped the vessel using disabling fire via a precision rifle. CGNR 6539 then remained on-scene to provide cover to *Midgett's* boarding team as they took positive control of the vessel and detained the suspected narco-traffickers. This interdiction resulted in nearly 3,600 pounds of cocaine being seized, worth \$49M in US street value.

This was the first interdiction for the pilot at the controls, a First Pilot and former Department of War aviator, during the interdiction. The pilot skillfully maneuvered the aircraft alongside the vessel during challenging nighttime conditions. Additionally, this was the first execution of disabling fire by the assigned Precision Marksman-Aviation (PM-A) who earned their PM-A qualification less than a year ago.

I congratulate the men and women of HITRON for their outstanding work to protect our nation. This relatively small team generates enormous dividends for the safety and security of our nation. Bravo Zulu!  
VADM Nathan A. Moore, Atlantic Area Commander (LANT-00), sends.

**ANCIENT AL CEREMONY FROM 1**

The joyous ceremony was graciously hosted by the CO, Ptero CAPT Catherine Carabine, Aviator 3694.

Our esteemed Ancient Albatross, RADM Carola List, Aviator 3198, presided. Ptero Past Prez and current Executive Secretary Mike Emerson, Aviator 2799, represented the CGAA and presented MC Burns and MC Ethridge with some mementos.



MC Burns (L), RADM List, and MC Ethridge celebrated the momentous occasion.



Among the special guests were Enlisted Ancient Al #3 ('98-'99), Gary Butler (L) and Past MCPOCG Vince Patton.

**Ptero Past Prez George Krietemeyer, Aviator 913, Honored as Alabama's August Veteran of the Month By Senator Tommy Tuberville**

for fellow Americans in times of need. He dreamed of attending the Naval Academy, but through a series of events found himself attending the CG Academy. This experience would launch him into an over 30-year career in the Guard. He decided to attend flight school after a few years in duty where he trained to fly both airplanes and helicopters. Through his extensive training, Captain Krietemeyer established himself as a leader among the ranks.

“When natural disasters strike, you can always count on the U. S. Coast Guard. This month, the Guard celebrates 235 years of excellence and life-saving emergency missions. And that’s because of heroes like CAPT George Krietemeyer of Opelika.

Growing up in the post-World War II era, Krietemeyer said his favorite pastime was watching John Wayne save the day in war movies. Like John Wayne, George wanted to be that hero



As John Wayne always said, “Courage is being scared to death... and saddling up anyway.” Captain Krietemeyer truly embodies this type of courage. And it is my honor to recognize him as the “August Veteran of the Month.”



**CGA Flight Team Flying Events Winner at NIFA Region 7 Competition! By Sue Bibeau, CGA Flight Team Ground Support Coordinator**

It began with trepidation and ended with elation. For the first time in nine years, the CGA Flight Team competed in a National Intercollegiate Flight Association (NIFA) Region Seven event. NIFA fosters pilot skills, leadership and resilience crucial for future aviators. Overall winners in each of seven regions advance to nationals (May 2026, Moline IL). Although not the overall winner, the CGA Flight Team flew home with much more than their victory as the Flying Event Champions for top performance in flying events – Power Off, Power On Short Field Landings, Navigation, and Message Drop.

Seven CGA cadets, five pilots and two student pilots, went head-to-head in four flying events and five ground events, against 37 competitors from Bridgewater State University (BSU) and West Point (USMA), from 17-19 October at the New Bedford Regional Airport (KEWB). CGA fielded only one 1/C Cadet, with the re-



25 NIFA Region 7 CGA Flight Team Pilots and Coaches. Sue Bibeau Photo

mainder competing for the first time. The perennial host, BSU, offers an FAA approved flight program operating under Part 141 regulations. With 10 aircraft, a hangar and simulators, they are a formidable opponent and gracious host.

It almost didn’t happen. Cadets immediately confronted the realities of weather and SOP safety requirements as wind limits hovered above max at their point of departure, KGON. With the countdown approaching a “go or no-go” decision by Acting Head Coach Dan Burbank, both team aircraft took off, landing at KEWB before sunset. 3/c Ammon Anderson, medaling in third place in the Top Pilot category and Simulator ground trainer event, was exultant: “I can’t believe we made it!”

Other top medal winners: 3/C Cole Ramirez: First, Power On Landings; 2/C Caleb Johnson: First, Power Off Landings; 3/C Ammon An-

derson: Second, Power On Landings; Third, Simulator Ground Trainer; 2/C David Ulmer: Second, Simulator Ground Trainer; 2/C Ben Bendetto: Third, Power Off Landings

Importantly, the NIFA judges were overheard commenting on CGA power on and off landings, because they were consistently safe and professionally flown, in and out of the 200 ft scoring box. As 2/c Ulmer said, “I have always been impressed by the culture of safety in our team...NIFA reinforced that, constantly showing safety is the number one priority.”

We attribute much success to the volunteer coaching staff, who bring superior credentials and deep dedication: Head Coach Ptero LCDR Erin Warwick (#4646) See CGA Flight Team on P. 23

## AST3 Conor Plasha-Aviation Survival Technician Third Class: Ocean City Beach Patrol Lifeguard to Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer

By Leon C. DeFulgentis, AuxPA1



AST3 Plasha participating in interagency training between Ocean City Beach Patrol, AirSta Atlantic City, Ocean City Fire & Police departments. CG photos by Matthew DiMarino, OCBP

It all started when Conor Plasha was a little kid watching guys jump out of helicopters from the 2nd street beach in Ocean City, NJ. He enjoyed watching search and rescue teams practicing and this made a profound impact on him. Conor credits his grandmother and family for persuading him to follow his dream of joining the Coast Guard and eventually becoming

a rescue swimmer. He started as a junior lifeguard with the Ocean City Beach Patrol at eight years of age and became a full lifeguard in 2012 at the age of seventeen. Conor graduated in 2017 from Saint Joseph's University (fellow SJU Hawk) and initially pursued a career in education. He taught seventh grade science in Jacksonville, FL and was under a two-year teaching commitment. Conor decided that a career in education was not something that he wished to pursue. He joined JFRD Ocean Rescue from 2020 to 2022; starting as a lifeguard and eventually attaining the rank of captain.

He joined the Coast Guard at the Jacksonville recruiting office and was accepted to begin training in July 2022 at Training Center Cape May. His primary goal was to become a rescue swimmer and this was his sole purpose of joining. Both of Conor's grandfather's and an uncle served in the military, either in the Navy or Army. His uncle served as a Colonel and Ranger within the Army. Conor also has a cousin who is a major in the Green Berets; he serves as an inspiration to Conor since he completed one of the most elite military schools within the U.S. Army. Having family in the military helped Conor to pursue his goals within the USCG. He joined the Annex program upon graduation from bootcamp which meant that he would be assigned to an Air Station for further training. In 2022, a critical facility issue surfaced at the rescue swimmer training facility in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. Training for rescue swimmers was shifted to the West Coast (CG Training Center, Petaluma, CA). Conor received orders to CG cutter *Venturous* since there was a delay in entering the rescue swimmer training program. He served on *Venturous* based out of St. Petersburg, FL for one year and then received orders to Air Station Clearwater, FL for seven months. While assigned at AirSta Clearwater, Conor trained alongside current rescue swimmers. At least 2 to 3 times per day he would train alongside them either in the pool or on land. He was assigned to the AST shop and would also help with equipment maintenance, sewing, and other tasks. In 2024, Conor

attended AST training school in Petaluma. All AST's are also certified as emergency medical technician's and complete an intensive six-week course while also completing AST training. They earn NREMT (National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians) certification as well. Training includes basic life support (BLS), trauma, medical, field operations, airway, cardiology, and basic pharmacology; vital skills that AST's use every day in the fleet to save lives. The Coast Guard's team of AST's is composed of about 350 active-duty members that have successfully passed the training to become helicopter rescue swimmers since the mid-1980's. This training is extremely difficult and it has one of the highest attrition rates of any military school with about eighty percent failing to complete the program. As a comparison, the attrition rate for U.S. Navy Seal selection and training is about seventy five percent.

Conor graduated from AST training in August 2024 and reported to Air Station Atlantic City as Rescue Swimmer #1098. In addition to rescue swimming, AST's duties also include inspecting and maintaining emergency equipment as well as training & testing others in survival skills, such as how to escape a sinking aircraft. In the Fall, AST Plasha hopes to attend AHRS (Advanced Helicopter Rescue School). AST's also need to re-qualify their skills as a rescue swimmer. I asked Conor what advice he can give to other lifeguards thinking about a career in the CG as a rescue swimmer. "Rescue swimmer school is one of the hardest to graduate in the military. Training and preparation is extremely important in both environments. Ocean lifeguarding gives you a good base and foundation. If becoming an AST is your goal, it requires a lot of hard work, dedication, and an extremely intensive training cycle" according to AST3 Plasha. He further added, "My inner-city teaching background with Teach for America also had a positive impact on helping to prepare me mentally for AST training. Due to the intensive nature of the training, my social life was put on hold. My number one priority was to focus on my goal of graduating and becoming an AST. I trained on my own for two-years with an AST assigned to HITRON before joining the Coast Guard, which was very helpful in my development."

Sources: USCG.mil, "What it actually takes to be a Coast Guard rescue swimmer" Austen Alexander, November 2024.



