

# AFTER ACTION REPORT

## HAWAII MINI-REUNION

28 November – 14 December 2013

- I. Approach. This After Action Report (AAR) will be organized around five sections. The first section discusses the background to this mini-reunion and four sections cover each of the four phases of the mini-reunion. Phase 1 focuses on football events and includes the Thanksgiving Buffet, registration, rally, tailgate and game. Phase 2 focuses on activities and includes the brunch and all activities during the week ending with the class dinner. Phase 3 focuses on the cruise. Phase 4 focuses on developing and writing the AAR.
  - a. Background
    - i. Concept. Once it became known that there would be an exchange of games between Army and the University of Hawaii (UH), it was a natural extension to speculate on a class mini-reunion centered on the football game in Hawaii. It turned out that the game was on 30 November 2013, a couple of days after Thanksgiving. This unfortunate timing would ultimately affect the mini-reunion in both positive and negative ways.
    - ii. Organization.
      1. Committee Structure. Conceptually, since I was in Virginia and the mini-reunion would be held in Hawaii, a bi-modal committee structure made sense. I would require a committee with reunion planning experience on the mainland, primarily in the National Capital Region (NCR) and a local host committee.
        - a. NCR Committee. I explored at different class functions, primarily in the NCR, whether classmates were interested in a Hawaii mini-reunion and if they were, would they be interested in serving on the planning committee. I approached classmates and spouses that had served on committees for earlier reunions. The committee and their roles are captured in attachment 1.
        - b. Local Host Committee. Over the years, whenever I was on TDY in Honolulu, our classmates on island and I would explore mutually convenient days and times to share a meal together. This ranged from breakfast or lunch or dinner, normally at the Hale Koa. I introduced the idea of the mini-reunion very early in the process. I think it is fair

to say that they were cautious at first ... concerned about the time it would take to pull this off. However, it was not long before they completely internalized the mini-reunion. A special mahalo to Suda and Cal Delaplain, Joyce and Michael Lighthill and Mary and Bob McEldowney. I could not have asked for a better local host committee. The local host committee is captured in attachment 2.

b. Administrative considerations

- i. Communications. There were a couple of external objectives for how communications were to work. First, classmates and their families needed to have a working knowledge of the plans for and status of the mini-reunion. Classmates and their families should be consulted on what they wanted to do during the mini-reunion. In other words, the planning committee needed participant feedback. In order to accomplish this objective, the reunion address list would be used. Thus, John James was asked to help with mini-reunion communications. Second, the class website needed to be refined to help during mini-reunions. Dan Jinks was responsible for the website.
- ii. Deposit. Generally, the mini-reunion deposit is used to establish a positive bank account so that venue deposits can be paid. Traditionally, the deposit is made up of the cost of the reunion bag and its contents, transportation and other costs that are amortized across the participants. The initial participation was estimated at about 100 people. It turned out that this was much too high. The original deposit of \$300 was made up of \$120 for the reunion bag and its contents (class aloha shirt/blouse, WPSH aloha shirt/blouse and miscellaneous bag stuffers), \$100 for transportation, \$50 for the hospitality room and \$30 in reserve. The final deposit remained at \$300 but was very different in its composition. The mini-reunion bag cost \$35 with the class crest and the bag's contents cost about \$10. The smaller participation level caused us to lose \$350 from our room deposit when I cancelled rooms. This loss was amortized across the participants and added about \$15 to the \$45 for the reunion bag for a grand total of \$60. The cost of the shirts and transportation costs were handled on an individual basis. What I forgot to do was add in the \$30 in reserve. That was a mistake.
- iii. Registration
  1. Name tags. Fortunately, I had a bunch of name tag holders from an earlier reunion. Like a pack rat, I still had them in a box in my

basement. The only issue was to get the name tags for the holders. I also had a bunch of old blank name tags with the class crest. However, it was easier for Dick Gladstone to generate new name tags. In order to get the information for the name tags, I sent out an e-mail to gather name tag preferences from participants. In those cases where I did not know preferences, I had Dick make up multiple name tags and let the participant choose at registration. This caused Dick some extra work, but I did not want the name tags to be an irritant for participants. This worked out well. I also used the "hand out" feature of MicroSoft Word to print out the roster on a single page and the schedule on a two-sided, single page. These two pages were then folded to fit into the pocket behind the name tag in the name tag holder. This also worked out well.

