

New Smyrna Beach hosts naval reunion By Diane M. Carey  
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Retired Admiral Peter Chabot, left, and retired Naval Capt. Robert Osmon, right, flank Randy McHenry in the lobby of his Springhill Suites by Marriott Hotel in New Smyrna Beach. The three were among classmates attending the 60th reunion of their U.S. Naval Academy class. The

City of New Smyrna Beach welcomed 40 members, including several widows and spouses, of the U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1960 Feb. 1-4.

Reunion headquarters was the Springhill Suites by Marriott, which is owned by class member Randy McHenry. Class members, who are all in the 85-years-old range traveled from around the country to celebrate their 60th reunion, which was delayed twice by the pandemic and was originally going to be in Annapolis, Md.

The original 1960 class started with 1,200 members attending the Naval Academy in Annapolis. From that number, 797 graduated and 560 remain. Minireunions from the class take place in several geographic locations around the country on a regular basis. Discussions among members resulted in this minireunion in New Smyrna Beach.

Four retired admirals were among those in attendance. Adm. Peter Chabot was one of them. He alternates time between Florida and Virginia. The career veteran spent 30 years in the U.S. Navy. He also was the 1960 class president and remembers well what members of that class faced after graduation.

“The first major military event was the Cuban missile crisis,” Adm. Chabot said. “Some of our people were involved in terms of U.S. ships that intercepted the Soviets coming down to Cuba.”

The admiral had a busy career, commanding an SSN attack submarine and a squadron of submarines. He was a program manager in Washington, building submarine torpedoes. He also was the commanding officer of the nuclear power training unit in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

But that career is nothing without the people.

“If you don’t get people together and practice the social skills, you lose some of those things that I call the camaraderie,” he said. “So, we started mini reunions to maintain the regular contact until the next regular reunion, which comes around in 2025.”

This mini-reunion grew out of a visit Mr. McHenry had with classmate and U.S. Navy Capt. (ret.) Bob Osmon. “Bob came down to visit me last November. He said we were trying to have this 60th reunion and we had trouble with the hotel and I said you ought to come to New Smyrna,” Mr. McHenry said. “And he said that’s a great idea and has done all the work and put it all together. We’re excited to have everybody in New Smyrna Beach.”

Mr. McHenry served five years in the Navy before a career with Merrill Lynch and now owns several properties including the hotel.

Capt. Osmon was a logistics officer who served 30 years.

“I had many varied duties. I served on a sub, I served on a destroyer. I’ve served in four countries; I’ve lived in Turkey. I had a wonderful career,” he said. “We’re honored to serve in the Navy. It opened great doors for us. We traveled the world, learned different languages. All things laid the groundwork for being successful. It took a lot of discipline to get through the Naval Academy. Discipline stayed with us no matter what our careers.”

As to the reunion, he jokingly said, “The mistake I made was when I called (Adm. Chabot) he said ‘Bob, why don’t you be in charge?’”

Even the button name tags were produced by a former shipmate, who lives in Annapolis. They say "Super Sixty Mini-Reunion 1-4 with the Navy emblem. Five classmates are on the Vietnam Wall in Washington.

The mini-reunion left an impression on New Smyrna Beach.

Jeffrey Lawrence, who owns B On Time Concierge, said, "I've known Randy for over four years and he is one of the most outstanding men I've ever met. I didn't know he was a naval officer. Such a nice man.

"These are war heroes. They are coming from every walk of life," Mr. Lawrence said. "I am thrilled to be associated with it and to work with them. (Our) drivers are excited. We just need to honor these guys. (And) the fact they chose our community."

B On Time specializes in scheduled-in-advance transportation to and from all area airports and cruise ports.

The mini-reunion's main event was Feb. 2 at Kennedy Space Center with NASA officials giving the group a VIP tour. There also was a gala dinner at Smyrna Yacht Club and a Marine Discovery Center tour.