## On Pre-flighting or Another Goat Story By Ptero Tom Beard, Aviator 1104

A flight crewmember approached me as I was walking to the HU-16E parked on the ramp at Mobile. He said the plane wasn't quite ready; they were still wiping up water on the cabin decking. A hurricane had passed nearby the day before. The planes on the ramp were doubly secured and opening gaps sealed with duct tape.

Preflights this day were conducted with extra care. Except....the water on the amphibian's deck wouldn't wipe up! The bilges were full up to the interior decking. The deck line happened to coincide with the approximate waterline of the floating Goat or about 35,000 pounds. This aircraft's weight thus was doubled with its bilges full. What an interesting take off attempt that might be at double max weight!



**Mail Call!** This issue's mail is brought to you by P4Y CGNR 59688 on the runway at Air Station Barbers Point on 6/19/57. Photo submitted by Ptero Art Ladley, Aviator 724. Art's comments:

Barbers Point was my first assignment out of flight training ('57-'60). There we had three R5Ds, two UF-1Gs and two P4Ys. The P4Y was the ready plane. The R5Ds were used for the monthly forward area flights (to support the Loran stations in the central Pacific, the Philippines, Japan and Korea). They were also available for SAR. The UFs were used mainly to supply French Frigate Shoals (2900' coral strip). When I got there, on my second day my OPS officer, Jack Weber, said the CO, CDR Robert Shunk, wanted to see me. The first thing he said is, "I don't know why you were sent here. We only need experienced pilots. You can expect to spend the next six months sitting at the nav table." That was disheartening, but Jack said don't worry. And he was right. Three weeks later, I was checked out as copilot (loosely) in all three types. The other pilots were happy to have another watchstander. However, this was before standardization and each pilot I flew with had a different form of cockpit management!

We flew lots of intercepts then on the recip airliners. My logbook shows I flew some 60 odd intercept flights in my 33 months there (remember my poem "Night Intercept" in a previous Pterogram?).

Of course, I had the famous last flight of P4Y 59688. George Thometz was letting me do my first landings on runway 4L at Barbers Point. On the 3rd touch and go, he inadvertently raised the landing gear handle instead of bringing the flaps to 50. Both controls were about 10 inches apart on the back of the throttle quadrant. At about 80 knots the gear started to retract, George said, "Oh, s\_\_\_!", pulled back the throttles, the right main gear collapsed, we commenced a right turn through 150 degrees shedding some of the fuselage bottom, causing sudden stoppage of #3 and 4, and came to halt. George said, "Everybody out." I opened my sliding window, somehow pulled myself out of the cockpit and jumped about eight feet to the ground, just missing impaling myself on a pitot tube. No one was injured. My logbook says. "Not involved." I flew with George many times after and he was a fine pilot and instructor. He gave me my first water work flight in the Goat on Keehi Lagoon. Fun times!

### Ptero-authored Book for Sale

I recently published a memoir titled 'Raised by Wolves, Saved by Wings,' which chronicles my journey from a difficult childhood to a career in Coast Guard aviation—and ultimately, to healing and leadership through service. 'From early years shadowed by hardship to commanding rescue helicopters across Alaska, California, and the Gulf Coast, my life is a testament to resilience—and the power of one person to break the cycle. The book's title honors the angelic love of my wife, Cary, whose unwavering support saved our family and reshaped a legacy. This isn't just a memoir—it's a mission. Every chapter is meant to reach those who feel alone in the storm.' It's a story written

to inspire both young readers and our broader Coast Guard family. The message of the book aligns closely with the CGAA's mission to honor and preserve the history and humanity of Coast Guard aviation. The book is available in paperback, hardcopy, or Kindle on Amazon. To buy the book, visit <https://a.co/d/117aN7e> or scan the QR Code below.



I'm honored to be a small part of keeping the legacy of our aviation community alive.

Ptero William E. Seward, Aviator 3434D



### Book Review

Ptero Past Prez Mont Smith, Aviator 1520, has written a book that should be read by people who think they might want to be pilots—especially Coast Guard Rescue Pilots. The book is a collection of stories that span his 20-year career in Coast Guard Aviation. During this time, he served at six large air stations, and he was intimately involved in several major deployments around the globe, including Caribbean counter-drug Operations such as Operation Buccaneer and Wagon Wheel. He also was heavily involved in the Cuban refugee boatlift and the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska.



CAPT MONT J. SMITH USCG (RET.)

### Going Out When Everyone's Coming Back

Stories to Inspire Young People

He established aviation detachments at NAS Key West and NAS Guantanamo Bay. He was certified to fly both Fixed Wing (HU-25 and C-130) and Rotary Wing (HH-3F and HH-65) and amassed over 6,000 hours of flight time.

He tells these stories in an exciting manner which will encourage young folks to want to learn more about the real world of Coast Guard aviation. Experienced pilots will enjoy his detailed analysis of Coast Guard operations and exciting missions which happen every day in CG aviation. They will also want to learn how he managed to never serve a Headquarters or District staff job in a twenty-six-year career. John Wayne said, "Courage is being scared to death-but saddling up anyway". CG pilots enjoy the excitement and rewards which keep them "saddling up" and look forward to every day at work.

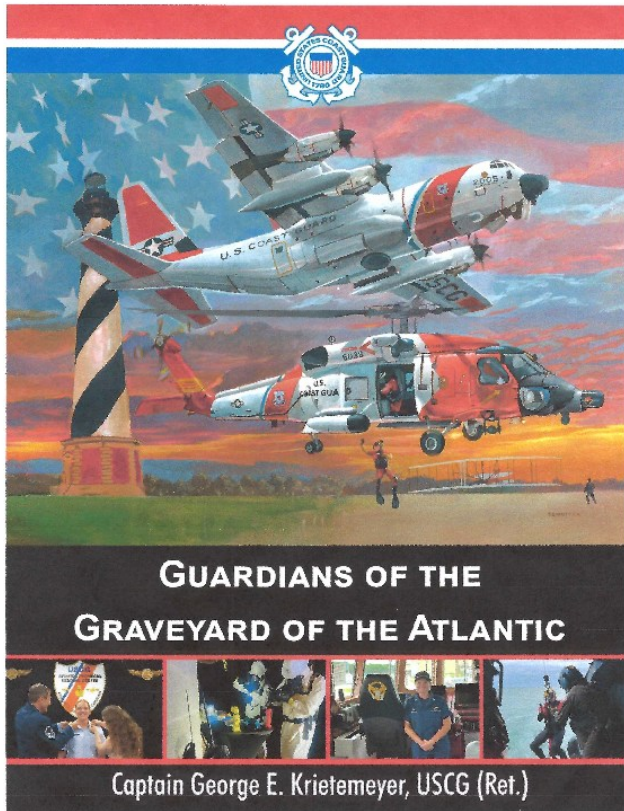
This book is available from Amazon in several formats such as e-book or printed with soft or hard cover. Check Amazon for details. You will enjoy the book and learn some things that will help improve your career in the military.

Ptero Past Prez George Krietemeyer, Aviator 913

### Another Ptero-authored Book for Sale

This is the cover for my new book GUARDIANS OF THE GRAVEYARD OF THE ATLANTIC—the 235-year history of the USCG in North Carolina. Revenue Cutters, Life Saving Service and Lighthouses are covered in detail. Coast Guard units throughout the State are described in detail along with Extraordinary Rescues performed over the 235-year period. Loaded with pictures and other important history and modern exploits of Coast Guard personnel. A must read and have for all

CG personnel ever serving in North Carolina. Book will be available on Amazon and in local bookstores and Exchanges.  
Ptero Past Prez George Krietemeyer, Aviator 913



### An Unexpected Mission

My “mission” started in the most unlikely of places: an elementary school. In 2014, I began volunteering in local elementary schools, helping kids learn to read. Teachers would frequently ask me to read a story to their class. My go-to book was *Mayday! Mayday!* by Chris L. Demarest, a story about the Coast Guard’s search and rescue mission. After five years of working with young kids, I gained a pretty good understanding of what they like in a story.

I’d flown plenty of search and rescue missions during my career as a USCG helicopter pilot. Why not tell the story of one of my SAR missions in a picture book that would appeal to the 4-8-year-old age range? I chose one of my more exciting SAR missions as the plot for my story, named the helicopter “Dolph” (derived from the HH-65 “Dolphin”), and gave Dolph eyes, a mouth, and the ability to communicate with his pilot. My granddaughter already knows her grandpa used to be a helicopter pilot, so I decided to make the pilot a woman, so my granddaughter could see that girls can be pilots too. I named the pilot Gwen (after my granddaughter, of course). Fight Mech Mike and Rescue Swimmer Sam rounded out the crew. I wrote the story, hired an illustrator, and *Into The Storm: The Coast Guard Adventures of Dolph and Gwen* was born.

The plan was to publish one book that I could use to teach kids about the U.S. Coast Guard, its SAR mission, and show a helicopter and crew in action while exemplifying themes of courage, teamwork, and trust. To my surprise, kids loved Dolph and Gwen, teachers loved the lessons of courage and teamwork, and parents loved that it provided examples of real-life heroes. My granddaughter also fell in love with Dolph and Gwen, and it wasn’t

long before she was asking me when the next Dolph and Gwen story would be written.

Thus began a totally unexpected new mission: authoring children’s books. It’s now been a little over three years, and I’ve written and published six Children’s Books and a memoir.