2. Clothing for the Mini-reunion. This was perhaps the most vexing problem encountered in planning for and execution of the mini-reunion. The local host committee certainly did not think it would be; it just evolved that way. The local host committee initially planned to have our own class aloha shirt/blouse in addition to the aloha shirt/blouse produced by the West Point Society of Hawaii (WPSH). We made several trips to Hilo Hatties, the most successful Hawaiian products store in the islands. We made an initial selection of material and a shirt/blouse design. However, once participation dropped to a low level, it became not economically feasible. So the local host committee chose to use only the WPSH shirt/blouse and to add a class crest. The local host committee chose to embroider the class crest on the left sleeve and that proved to be the right choice. The shirt/blouse became very popular with class participants and other graduates and their families. The problems came with the logistics accompanying this decision. The aloha shirts/blouses were no longer in our control. The WPSH was very cooperative, but managing the logistics became very manpower-intensive. The WPSH knew we were late in our planning window and generated a special flyer for our class to purchase aloha shirts/blouses. However, there were ultimately three ways to order a shirt/blouse and the local host committee and the WPSH did not have an integrated picture of what shirts were ordered and if and

how they were paid for. In the end, the WPSH believed we had not paid for five shirts/blouses and to avoid a lengthy assessment, we made the decision to just pay for them. This was an unexpected \$325 expense.

3. Mini-reunion bag. Early discussions with the local host committee involved choosing a mini-reunion bag and deciding what to put into it.
  - a. Mini-reunion bag. At one of the early meetings of the local host committee, Joyce Lighthill informed us of an Army wife who made bags. We decided that if the bags were affordable, we would try and support an Army wife. We wanted to keep the cost of the bag to \$20-\$25 and we were ultimately able to do that. After Joyce could not manage this project due to health reasons, I asked Cal Delaplain to continue this effort. He had made earlier contact with the Army wife and had seen the examples of her work. He led this effort and by all feedback from participants, this bag was a big hit. It was perfect for carrying around personal property during the mini-reunion. Cal chose the design and it worked well. The bag was made of cloth, had a class crest and a turtle appliqué for bags for the guys and a hibiscus appliqué for the gals.
  - b. Mini-reunion bag contents. We went through an evolution of ideas. In addition to the shirts/blouses, ideas included a kukui nut lei, a favor, a hat band and logos. Several ideas dropped out early. We never got around to developing a logo. In the end, it would not have been cost-effective since we did not have enough participants. We could have bought kukui nut leis, but we realized that enough real leis would be available throughout the mini-reunion. Finally, the hat band was explored, but proved not practical. The choice of the final contents of the mini-reunion bag was primarily due to Joyce and Michael Lighthill. They purchased a tube of local sunscreen, a bar of local soap, a tube of aloe cream and a poncho for each bag. For those that climbed Diamond Head, the poncho proved to be extremely valuable. The last thing added was a free magazine published by MARCOA that provided detailed

information about what was available at the many military bases on-island.

- iv. Mini-reunion order. The actual order of the mini-reunion evolved over time. The early decision was to determine whether the cruise would be before or after Thanksgiving. The results of the questionnaire was inconclusive with the split about 50/50. I thought that having the cruise over Thanksgiving would be one more reason to reduce participation so I made the decision to have the cruise after Thanksgiving. Over the times the local host committee met, we discussed what activities would be most interesting to our classmates and their families. Some activities were available only on certain days; like the brunch, luau and magic show. We wanted to do the Polynesian Cultural center towards the end. We thought that the Circle Island tour should be the first event. That would give participants an overview of Oahu. There were three venues at Ford Island ... the Pacific Air Museum, the USS Missouri and the USS Arizona. Doing all three on the same day would have been too exhausting. We were cognizant that we were all getting older. The Air Museum had a huge aerial picture of Pearl Harbor on the entrance floor with ships arrayed as they were on 7 December 1941. We thought it would be a good introduction to what we would see when we visited the USS Missouri and USS Arizona. The Air Museum and the USS Missouri were close to each other so we chose to do those together. We followed the next day with the USS Arizona and filled the afternoon with the Punch Bowl tour. That left the Polynesian Cultural Center for Thursday. The day was open on Friday with the only event being the class dinner that night.
- v. Transportation. Early on we knew that rental cars were not the answer for participants to get from venue to venue in Honolulu. So a priority was to interview bus companies. Through some stroke of luck, the local host committee was able to talk with a representative from Roberts. They have the green busses with the rabbit logo. This proved to be a very good choice. They were very responsive and the support they provided to the group was outstanding. Their drivers were very friendly and professional. They never missed a pick-up. Their dispatcher was responsive and got busses quickly to pick us up when our visit was open-ended. In addition they offered a round trip from the airport to the Hale Koa at the beginning and back to the airport at the end. Those that took advantage of this service were happy with the efficiency and the \$20 fee.

