

656TH RADAR SQUADRON NEWSLETTER

2023 REUNION EDITION

Produced by and for veterans of Saratoga Springs Air Force Station



The sixth reunion of the 656th Radar Squadron was held in Saratoga Springs, NY from September 12 thru 15. Tuesday the 12th was check-in day. Attendees met in the hospitality suite to renew old friendships and establish new ones. That evening we all met for dinner in the hotel. **John Tianen** was **Master of Ceremonies**. **Chaplain Chip Norton** offered a prayer before the meal. A drawing for valuable prizes was held after dinner.

The future of our reunion group was discussed in depth by John Tianen. Our group of veterans is getting older and we are steadily losing our vets. 2023 was not a good year for us. We lost many and will continue to lose more as time passes. Our webmaster “**Doc**” **Dougherty** recently calculated the mortality rates for the different years the 656th was active. For the 1950s it is over 60%. For the 1960s it is almost 45% and for the 1970s it is almost 34%. These numbers are probably low because it is often difficult to determine if a veteran has died. Upon returning from the recent reunion, John Tianen went through the roster and found an additional 24 of our veterans who had passed away. We had 10 last-minute cancellations during the Saratoga reunion. Most were health-related and one was for a death in the family.

Basically our group has reached a point where it becomes difficult to sustain continued reunions given the demographics of the group. For the above stated reasons, it was announced that the recent Saratoga reunion would probably be our last.

That is not to say the door is forever closed. John Tianen stated that if another 656th veteran would like to take the reins and organize a future reunion or reunions, he would be willing to share his expertise and help that person. “Doc” Dougherty has also agreed to maintain our website for the foreseeable future. We still have funds in our reunion account to pay for that expense.

On Wednesday the 13th, we boarded a bus for Lake George and a lunch cruise aboard the **Lac du Saint Sacrement**, flagship of the Lake George Steamboat Company.



After lunch, we were entertained by a very talented Elvis impersonator. Several ladies in our group were thrilled when Elvis presented them with a scarf. Music was provided and several of our group including Chip and Hope Norton took the opportunity to dance to the music.



Elvis

Chip and Hope Norton

At noon on September 14, we met at **Lanthier's Grove** for an all-afternoon picnic. The weather cooperated and we were able to enjoy several hours of friendly fellowship. A group photo was taken of our veterans as well as another one with their partners.



Tom Morehouse, Jim Siewert and Bob Terry at the picnic.

After the picnic, several of our vets stopped by the old radar site to take photos. The old site has deteriorated and many of the buildings are unsafe to enter. One bright spot is the old base housing area that has been remodeled. It looks as good or better than it did back in the day.



Ron Staley, Mike Wolfston, Tom Morehouse and Dave Fiedler at Ketchums Corners.



Base housing area.



656th veterans at the picnic.

Additional reunion photos can be found on our website <http://saratogaradar.org/> Click on the “REUNIONS” link at the bottom of the home page. Also follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/256662934155/> If you have reunion photos you would like posted, send them to Mike “Doc” Dougherty at doc@saratogaradar.org or mail them to him at 16 Alder St., Milford, NH 03055.