- ***Into the Storm*** – The rescue of three from a fishing boat caught in a fierce storm in the Gulf of Mexico.
  - ***Escaping the Blaze*** – The rescue of eight people trapped on a narrow peninsula by a wildfire as 30 knot winds rapidly approached.
  - ***Four Lives Saved*** – An in-flight emergency that changed the focus of the mission.
  - ***Some Angels Have Rotor Blades*** – A heartfelt tribute to First Responders, their impacts on the lives of others, and an HH-52, which is now on display at the Museum of Flight in Seattle.
  - ***Ginny, The Martian Helicopter*** - A true-life helicopter hero, but with a twist... It’s on Mars! NASA’s history-making Mars helicopter, *Ingenuity*, nicknamed *Ginny*, is not rescuing anyone from peril, but she did make history. *Ginny’s* flight, the first powered aircraft to fly on another planet, was an achievement equivalent to the Wright Brothers'.
  - ***Dolph and Gwen Activity Book*** – For kids who like puzzles, number and word challenges, coloring, etc.
- To Seek and To Save, A Memoir*** – Because after all these children’s stories, someone was bound to ask about the guy behind them.



I’m now known as “Mr. Darcy, The Helo Guy” to many kids, teachers, and librarians in the local area, where I’m frequently asked to be a guest author. I typically read a story, then have a “hangar talk”, where we discuss how helicopters fly, how they are uniquely suited for rescues, why courage is essential, and how they can be brave when feeling nervous or scared.

The best part of reading these stories to kids is seeing them fully engaged in the story — leaning forward in their seats, asking sharp questions, and watching them draw pictures where they imagine themselves piloting Dolph, or jumping into the water as a Rescue Swimmer, or standing in the door hoisting survivors up to the aircraft.

These books are more than just entertaining stories. They’re a way to inspire and demonstrate to kids that courage and service to others are real-world superpowers of real heroes, not fairy tales.

My books have found their way into classrooms, libraries, and homes worldwide. They are available online (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, etc.), at Coast Guard Exchanges, and in a growing number of bookstores and aviation museum gift shops.

I’ve hung up my wings and retired from the cockpit, but this new mission is far from complete. Each school visit, book signing, and special event is another sortie that I hope will plant a seed of inspiration in the next generation.

Ptero Darcy Guyant, CDR, USCG (ret) Aviator 2642



## Air Station Sitka By LCDR Amanda Thrasher, Aviator 4795



From routine MEDEVACS to heart-pounding cliff rescues, Air Station Sitka sees it all. Covering an area of responsibility of over 180,000 square miles of seas and unimaginably rugged terrain, Air Station Sitka cases range from saving the lives of people living in remote villages to immensely complicated rescues of capsizing vessels where every second counts. Given the remote location, Air Station Sitka also responds to land-based search and rescue cases, sometimes resulting in challenging vertical surface or terrain hoists.

Over the last year, Air Station Sitka has launched on 146 cases. That's about three cases per week. A huge portion of Air Station Sitka's cases are non-maritime MEDEVACS serving small, largely Indigenous communities where commercial MEDEVAC services are often limited by weather or daylight. It's difficult to understand the scope of the area and how remote many of these locations are. For example, Angoon, a common MEDEVAC location, is located on a 1,650 square mile island where bears far outnumber people. It has a population of around 500, no hospital, no road system connecting it to any other town, and no runways for commercial airlines to land. Although it is only 40 miles away from Air Station Sitka, a direct route is often impossible. Low IFR conditions are typical in Southeast Alaska, and the direct route to Angoon crosses the towering spine of Baranof Island. Climb-

ing into the clouds is not often an option—even if there were a reasonable IFR route, the icing is typically too severe for helicopter flight. The safest route is to navigate down the long western edge of Baranof Island and turn north, turning the 40-mile trip into a 180 mile-trip. The more direct route follows the aptly-named Peril Strait, a half-mile wide waterway dotted with islands and flanked on each side by thousand-foot peaks. This can drop the length of the trip down to around 80 miles, but along Peril Strait, there is no weather reporting or cameras, and no cultural lighting at all. In high winds, crews can often get tossed around by severe turbulence tumbling down the steep hills. In low visibility, it can quickly become a dangerous situation. Do the aircrews accept the elevated risk in order to get the patient to a hospital sooner? Or commit to a longer route, offshore in the dark?

Luckily, aircrews are not making these decisions in a vacuum. In spite of the relentless SAR tempo, Air Station Sitka maintains a comprehensive training program that trains pilots and aircrew to the high caliber required for the demanding environment. Every village and town in SE Alaska is connected by a web of low visibility routes that pilots learn to program and stitch together in seconds. Pilots refer to most of the uninhabited chunks of Baranof Island as the “playground”, where crews can train high mountain peak landings, terrain hoisting, and confined area work in staggeringly beautiful settings. Air Station Sitka constantly strives for improvement through international partnerships. Each year, the Air Station organizes a SAR exercise with Canadian partners and other CG air stations. This week of SAR scenarios not only provides great training to visiting and local aircrews, it allows crews to swap ideas and stay sharp on best practices. The Rescue Swimmer Shop designs their own training to meet the dynamic demands of the environment, including an in-depth ropes rescue course at a local wilderness.

One week after that training, AST2 Grooms was standing duty when the crew was notified of an injured hiker near the town of Skagway.



The hiker had fallen off the trail the day before, and had already spent a night on the 2,000 foot cliff before being located by the local fire department. The crew launched, battling aircraft malfunctions, along the way, and arrived on-scene at nearly midnight. To their surprise, the local fire department had retreated down the mountain, and the position they had been given was inaccurate. The crew used all tools available to scour the mountainside and finally spotted the survivor, clutching terrain. From the air, the crew thought it looked like a flat surface and planned to send AST2 Grooms down to send up a basket. But, given the difficulty of the terrain, Grooms went down with a quick stop in case it wasn't safe to disconnect. After lowering out of the helicopter on the hoist and getting level with survivor, Grooms realized the terrain was not at all flat. He quickly changed the plan to connect the survivor to the quick stop, and the crew were able to rescue him and get him to awaiting medical care.

When asked about the cliff rescue case, AST2 Grooms said, “I'm just happy to be part of a team that can do such efficient and effective rescues. That's why I'm here.” This was just one of the 112 lives saved or assisted this year. More than just SAR, Air Station Sitka works with the local Aids to Navigation team to service remote navigation markers, slings external loads to distant islands to support other federal agencies, and even flies whale surveillance to gather crucial information for scientists. Operations are diverse and demanding, but with thorough training and a spirit of readiness, Air Station Sitka rises to the challenge.



## Proud Ptero Pins CG Aviator Wings on His Daughter

Executive Secretary Mike Emerson, Aviator 2799, proudly pinned his vintage CG aviator wings (that he wore “going out when everyone else was coming in”) on his daughter, LTJG Becca Emerson, Aviator 5310, at Pensacola. Becca has orders to fly “big iron” (H-60s) at ECity! Mike said ‘it was great having Becky and all four daughters in the same place for a team photo (P. 24).’



On 15 August, Ptero Past Prez and current Exec-



## CG Aviation Association Chapters

CGAA Chapters have been established in the general region of Coast Guard Aviation Units as well as other selected locations. The purpose is to raise the profile of the Association, interact with former and active duty aviation personnel, as well as the local Air Auxiliary, and to recruit new members. So, instead of Local Coordinators we now have Chapter Coordinators.

The Chapter Coordinator represents the CGAA to the following:

- The local Command. Sole point of contact for CGAA issues. Assist the Command as the CO may desire.
- All CG Aviation personnel in the area. Officer or Enlisted, Active or Retired as well as Air Auxiliary.
- The Local Community. As able, involve Chapter members in community activities and civic as well as other veterans organizations.

**After years of hard work, we can now report that we have coordinators in ALL locations!**

**Gary Gamble, at Mobile, is traveling a lot in his later retirement years and has requested a younger person to relieve him. Anyone in the Mobile area that would like to step up, it is a very exciting place to be involved in Ptero activities. Please volunteer.** Take a look at the latest list, contact your Chapter Coordinator and offer up some assistance. Or, just go ahead and be one. If you wish to become a unit CC, contact CGAA Chapter Liaison Broderick Johnson, P-5068, at 808 225-2363 or email [broderick.w.johnson@gmail.com](mailto:broderick.w.johnson@gmail.com).