c. Research

- i. Early polling. It struck me when the University of Hawaii came to West Point to play football that there would be a reciprocal game. It turned out that it would be in 2013. Since I used to travel frequently and meet with classmates while in their city, I took that opportunity to seek feedback on whether they would be interested in a mini-reunion in Hawaii with the football game as the catalyst. I tested this idea in Hawaii, in the National Capital Region (NCR) at brunches and dinners, in Albuquerque and in the Tidewater area. The positive response was overwhelmingly positive. However, as we got closer to the 2013 football season, it became known that the game was on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. What I did not realize at the time was how big a factor that was. It was the principal reason for classmates to turn down the trip.
- ii. Activities. Being from Hawaii, I had an idea of what venues I would like for my classmates and their families to visit. Over visits with the local host committee, we refined that list of venues. We visited many venues to determine what we need to do from a logistic perspective such as how long a visit would be and how many people could be supported by each docent. What we actually planned is found in the schedule at attachment 3. Note that some activities were cancelled due primarily to a lack of participation.
- iii. Questionnaire. One of the most important pieces of information in planning this reunion was estimating how many would participate. I believe I was overly optimistic on the participation level.
- iv. I took a number of trips to Hawaii to do reconnaissance and to meet with vendors. Some were in conjunction with business trips and others to meet with family. These trips are documented in the Concept Paper which I kept updated as I completed visits. The most current version of this concept paper is dated 23 January 2013 at attachment 4.

d. Costs.

- i. General. Determining the costs of the mini-reunion proved to be very challenging. There were many moving parts. Early on, in discussions with vendors, we were able to agree on the costs of various venues. Some venues were easy since they were free. There were only the transportation costs to consider. Diamond Head (Hawaii State park), the USS Arizona (National Park) and Punch Bowl (VA) are examples of these venues. Some had a ticket cost per participant. The Thanksgiving Buffet

at the Hale Koa, the rally, the tailgate, the football game, the luau at the Hale Koa, the Pacific Air Museum, the Magic Show at the Hale Koa and the Polynesian Cultural Center were examples of these venues. Much more difficult were costs that were based on participation. The USS Missouri and class dinner at the Hale Koa were examples of these venues. At first, given the initial estimates, the USS Missouri required a 50% deposit of about \$1650. The final count was 21 and that cost about \$636 and we got a refund of \$1013.61.

- ii. Busses. The most complicated was determining what the transportation costs were. This took multiple iterations. We really tested Roberts' patience. The original cost estimate was for about a \$10,000. This was based on a participation rate for most venues of about 80 which required a 53 and 25 PAX busses. This cost would have been amortized among all participants as part of the deposit. Once we shifted to an individual transportation bill, it became labor-intensive as some participants changed their requirements. Each size bus cost a different amount. Some busses came close to capacity. In the end, I stopped the iterations and just kept the per person cost as it was at that time. Any extra passengers would add to the revenue. Any passengers that dropped out would cause a deficit. In the end, it mostly balanced out.
- iii. System. At this point there were four categories of costs: 1) the amortized costs for the reunion bag; 2) the individual transportation costs; 3) the cost of venues that the participants would take care of individually and 4) the cost of venues for which the reunion committee would be responsible. Each category was captured in a PowerPoint slide. So each family would get an identical, general bill for external costs. It was just a listing of what costs individuals would have to arrange for and pay for if they wanted to participate in that venue. I also made up a individual bill for transportation costs. A third slide integrated all these costs. It had a section for individual costs that the reunion committee would process. That total was then added to the transportation and reunion bag costs. This grand total was then compared to the deposit and this determined if the participant owed the committee money or was due a refund. These documents were used at registration. Recall, that I forgot to add a reserve. This proved to be a problem.
- iv. Finances. In the final analysis, the lower participation rate and the lack of a reserve caused this mini-reunion to end up just slightly in the black. I