### CGAA CHAPTER COORDINATORS

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Barbers Point	Ronny German	<a href="mailto:Ronny.w.german@gmail.com">Ronny.w.german@gmail.com</a>	808 349 2990
Borinquen	Doug Armstrong	<a href="mailto:doug@ratio.com">doug@ratio.com</a>	340 643 2151
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Denver/C Springs	Tim Tobiasz	<a href="mailto:tobiascg@mac.com">tobiascg@mac.com</a>	504 470 5040
Detroit	Rick Hamilton	<a href="mailto:rickleehamilton@gmail.com">rickleehamilton@gmail.com</a>	248 807 3648
Elizabeth City	Keith Overstreet	<a href="mailto:sobrecalle@hotmail.com">sobrecalle@hotmail.com</a>	540 405 3236
Houston	Tony Hahn	<a href="mailto:tony.hahn@aoptero.org">tony.hahn@aoptero.org</a>	703 220 6582
Humboldt Bay	Zoran Sajovic	<a href="mailto:zoransajovic@msn.com">zoransajovic@msn.com</a>	337 849 4713
HITRON	Kevin Gavin	<a href="mailto:kpgavin5@gmail.com">kpgavin5@gmail.com</a>	904 808 3507
Kodiak	John Whiddon	<a href="mailto:jbwhiddon52@gmail.com">jbwhiddon52@gmail.com</a>	907 942 4650
Memphis	Steve Rausch	<a href="mailto:rauschfamily@comcast.net">rauschfamily@comcast.net</a>	901 871 4702
Miami	Paul Sumner	<a href="mailto:sumner343pb@gmail.com">sumner343pb@gmail.com</a>	954 536 3065
Mobile	Gary Gamble	<a href="mailto:gary.e.gamble@gmail.com">gary.e.gamble@gmail.com</a>	251 604 5877
New Orleans	Jake Korn	<a href="mailto:jakekorn2@gmail.com">jakekorn2@gmail.com</a>	305 302 5419
North Bend	Lance Benton	<a href="mailto:lancebenton@me.com">lancebenton@me.com</a>	541 756 6508
Pensacola	Kevin Marshall	<a href="mailto:kevinandmaryliz@yahoo.com">kevinandmaryliz@yahoo.com</a>	251 776 3914
Port Angeles	Eric Moan	<a href="mailto:eric.moan@gmail.com">eric.moan@gmail.com</a>	360 797 5406
Sacramento	Steve Delikat	<a href="mailto:stdelikat@hotmail.com">stdelikat@hotmail.com</a>	916 218 9321
Salem	Paul Francis	<a href="mailto:paul.francis@tsa.dhs.gov">paul.francis@tsa.dhs.gov</a>	617 721 0639
San Diego	Stuart Hartley	<a href="mailto:stuart@stusart.com">stuart@stusart.com</a>	619 316 8733
San Francisco	CDR Ryan Ramos	<a href="mailto:ryan.r.ramos@uscg.mil">ryan.r.ramos@uscg.mil</a>	530 701 6744
Savannah	Todd Lutes	<a href="mailto:toddlutes@gmail.com">toddlutes@gmail.com</a>	954 279 9712
Sitka	John Leach	<a href="mailto:John.m.leach@icloud.com">John.m.leach@icloud.com</a>	252 202 4021
Traverse City	Curt Erickson	<a href="mailto:curtis_erickson@hotmail.com">curtis_erickson@hotmail.com</a>	228 235 9237
Ventura	Pete Heins	<a href="mailto:k1fjm@aol.com">k1fjm@aol.com</a>	805 796 6693
Washington	Joe Kimball	<a href="mailto:joekimball65@gmail.com">joekimball65@gmail.com</a>	703 347 1330

### POST COAST GUARD AVIATION EMPLOYMENT ADVISORY SERVICES

*by the Coast Guard Aviation Association / Ancient Order of the Pterodactyl*

The CGAA has established a mentoring program designed to assist all of our aviation personnel in securing post Coast Guard employment. The following Pteros have volunteered to assist, in any way they can, people in the aviation rates with future employment advice and counsel. Feel free to contact these willing volunteers.

**JIM McMAHON, SHELL OIL COMPANY (Ret):** Jim served in the Coast Guard for 12 years and left as an AD1 to pursue other interests. He has been with Shell Oil Company for the last twenty years and is now an IT Solution Architect helping design Shell's new Asset Management business process using SAP (business software). Jim is also heavily involved in Shell Oil's MILNET or Military Network program. Shell wants to hire military veterans. He can be reached at: [jim.mcmahon44@yahoo.com](mailto:jim.mcmahon44@yahoo.com) or 281-753-5221.

**CHRIS LUTAT, B-777 CAPTAIN, FEDEX:** Chris Lutat is our Chapter Coordinator at the Coast Guard Academy. He has extensive instructor, as well as pilot hiring experience. He can be reached at: [clutat@aol.com](mailto:clutat@aol.com) or 901-830-0939.

**PAUL FRANCIS, CDR, USCG (Ret):** Paul is our Chapter Coordinator in Salem, MA and now works for TSA in Boston. He is responsible for the inspection and regulatory oversight of air carriers, 21 federalized airports, cargo facilities, indirect air carriers, certified cargo screening facilities, flight schools, flight instructors, and general aviation outreach throughout all six New England States. He can be reached at: [paul.francis@tsa.dhs.gov](mailto:paul.francis@tsa.dhs.gov) or 617-721-0639.

**STEVE RAUSCH, CDR USCG, (Ret):** Steve currently flies the Airbus 300 for FEDEX, and is our Memphis, TN Chapter Coordinator. He is available to discuss with both pilots and aircraft maintenance personnel potential airline hiring opportunities. FEDEX is now actively recruiting both pilots and maintenance personnel. Steve can be reached at: [rauschfamily@comcast.net](mailto:rauschfamily@comcast.net) or 901-871-4702.

**BILL PAPPAS, CWO4 USCG, (Ret):** Bill was an ADCS to CWO to LT. He transitioned to the private sector and held a position with a Government Contractor then spent a couple of years as a Director at an IT consulting company. He went on to a publicly traded

company, where he was VP-IT and then Senior VP–Chief Information Officer. Bill has extensive experience hiring and mentoring personnel. He can be reached at: [wpappas@me.com](mailto:wpappas@me.com) or 919-889-7847.

**PETER TROEDSSON, CAPT USCG, (Ret):** Peter is the City Manager in Albany, Oregon. Albany is a full service city with 450 employees providing police, fire, library, parks and rec, public works, municipal court services, along with all support departments. Peter serves on the board of the International City Management Association and has counseled many transitioning veterans interested in local government service. He can be reached at: [ptroedsson@gmail.com](mailto:ptroedsson@gmail.com) or 503 468 9898.

**LARRY POST, AMERIPRISE FINANCIAL (Ret):** Larry was on active duty from 1976-1982 as an HU -16 pilot at Cape Cod. He spent 34 years with Ameriprise Financial Services, retiring as a senior executive. Larry lives in Boston and is currently CEO of Post Hospitality Group: <http://www.posthg.com/> He may be reached at [LPTHEJET@AOL.COM](mailto:LPTHEJET@AOL.COM) or 617 908 4001.

**HANK SCHAEFFER, CDR USCG, (Ret):** After retirement from the CG, Hank worked for FlightSafety International as an S76 Instructor. He then transferred to FlightSafety Boeing. With Boeing, he became the 737NG/Classic Maintenance Chief Instructor, and Manager, Regulatory Approvals and Standards. Hank is at [globalflyer7x7@gmail.com](mailto:globalflyer7x7@gmail.com) or 541 749 0774.

**LIAM WILLIAMS, AETCM USCG (Ret):** Liam retired in 2017 and went on to civil service with the State of California as Operations Manager of the Statewide Training Center. He is now a financial Advisor for First Command Financial Services. First Command is recognized as a Military Friendly Employer. He can be reached at [ldwilliams1975@yahoo.com](mailto:ldwilliams1975@yahoo.com) or 510 846 7001.

**JACK SANTUCCI, CAPT USCG (Ret):** Jack is Safety Officer and a Gulfstream Captain for Reyes Holdings Aviation in West Palm Beach, FL. Reyes operates Gulfstream V/450/550/650 aircraft and is frequently looking for both pilots and mechanics. Mechs must have an FAA A&P certificate, Gulfstream experience preferred. He can be reached at [JackSantucci84@gmail.com](mailto:JackSantucci84@gmail.com) or 561 267 2522.

**MARK CREASEY, CAPT USN (Ret):** Mark is a retired Navy P-3 pilot and proud CGAA member. He works at Lockheed Martin in Arlington, VA, as Director of Govt. Affairs for Naval and CG Aviation. He can offer insights on making the transition to the defense industry, going to the airlines, and/or building your professional network. Mark can be reached at [mcreasey90@gmail.com](mailto:mcreasey90@gmail.com) or 703 597 3661.

**DAN CRAMER, CDR USCG (Ret):** Dan is a former Air Medical Pilot and can discuss that area of the industry for both pilots and mechanics. He can be reached at: [daniel\\_s\\_cramer@yahoo.com](mailto:daniel_s_cramer@yahoo.com) or 510 229 0924.

**RICK KENIN, CAPT USCG (Ret):** Rick is Chief Operating Officer, Boston Medflight, Bedford, MA. This is a fixed and rotary-wing air ambulance provider servicing the New England region with a long history of employing former Coast Guard pilots and mechanics. Additionally, Rick is connected across the air ambulance industry and can provide career advice for CG aviation people transitioning to commercial aviation. He is at: [rick@keninfamily.com](mailto:rick@keninfamily.com) or 305 389 3667.

**SEAN CROSS, CAPT, USCG (Ret):** Sean is working for Tecolote Research as a Principle Analyst supporting the Space Enterprise Corps - Commander's Action Group, Space Systems Command, U. S. Space Force. His group supports acquisition and sustainment of command and control and data management systems supporting larger satellite portfolios and ensuring compatibility and interoperability at Space Systems Command. He can be reached at: [seanmcrossBI@gmail.com](mailto:seanmcrossBI@gmail.com) or 540 735 4921.

**TOM PALIGRAF, VICE PRESIDENT, SUN TRUST BANK, (Ret):** Tom served at AirSta Miami from 1968-1972, leaving as an AD2 to pursue a career in banking. After completing college (thanks to the GI bill), Tom served twenty-four years with Sun Trust Bank, retiring as Senior Voce President. He has extensive experience in commercial, consumer and residential lending. Tom lives in Fletcher, NC and can be reached at [paligraf@comcast.net](mailto:paligraf@comcast.net) or 305-962-5218.

**JAMIE WRIGHT, B-737 FIRST OFFICER, UNITED AIRLINES:** Jamie flew C-130s in the Coast Guard and then transitioned to commercial flying. She worked extensively as a Part-135 pilot for Cape Air and Express Jet and is available to provide career advice for CG Aviation personnel transitioning to civilian flying. She can also discuss hiring opportunities at United Airlines which is actively recruiting pilots. Jamie can be reached at [c130pilotgirl@gmail.com](mailto:c130pilotgirl@gmail.com) or 727-235-8360

**TONY HAHN, CAPT, USCG, (Ret):** Tony is Aviation Advisor for ConocoPhillips doing Quality and Safety Assurance for both internal and external operations. He is type rated in the Q400, DeHavilland DHC-8. VP, Development for CGAA, Houston Chapter coordinator, and Secretary of Houston Chapter of NOAA. Tony can be reached at [tony.hahn@aoptero.org](mailto:tony.hahn@aoptero.org) or 703 220 6582.

**CDR PETER M. BRODA USCG (Ret):** Immediately after retirement in 2011, Peter went to work as a line pilot, Site Safety Officer and Base Aviation Manager for Med Trans Corp, one of the largest helicopter EMS providers in the U.S. He can assist pilots or mechanics transition from the Coast Guard into the air medical industry. Peter can be reached at [peter.broda@gmr.net](mailto:peter.broda@gmr.net) or (609)342-3416.

The only job requirement is to relate your experiences as you made the transition from Coast Guard Aviation to any kind of civilian employment. If you have any questions, call or email: **Mark Benjamin at: 231-642-1201, or email: [mebmd11@gmail.com](mailto:mebmd11@gmail.com)**

## LOCAL CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

### HITRON Awards Presentation By HITRON Chapter Coordinator Kevin Gavin, Aviator 3296

On 5 September, the following HITRON members pictured below received their aircrew designation and aircrew wings and gift boxes from the Pteros: AET3 Dakota Ek, AET3 Javier Gamboa, AMT3 Sergio Pezzulich, AMT3 Frankie Reyes.

This fiscal year has been record setting for HITRON for seizure amounts and value. As of the 5th of September (so the fiscal year is not finished yet), HITRON aircrews have interdicted 41 vessels carrying over 115,000 kgs of cocaine valued at \$3.4B and detained 257 traffickers. Most notably, the unit also achieved interdiction number 1,000 recently and I expect we'll see some more pictures from that as well. I learned the right seat pilot for the mission was his first deployment, first interdiction - pretty cool! Those numbers since inception show that HITRON has kept over a 1M kg of cocaine off US streets valued at over \$33.4B. Not bad return on investment - pretty good action from Jax!



**SCHEDULED CHAPTER ACTIVITIES**

**If traveling thru the area, be sure and join in on these regularly scheduled events. For details contact the Local Coordinator.**

**CAPE COD:** Marshland Too has closed. Brian is organizing monthly luncheons at various locations on the Cape. Call Brian for more info.

Annual Cape Cod Mini Roost. Held at various locations over the last 23 years, normally late August or early September.

For more info contact Cape Cod Coordinator Brian Wallace at [ccjwblbs@comcast.net](mailto:ccjwblbs@comcast.net) or 508 888 7384.

**CORPUS CHRISTI:** Monthly luncheon. First Thursday of the month at 1500. IHOP on Padre Island Drive. For more info, contact luncheon coordinator John Mills at 361 215 6941 or Corpus Christi Chapter Coordinator John Pasch at [paschfam@gmail.com](mailto:paschfam@gmail.com) or 504 236 6562.

**KODIAK:** Annual Kodiak Chamber of Commerce Coast Guard Appreciation dinner. Held in February. For info contact Kodiak Chapter Coordinator John Whiddon at [jbwhiddon52@gmail.com](mailto:jbwhiddon52@gmail.com) or 907 942 4650.

**MIAMI:** Breakfast every 2nd Tuesday at 0830. Lester's Diner, 1393 NW 136th Ave, Sunrise, FL



**TRAVERSE CITY:** Breakfast at 0900 on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month. Willie's Rear, Where the Elite Meet to Eat!, 1315 W. South Airport Road, Traverse City. Monthly Ptero dinners. Scheduled each month September thru May. Generally, held on a Thursday evening at 1800 somewhere in the Traverse City area. For more info contact Traverse City Coordinator Curt Erickson at [curtis\\_erickson@hotmail.com](mailto:curtis_erickson@hotmail.com) or 228 235 9237.



**Enlisted Ancient Al FROM 5**

meeting was two-fold as I was also meeting with them as the AMT RFMC. Serving in these two positions concurrently creates a unique dynamic. I not only get to represent the history of CG aviation, but also, along with my other aviation RFMC counterparts, get to represent our ratings, help create policy, shape the trajectory of our training programs, and collaborate with stakeholders across the enterprise on decisions that affect the entire CG.

It was also an honor to present ASTCM Eric Biehn with a Meritorious Service Medal and a departure plaque for

his time serving as the Aviation Survival Technician RFMC. Eric is a true champion of the AST rating. He is now serving as the AST Program Manager in CG-711.

I will close by saying THANK YOU! Thank you to all of the men and women who have built the Coast Guard Aviation Legacy and shaped Coast Guard aviation into what it is today. I get asked all the time, "why are you still doing this"? Let's just say that life has a way of adding in lots of turbulence, and by God's grace, there was always someone that came along that made things tolerable or just plain ol' helped me thru. That was the men and women that I worked with day in and day out. I have made relationships in CG aviation



that surpass duty stations. That's because we have a commonality; a deep belief in working hard, doing the job right, and making sure the aircraft that our shipmates flew in not only took off safely, but returned with the crew safely. This is why I keep going. There is still a lot of work to do and traditions to pass. Take care 'til next time and stay Semper Paratus!

Ptero AMTCM  
Michael Ethridge, P-6535



**New Members FROM 2**

Meghan Fornaro	Life-Regular	5016
Scott Austin	Life-Regular	4214
Kevan Hanson	Life-Regular	4177
Alvin Tirso P. Cura, III	Life-Regular	P-6506
Christian Sandberg	Life-Regular	P-5977
Logan Swan	Life-Regular	4680
Rob O'Donnell	Life-Regular	4180
Megan King	Life-Regular	P-6529
Chad Whetsel	Life-Regular	P-6524
Seth Reeves	Life-Regular	P-6533
Michael (Mike) Ethridge	Life-Regular	P-6535
Michael Hovick	Life-Regular	5203
Andrew Stoddard	Life-Regular	5252
Andrew Lund	Life-Regular	4272
Howard Rainey	Regular	3597C
Jonathan Ardan	Life-Regular	4559

Wayne Langley	Regular	P-3032
Craig Monce	Life-Regular	P-6502
John (Jack) Sauve	Life-Regular	4384
Dustin Brecher	Life-Regular	P-6507
Dominic Bucciarelli	Life-Regular	4215
Tye Conklin	Life-Regular	RS-458
Miller Mott	Life-Regular	5295
William James	Active Duty	P-6525
Leon DeFulgentis	Regular	P-6518
Andrew Snyder	Life-Regular	4445
Scott Ruskin	Life-Regular	P-6533
James Heller	Life-Regular	3964
Charles Majewski	Life-Regular	5027
Thomas Useglio	Life-Regular	5207
Rachel Seaman	Life-Regular	4854
Ian Chenault	Active Duty	P-6548
Kenneth Hunkus	Life-Regular	5021

Alex Serrato	Life-Regular	P-6555
Jason Zeddies	Life-Regular	P-6500
Joel Norton	Life-Regular	4799
Christopher Morton	Life-Regular	P-6508
Daniel Diaz	Life-Regular	P-6510
Justin Dougherty	Life-Regular	4570
Kelsey Thompson	Life-Regular	5250
Logan King	Life-Regular	P-6528
Pete Schofield	Life-Regular	4354
Stone Quinlan	Active Duty	P-6531
Kassidy Dishman	Life-Regular	P-6543
Garrett Hendrickson	Life-Regular	4797
Suzanna Peters	Life-Regular	4915
Scott Bigelow	Life-Regular	P-6545
Thomas Sizer	Life-Regular	RS-983
Jacob Scott	Life-Regular	4896
Aaron Black	Life-Regular	4882

## Naval Aviation Hall of Honor

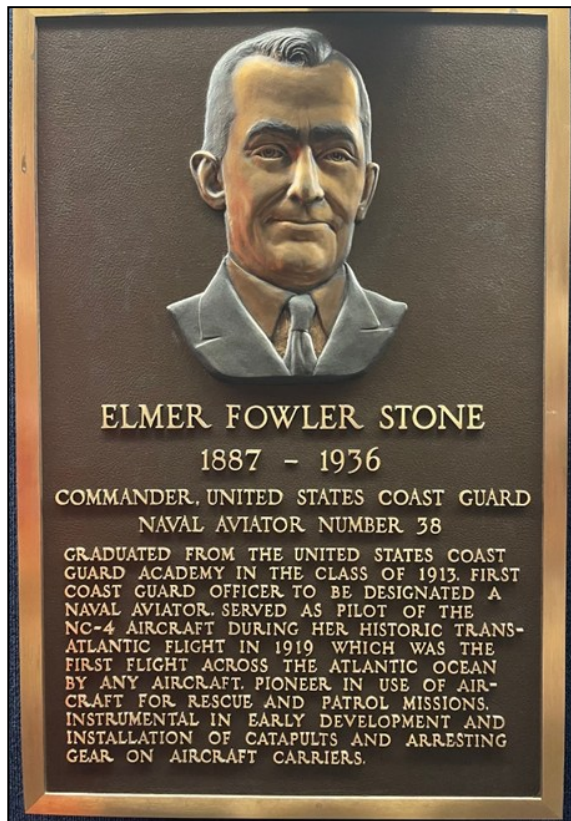
By Ptero Past Prez George Krietemeyer, Aviator 913



The United States Naval Aviation Hall of Honor is located at the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola on the second deck. It recognizes individuals “who by their actions and achievements made outstanding contributions to Naval Aviation”. Since its inception in 1979, the Hall of Honor has enshrined 99 people representing every element of the Naval Aviation family-US Navy, US Marine Corps and US Coast Guard.