was unable to refund classmates for missed activities. The small positive balance was sent to the class administrative fund.

II. Phase 1 Football Events

- a. Thanksgiving Buffet. Since many of the participants were either already on-island or travelling on Thanksgiving Day, I thought that some would be interested in attending the Hale Koa Thanksgiving Buffet. I was told that the Thanksgiving Buffet would quickly sell out so when the reservations opened, I initially made reservations for ten and subsequently another four and paid for them. I then learned that another four had made reservations and had already paid. I added them to our group. Finally another family group of six had made reservations and already paid for them. Ultimately, a total of 24 sat down for the Buffet. We had the last seating at 1730 and shut the place down. It was an excellent buffet.
- b. Registration. Overall, registration went pretty well. On Friday morning, the local host committee gathered with other volunteers and started to prepare for registration.
  - i. Cal Delaplain had coordinated the mini-reunion bags. Bob McEldowney brought them to registration preparation. Bob also brought the completed WPSH aloha shirts/blouses with class crest. Joyce and Michael Lighthill had gone shopping and brought the local sunscreen, soap, aloe and ponchos. I had shipped to the Hale Koa the nametags and nametag holders. I had also shipped rosters and schedules in "handout" form to be folded and stuffed into the back of the nametag holders where there was a pocket. I also had made arrangements to have the magazines prepositioned at the Hale Koa so they were prepositioned by the hotel at our registration site. The nametag holders with nametags were tied to the mini-reunion bag handles and placed in alphabetical order. Registration preparation was started about 0800 and completed before lunch.
  - ii. Registration was opened about 1300 and initial registration was conducted with the local host committee first and then with the volunteers that had helped with preparation. All through the morning we had seen classmates and their families and they all came by as well. We shut down registration about 1800 so we could attend the rally. Overall, I thought registration went well.
- c. Rally. The rally was held Friday night at 1830. 38 of us participated. The event was held in the Luau Garden at the Hale Koa. Classmates generally found an area to sit in. Different food tables were distributed throughout the Luau Garden. The food had a Hawaiian theme and was generally good. The West



Point Society of Hawaii president, Chuck Cardinal, acted as the Master of Ceremony. The Superintendent gave a talk. Overall, it was a successful event.

- d. Tail gate. The tailgate on Saturday started at 1500 and was held at Richardson Field adjacent to Aloha Stadium where the football game was held. Everyone was able to walk from the tailgate to the stadium. Don Nelson had his scooter and that worked well. Al Bornmann was in a wheelchair and he was able, with some assistance, to also get to the stadium. The tailgate was held in a large tent. Once again we found an area of the tent where we could sit together. Food was served on buffet tables. The caterer for this event was outstanding. Once again Chuck Cardinal was the Master of Ceremony and the Superintendent gave a talk. Overall, I thought it was a successful event.
- e. Game. About 50 of us participated. Some did not attend the tailgate and went directly to the game. The process to purchase tickets to the game require some elaboration. Originally we had heard that the University of Hawaii had provided very poor seats to the visiting team. They were up in an upper section, wrapped around the end zone. Freed put me in contact with Zach Hurst who works for the AOG and is an assistant Athletic Director. He was very helpful with arranging for tickets. He also told me there was a chance we would be able to get better seats in a lower section of Aloha Stadium. Ray Jones had been helpful in setting up a group number for our class. Participants worked directly with the Army Ticket Office. There were a few hiccups. The lower level seats were \$5 more expensive. Rather than the Army Ticket Office contacting each member of our class going to game and collecting the \$5, I agreed to pay the difference and then collect the \$5 at registration. We did that. This was an area that was mostly out of our control. At the game, we were not all seated together. We sat close, but not together. This was not a major issue.