### Coast Guard Fixed Wing Pioneers:

CDR Elmer F. Stone, Aviator 1, and CAPT Donald B. MacDiarmid, Aviator 59, are the two Fixed Wing CG aviators in this prestigious museum.



In May of 2026, Ptero VADM John P. Currier, Aviator 1877, will join them as the fifth CG aviator enshrined in this prestigious museum. Details and dates will follow in Sitrep 1-26.

## First CG Aerial Vehicle Pilot Winged

By Kathy Murray, Senior Writer, MyCG



As a boy, LCDR Ryan Major was fascinated with flying. Not only had his great grandfather flown B-25s in WW II, two of his cousins became military pilots and his parents both worked for the airline industry. “I grew up around aviation and have always loved it,” he says. So, Major was understandably thrilled when he became the first Coast Guard aerial vehicle pilot to earn his wings.

Major, an unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) aviator based in San Angelo, Texas, took the stage to receive this honor during the Robotic and Autonomous Systems (RAS) Exposition held at CGHQ on August 26. As his parents watched from the audience, Vice Commandant, ADM Tom Allan pinned the Navy Aerial Vehicle Pilot (AVP) insignia to his uniform. “We are entering a new era of Coast Guard aviation where unmanned systems will play an increasingly vital role,” Allan said. “So we’ve opened up MQ-9 Flight Assignments to a broader range of qualified personnel.”

To Major, the recognition marked the culmination of an aviation career he’s been building for more than 20 years. Even prior to joining the Coast Guard in 2004, Major completed civilian flight training and became a certified flight instructor. Once in, he excelled as an aviation electronics technician and got a bachelor’s degree in aeronautical science. He

served as a rotary wing sensor instructor, then later earned a commission and worked at the Coast Guard Research and Development Center (RDC) and managed projects at C5 ISC.

When the Coast Guard solicited for the new insignia, Major was working as an IT/Project Management Officer. But having accumulated more than 1,500 manned civilian flight hours over his career, he knew he had the required time in the air. “I jumped at it,” he said. To qualify for the AVP, Major also had to complete the approved Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations (CBP AMO) initial MQ-9 flight training course and local training syllabus. Historically, only Coast Guard aviators have been eligible for assignment to this JPO. But because of the unique differences between manned and unmanned aircraft, this requirement was recently adjusted to allow Coast Guard members who meet the CBP MQ-9 hiring requirements to also be eligible for assignment. CG officials determined Major’s civilian training and certifications, together with his CBP MQ-9 training exceeded the typical requirements to wear the AVP insignia. As a result, he is now designated as Coast Guard MQ-9 Aircraft Commander and assigned the AVI 13 officer subspecialty code. “Being an MQ-9 pilot was my pathway to become a Coast Guard pilot,” says Major, noting he’s always enjoyed being part of a crew with a common mission. “I also like the interoperability aspect of working the CBP AMO.”

The AVP insignia is reminiscent of traditional aviator wings. It features an inverted delta displayed on the shield centered on two cross anchors and flanked by wings. Establishing a new pilot insignia for UAS pilots who operate the MQ-9 paves the way for a new career path in the service and is part of a larger initiative to expand the use of robotics and autonomous capabilities across all Coast Guard missions. In July, a program executive office—the RAS PEO—was set up to accelerate the adoption of uncrewed systems (UxS) in the field as part of Force Design 2028 modernization efforts.

This rapidly evolving technology is expected to be the biggest enhancement to operations since the inception of aviation. The RAS PEO will focus on testing and acquiring unmanned aircraft, surface, subsurface, and space systems and developing a future-ready workforce equipped to use them in the field.





# COAST GUARD AVIATION ASSOCIATION

## "THE ANCIENT ORDER OF THE PTERODACTYL" *FLYING SINCE THE WORLD WAS FLAT*

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14 July 2025

Admiral Kevin Lunday

Commandant, United States Coast Guard

2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE

Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Admiral Lunday:

Congratulations on your appointment to lead our great service!

On behalf of the Coast Guard Aviation Association (CGAA), I'm writing to express our deep concern regarding the aging fleet of helicopters in our Coast Guard. Per our by-laws, the CGAA is dedicated to the support and advancement of Coast Guard aviation, including the safety and efficiency of our flight crews.

The CGAA wants to provide solid support to you as alternative solution sets are presented. We're advocates for successful mission outcomes and for your aviators and air crews. We do not advocate for any specific platforms that may be under consideration. We firmly believe that the best possible platform selection will result from a competitive, transparent, and open acquisition process. With the support of Congress, this can be accelerated to a pace to match the urgency of this crisis.

We acknowledge that budgetary constraints and logistical considerations are significant factors in this process. However, we firmly believe that investing in the safety and capability of our aviation assets is essential to the Coast Guard's ability to achieve mission success in the future. We're committed to supporting you in any way we can to advocate for the necessary resources to achieve this goal.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to your leadership in addressing the challenges facing our helicopter fleet and to collaborating on solutions that will benefit the Coast Guard and the communities it serves.

Sincerely,

s/Peter Troedsson

President



13000  
August 21, 2025

Coast Guard Aviation Association  
P.O. Box 10737  
Alexandria, VA 22301

Dear Members of the Coast Guard Aviation Association,

Greetings from Coast Guard Headquarters! I hope this message finds you well. I want to take this opportunity to share updates on the significant organizational changes and ongoing developments within Coast Guard aviation. Your continued engagement and steadfast support of our aviation programs are deeply appreciated, including your recent outreach to the Commandant. I am committed to keeping you informed through periodic updates as we work together to advance the world's greatest aviation program.

### **Force Design 2028 Reorganization – Deputy Commandant for Systems**

As part of the Force Design 2028 initiative, the Coast Guard has undergone a major reorganization to enhance efficiency and mission effectiveness. This reorganization includes the establishment of a Vice Admiral-level Chief of Staff (CoS) and two new Rear Admiral-level Deputy Commandants: one for Systems (DCS) and one for Personnel (DCP).

Under the DCS, a two-star Director for Systems Integration/Chief Acquisition Officer oversees five newly established Assistant Commandants/Program Executive Officers (PEOs) for Aviation, Surface, Shore, C5I, and Remote and Autonomous Systems (RAS). This structure consolidates the legacy CG-9 (Acquisitions), CG-4 (Engineering), CG-6 (IT), Contracting, and elements of CG-7 (Operational Capability) under each PEO, ensuring full lifecycle management of systems and assets—from planning and acquisition to sustainment and disposal.

In my current dual role as Director of Systems Integration/Chief Acquisition Officer and Acting Assistant Commandant/PEO for the Air Domain (CG-AIR), I am honored to lead this transformation. Supporting me in this effort are the following key leaders:

- **Deputy Assistant Commandant for Air & CG-AIR PEO Deputy:** CAPT Scott Powers
- **CG-AIR-A (Acquisitions):** CAPT Brad McNally
- **CG-AIR-E (Engineering):** CAPT Ed Aponte
- **CG-AIR-C (Contracting):** Mr. David Burgess (GS15)

Additionally, the Commanding Officers of our aviation sub-commands are:

- **Aviation Logistics Center (ALC):** CAPT Christian Polyak
- **Aviation Projects Acquisition Center (APAC):** CAPT Ryan Angelo

This team is leading the transition of our new organization from Initial Operating Capability (IOC) to Final Operating Capability (FOC) over the next 18 months. Their responsibilities include addressing legacy acquisition and sustainment activities while managing the acquisition of new aviation assets funded by the recently passed \$25 billion Reconciliation Bill.

August 21, 2025

## Fixed-Wing Program Update

We are actively pursuing the acquisition of six additional HC-130J aircraft and at least one C-130J flight simulator to enhance our long-range surveillance and multi-mission capabilities. This acquisition will enable the transition of Air Stations Clearwater and Sacramento from C-27s to HC-130Js.

## Rotary-Wing Program

Efforts are underway to restore the MH-60T fleet to full operational strength by mid-calendar year 2026. This includes addressing the operational gap caused by the 19,000-flight-hour limit through the Service Life Extension Program (SLEP). The SLEP will extend the operational life of the original 45 MH-60T aircraft by incorporating new hulls from Sikorsky and Navy conversion airframes.

In parallel, we are advancing Increment 2 of the MH-60 program of record to increase the fleet to 84 aircraft while gradually drawing down the H-65 fleet. With funding from the Reconciliation Bill and in partnership with the USN, we also plan to incorporate new MH-60R aircraft modified to meet Coast Guard mission requirements in addition to building MH60T aircraft to meet this need. Additionally, we plan to acquire at least three new MH-60 simulators to enhance training and operational readiness at ATC Mobile and regional locations.

To shape the longer-term future of our rotary-wing capabilities, we have commissioned a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) to conduct a comprehensive analysis of alternatives. These findings will inform decisions on the future vertical lift capabilities of the Coast Guard.

## Looking Ahead

We deeply value the Coast Guard Aviation Association's advocacy and support for our aviation programs. As the Coast Guard grows under Force Design 2028, your insights and feedback remain invaluable as we navigate these changes and continue to enhance our operational capabilities.

As CG-AIR, I am committed to maintaining open and transparent communication with the CGAA. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or my leadership team with any questions or concerns. I look forward to connecting with you at the next Roost, where my team will provide further updates on our aviation programs.

Thank you for your unwavering support. Semper Paratus, and Fly USCG! #3380 sends.



Sincerely,

Digitally signed by CAMP-  
BELL.MICHAEL.E.10298873.96  
Date: 2025.08.21 18:10:58 -04'00'

RDML Mike Campbell  
PEO-AIR (CG-AIR)  
U.S. Coast Guard

## Book Review by Ptero Past Prez George Krietemeyer, Aviator 913

This hilarious and honest book traces the life of a young “Polish Kid” in Michigan who needs to

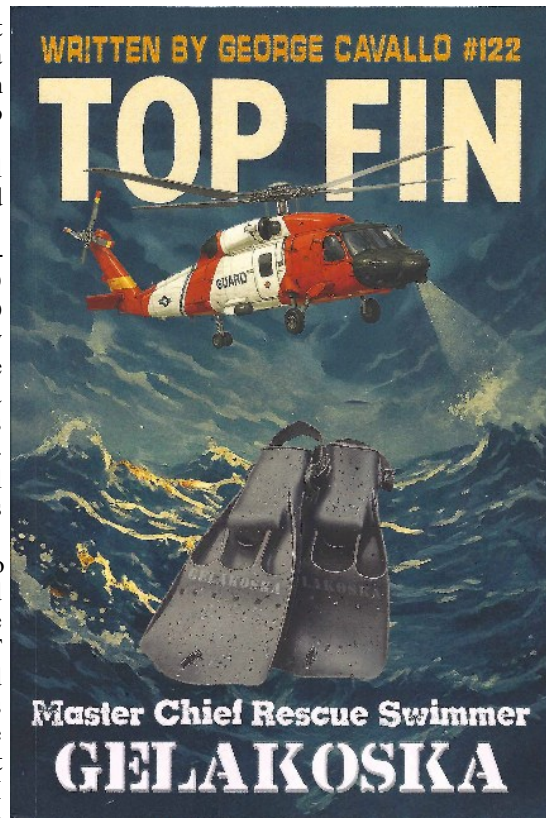
spread his wings. He followed his brother into the Coast Guard and, over time, became a leader of men and women. It took a little longer for Ptero Darrell Gelakoska, P-2317, because he liked to do things “his way”- not always a good idea!!

He joined the US Coast Guard aviation community at a time when the organization resembled the hilarious comedy movie THE MAGNIFICENT MEN AND THEIR FLYING MACHINES. In the early 1960’s Coast Guard aviation had NO standardization programs, very little unique training programs and zero safety officers. Ready crews ran to aircraft when bells went off-most with no knowledge of where they were going or what they were doing when they got there. Gelakoska fit into this organization perfectly. He quickly learned he did not like cutting grass and peeling potatoes, so he volunteered to become an Aviation Ordnanceman because he thought they “blew things up”. He was sent to a Navy Training School which taught him how to pack parachutes, use sewing machines and get pumps running-the primary roles of ASM’s in the late sixties.

Things got better and Daryl grew with the service. ATC Mobile was built to properly train pilots, ATTC Elizabeth City was built to properly train enlisted technicians and by the 1980’s Coast Guard Aviation started to look like the Blue Angels. By now Darrell was a Senior Chief (E-8)-a leader and a role model, BUT there were still some growing pains to endure. Chief Gelakoska was my lead ASM chief at ATC Mobile and I had the pleasure of enduring a few of his tricks BUT I also HAD prima facie evidence in one of his tricks that gave me leverage over the rest of his career. He got so worried about my “proof” of his exploits that he married a Lawyer just to ensure that somebody would help him if and when I dropped the bomb on his career. He also conned me into a trip halfway around the world BUT that story did not make the book.

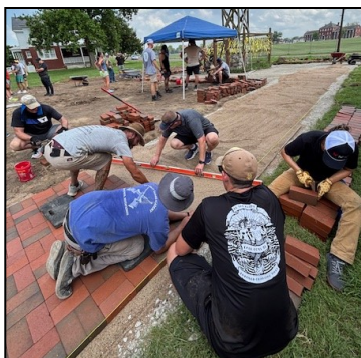
In the early 1980s, Congress finally gave the USCG permission to start a Rescue Swimmer program and all 120 plus ASM’s were invited to switch their jobs and leap out of “perfectly good helicopters” to save their fellow man. Gelakoska was over 43 years old and had consumed many cases of beer and wine over the years. He was NOT the first in line to train with the Navy in Pensacola BUT he finally saw the handwriting on the wall and jumped into the pool. He became Rescue Swimmer # 281 and decided he was senior enough to make some good things happen. For the rest of his career, he pulled strings and cajoled Admirals and Captains and truly helped improve the training and growth of the USCG’s premier Life Saving Group-Rescue Swimmers. His last CO gave him the title TOP FIN!!! Read this book over a cold weekend with a hot toddy and you will be happy you did. Get a copy on AMAZON.

PS-Another fun and easy to read book about early CG aviation is “I NEVER REALLY LIKED THOSE C-130’S ANYWAY” BY LCDR Malcom Smith-an officer version of ASTCM Darrell Gelakoska. He is famous for making an HH-52 helicopter into a static training aid (CPT) at ATC Mobile by crashing his HH-52 into a C-130 in Alaska.



## LT Jack Rittichier Memorial Walkway Completed By Ptero Tony Hahn, Aviator 3158

The Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer’s Association St Louis Chapter recently took on a wonderful service project at the Jefferson Barracks POW/MIA Museum in St. Louis. Based on their offer to build a brick walkway for the Museum, the Museum in turn voted to name the brick walkway the LT Jack Rittichier Memorial Walkway. The CPOA completed the project as part of the Annual National Convention in St Louis, this past July. The pictures above highlight the work and great effort in celebration and honor of LT Jack Rittichier, Aviator 997.



## CGA Cadet Flight Team Funding

It takes a lot of money to lease aircraft and buy 100LL (AVGAS) to build and maintain a proficient cadet flight team focused on safe operations. And safe operations require a lot of proficiency flying as well as ground training. Approx 90% of the flight team funding comes from cadets themselves via required monthly payments to the Cadet Activities Fund. Our second major funding source is via the CGA Alumni Assoc. CGAA regularly supports the team’s flight and ground training equipment. While our team is small (10 cadet pilots and 5 non-pilots) we are continually looking for funding to support both the fall NIFA regional competition and the annual spring Interservice Academy Flight Team Competition at West Point. There are 3 separate and easy ways to help fund the team and if you are interested please contact CGAA New London

Coordinator, Chris Lutat at [clutat@aol.com](mailto:clutat@aol.com) or Phil Volk at [pvolk1@att.net](mailto:pvolk1@att.net).



## Aviation Technical Training Center Graduates



The CG has three aviation ratings: Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT), Avionics Electrical Technician (AET), and Aviation Survival Technician (AST). The AMT and AET 'A' School is a blended program with a 10 week distance learning apprentice program administered by ATTC while students are serving at their permanent home air station. Students then attend a 10-12 week resident program at ATTC with an emphasis on performance based learning on their assigned airframe where possible. ATTC maintains maintenance training units for the MH-65, MH-60, and C-130H. AST students complete their technical and skills training in the state of the art Rescue Swimmer Training Facility during a challenging 24-week program. All graduates appreciate the "dues-free" initial year of membership in the CG Aviation Association when they achieve their aircrew wings and are proud to carry on the legacy of those who have preceded them. We recommend and hope ALL the graduates will continue as members and will help grow the association with new members. **Congratulations and Welcome Aboard!!! [\*Honor Graduate]**

<u>Graduate</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Graduate</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
AMT3 Jackson C. Saunders	Corpus Christi	AMT3 Braden T. Southards	Elizabeth City
AMT3 Mark B. Stout	Astoria	AMT3 Marshall J. Sugden	Sacramento
AMT3 Shaun M. Thompson	Atlantic City	AMT3 Anthony J. Vanore	San Diego
*AMT3 Mason R. Wallis	HITRON	AET3 Seth M. Cafarella	Miami
AET3 Jesse Atamanuk	Miami	AET3 Justin T. Davies	Barbers Point
AET3 Sean W. Dickens	Port Angeles	AET3 Brendan T. Grove	Elizabeth City
AET3 Michael E. Lee	Clearwater	AET3 Benjamin T. Longo	Elizabeth City
AET3 Rishab Nayar	Mobile	AET3 Marina A. O'Toole	Sacramento
AET3 Riley S. Pearce	Mobile	AET3 Catalina A. Rios-Blanco	Mobile
AET3 Alexander P. Stevenson	Clearwater	AET3 John R. Stillwell	Cape Cod
AET3 Louis P. Tapp	Atlantic City	AET3 Beau C. Theall	Elizabeth City
*AET3 Ethan W. Gray	Corpus Christi	AET3 Rogelio Alvarez Ruvalcaba	Houston
AET3 Ryan C. Ball	Elizabeth City	AET3 Gunnar E. Beeman	Barbers Point
AET3 Devon W. Browning	Clearwater	AET3 Morgan C. Dardia	Barbers Point
AET3 Dylan R. Devries	New Orleans	AET3 Luka Hadzik	Borinquen
AET3 Ashton T. Haley	Clearwater	AET3 John P. Horton	Elizabeth City
AET3 Reeve M. Jensen	Clearwater	AET3 Jameson C. Lovett, Jr.	Mobile
AET3 Elijah T. Sigmon	Borinquen	AET3 Connor P. Smith	Ventura
AET3 Hayden L. Wohl	Barbers Point	*AET3 Colin P. Egan	Traverse City
AET3 Liam J. Angello	Savannah	AET3 Owen M. Bennett	Corpus Christi
AET3 Bennett P. P. Birtles	Mobile	AET3 Noah J. Branda	Elizabeth City
AET3 Jonathan Herrera Rabadan	Corpus Christi	AET3 Hunter J. Legas	Houston
AET3 James A. Massey	North Bend	AET3 Ryland M. Miller	Elizabeth City
AET3 Curtis W. Moore	Clearwater	AET3 Cherry A. Niel	North Bend
AET3 Caleb J. Oyler	Cape Cod	AET3 Jose M. Sanchez	Clearwater
AET3 Ashley D. Schneider	Houston	AET3 Noah H. Smith	Cape Cod
*AET3 Aaron L. Riffle	Mobile	AMT3 Christian D. Fehlman	Ventura
AMT3 Catherine N. Halso	Miami	AMT3 Erin M. Henry	Traverse City
AMT3 Christopher J. Latimer	Clearwater	AMT3 Elijah J. Maser	HITRON
AMT3 Luke H. Rodriguez	Mobile	AMT3 Elijah Sandoval	Corpus Christi
AMT3 Wyatt R. Smith	Cape Cod	AMT3 Maximilian B. Sprouse	Atlantic City
AMT3 Abbey N. Tokay	Elizabeth City	AMT3 Joshua T. Crews	Elizabeth City
*AMT3 Luke D. Shuman	Astoria	AMT3 Paul M. Buschur	Clearwater
AMT3 Daniel E. Cantu	Clearwater	AMT3 Marcus C. Chandler	HITRON
AMT3 Ethan D. Duryea	Barbers Point	AMT3 Delaney S. Geist	North Bend
AMT3 Christopher J. Hudson	HITRON	AMT3 Alex R. Juerner	Ventura
AMT3 Mya B McNicol	Houston	AMT3 Andrew G. Norton	Mobile
AMT3 Sylvin J. Peaden	Ventura	AMT3 Sebastien P. Piot	Traverse City
AMT3 Steven T. Underhill	Barbers Point	AMT3 Tyler R. Viola	Cape Cod
AMT3 Robert W. von Tungeln	Elizabeth City	AMT3 Tyler L. Winslow	Astoria
*AMT3 Morgan E. Mattlin	Ventura	*AST3 Dashen Wada	Cape Cod
AST3 Eric Kohlhoff	Detroit	AST3 Nohea Sharp	Atlantic City
AST3 Kyle Collier	Atlantic City	AST3 Jared Hill	North Bend
AST3 Christopher Krotz	Detroit	*AST3 Ethan Gogulski	Barbers Point



## Newly Designated Aviators

The following pilots have been designated as Coast Guard Aviators and have been provided with a first year dues-free membership in the Association. Welcome aboard, Pterodactyls!! We salute you and wish you safe flight. We envy the thrills, opportunities and satisfaction which are on and beyond your individual horizons. As you settle in at your initial and subsequent assignments and carve out future CG aviation history, we hope you will maintain your membership and stay tuned to your rich heritage. As busy and focused as you are on many things, you are history-in-the-making, and you will want to preserve that history as well as that of those before and around you today. Your modest annual dues will help to keep you informed and make possible active duty awards, memorials and CG aviation history-preserving-projects. **Congratulations and Welcome Aboard!!!**

<u>CG Aviator Nr.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>CG Aviator Nr.</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
5300 Michael Ulrich	Clearwater	5301 Kirsten Bagwell	Savannah

## CG Aviation Association Multi-mission Form

### Apply for or Renew Membership / Update Data

New Member    Renewal    Update Information (MOVING?? Please let us know.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Rank/Rate \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: Any spouse info and phone numbers you provide will be used in the CGAA Directory/Roster - please do not include if you do not want them to be published.**

Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_ TP Res. ( ) - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Pri. \_\_\_\_\_ TP Work ( ) - \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Sec: \_\_\_\_\_ TP Cell ( ) - \_\_\_\_\_

**Sign me up for:**

- Life Membership      \$275 (includes a Ptero Pin)
- Annual Membership    \$40 (*Active Duty: Officers \$20, Enlisted \$20*)
- Life in 5                Life Membership after 5 \$60 annual payments

To activate your access to the members-only area on the web site, mail-in registrations to the Troy, VA P.O. Box must send an email to [member-services@aoptero.org](mailto:member-services@aoptero.org) and request access to the members-only area. Be sure to include your full name and email address.

Members who join/renew online automatically have access to the members-only area.

There is still time to Christmas shop for your favorite Pterodactyl. Visit the store and get some logo gear to make him or her smile. If there's something you would like, that isn't in the store, please let me know and we'll try to make it available.

I hope you all will plan to attend the upcoming Roost at Houston. It's our first attempt to have a Roost in the spring to avoid government shutdowns and other problems with the fall time frame.

Stay tuned for details in future Pterograms.

Also, I'm still in need of an "assistant store manager." At 82, I'm thinking I won't be doing this forever and a much younger person should be trained to take over when I retire (croak). I promise you won't have to do much, but I want someone to know how the whole thing works since right now it is my secret.

Please email me at [jay.d.crouthers@aoptero.org](mailto:jay.d.crouthers@aoptero.org) with your comments and suggestions. Please visit the "Store" tab at <https://aoptero.org/> or the online site directly at <https://stoutgearsailing.myshopify.com/collections/coast-guard-aviation-association> You can even pay by check if you don't like using credit cards on the internet. Ptero Jay Crouthers, Aviator 1360/722, Store Manager.

**November 2025 Please make copies of this form and pass it on.**

**Please check all below that apply:**

- CG Active     CG Retired
- CG Reserve    Former CG(not ret)
- CG Auxiliary    Other Supporter
- .....
- CG Aviator (Data if known:)
- Designation Nr: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Helo Nr: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- .....
- CG Aircrew    CG Flight Surgeon
- Exchange Pilot
- Service \_\_\_\_\_ Country \_\_\_\_\_
- CG dates served: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_
- .....
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- .....
- Please send me how-to-help info!

**MAIL TO:**  
**The CG Aviation Association**  
**2619 Luau Circle**  
**Mesquite, TX 75150**

<u>CG Aviator #</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	
5302 Andrew Dominguez	Clearwater	5313 Bryce Williams
5304 Maxwell Walck	Barbers Point	5314 Monique Gilbreath
5305 Dylan Rivie	Cape Cod	5315 Mark Stutts
5306 Matthew Kickhafer	Mobile	5316 Celine Pisanic
5307 Mary Huyhn	Detroit	5317 Andrew Rizzo
5308 Kenneth Malczynski	Savannah	5318 Anne Allman
5309 Torrance Haydon	Clearwater	5319 Noelle Gomez
5310 Rebecca Emerson	Elizabeth City	5320 Jennifer Thorpe
5311 Casey Savage	Cape Cod	5321 Hannah Robinson
5312 Andrew Cruver	North Bend	5322 Michael Samson
		5323 Thomas Sner
		Miami
		Miami
		Mobile
		San Diego
		North Bend
		Borinquen
		San Francisco
		Savannah
		Traverse City
		North Bend
		North Bend



**CGA FLIGHT TEAM FROM 9**  
 ; Head Flying Coach/MUC (ret)/Ptero Greg Case; Asst. Coaches/Pteros Dan Burbank ( #2672), Chris Lutat (#2686); and Phil Volk (#1644). The previous six weeks of training and preparation really paid off and show what can be accomplished with dedicated cadets focused on a future in CG aviation.

Other outcomes demonstrate the depth and effectiveness of CGA's small program. Cadets, including remaining competitors, 3/c Adrian Romej and 1/c Jackson Burrows, placed...

In the top 10 in all ground events:

2nd, 3rd, 4th in Ground Trainer (Redbird Simulator) event, proving the value of Frank Shelley and the Class of 1949's donation to CGA of the Redbird MCX Full Motion Simulator

1st, 3rd, 4th in the Power Off flight event

1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th in the Short Field (Power On) flight event

7th, 8th, 9th in the Simulated Comprehensive Aircraft Navigation (SCAN) ground event

3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th in Top Pilot category

4th in Unlimited Navigation flight event

Cadets grew tremendously as pilots and future officers during this competition. They

were top notch representatives of the CG.

The coaches hope to return to NIFA Region 7 every fall. With the annual Service Academy Competition next spring, NIFA provides a critical second focal point for pilot development. As Flight Team Captain 1/c Jackson Burrows said, "I can't wait to go to West Point in April. This has been phenomenal for the Team."

The cadets and coaches express their gratitude to the CGAA for continued financial support.



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2025 NIFA Region 7 Flying Events Champions – CG Academy Flight Team.  
Sue Bibeau Photo. See story on P. 9.



Ptero Past Prez Mike Emerson Pins  
CG Wings on His Daughter.  
See Story on P. 13

Air Station Sitka Highlighted.  
See Story on P. 13

MAIL Pg. 11



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