### III. Phase 2 Activities

- a. Brunch. The Hale Koa Sunday brunch is an excellent brunch which I have attended many times in the past. It serves traditional breakfast and lunch entrees as well as a line for local foods. I included it in the mini-reunion schedule. About 36 classmates and their families attended this event.
- b. Diamond Head. Only 10 classmates and their families attended this event. The weather was threatening. 26 had originally signed up. The trip to the top of Diamond Head was relatively uneventful, but as we approached the crest, the heavens opened up and all of us were drenched. The good thing was most of us had the ponchos that were in our reunion bags. There were waterfalls coming off the mountain. All of us survived and had something to talk about.

- c. Circle Island Tour. 12 made the tour. It was a wonderful event. It is too bad more classmates and families chose not to go on the tour. The Roberts' driver, Cousin Dorothy, was super and kept us entertained. We were able to stop at the shave ice place in Haleiwa.
- d. Hale Koa Luau. The luau is another of the events that I have attended multiple times in the past and added it to the mini-reunion schedule. It is pretty commercialized, but nevertheless, adequate food and a good show. About 30 classmates and their families attended. I believe everyone enjoyed the luau.
- e. Ford Island
  - i. Pacific Aviation Museum. The Pacific Aviation Museum is a venue strongly supported by the local host committee. I had not been there before planning the mini-reunion and the local host committee was correct in adding it to the schedule. We chose to go there first because the museum had an aerial photograph that covered the entrance foyer floor that had been altered to represent Pearl Harbor the way it was on 7 December 1941. It served as an excellent introduction to the tour of the USS Missouri that afternoon and the USS Arizona the next morning. Even more displays were ready than when I went through the museum last year. The docent was excellent. He was very knowledgeable and interacted with the tour group in a very professional manner. About 20 classmates and their families attended this event.
  - ii. Lunch. Originally, when we had planned on more participants, the plan called for lunch on the USS Missouri fantail. It was a very neat place for lunch. It would have had to be catered and all that was planned. When the numbers of participants fell, it became cost-prohibitive. It turned out the USS Missouri alternatives to eating lunch on the fantail were not attractive so we looked into lunch at the museum. This worked out extremely well. The museum set up tables in the middle of some of the displays. The lunches that the museum snack shop prepared were excellent and very fresh. Sometimes venues exceed expectations.
  - iii. USS Missouri. Of course, the USS Missouri is just down the street from the museum so it was reasonable to schedule these two venues together. Recall that I had asked for two tours. One was the general tour and it confined itself to the main deck. Four people chose this tour. The second tour was based on how sailors lived and fought on a battleship. The docent was excellent and explained everything in more detail than he normally did. We crawled all over that ship and learned an extraordinary amount.

- f. USS Arizona. If you have not done so, the USS Arizona is an obligatory venue to visit. For those that have not visited in a while, it is worthwhile because the visitor center recently had a major makeover. So on Wednesday, the first stop of the day for about 18 classmates and their families was the USS Arizona. The visit was all that was promised.
  - g. Punch Bowl. I would say that this was the most moving of the venues. I especially wanted classmates and their families to go to Punch Bowl, not only for the intrinsic beauty of this National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, but to visit the newest building that was recently added to those that contained the mosaics of WWII Battles in the Pacific and the Korean War. This building housed two mosaics of the Viet Nam War. For some reason I wanted to point out that Mary McEldowney was assigned as an Army Nurse at Chu Lai. That led to each classmate to relate where they served and in what capacity. It was amazing. I do not think many classmates had ever related to their families what they did in Viet Nam. Some spouses were crying. About 17 classmates and their families attended.
  - h. Magic Show. I did not attend the Magic Show. However, 14 classmates and their families did. All feedback was positive.
  - i. Polynesian Cultural Center. Another obligatory venue. Many have already done this so the participation was about 18 classmates and their families. The villages have been much improved since the last time I visited. The parade of islands now occurs mid-afternoon rather than the show itself. The show has morphed into a play. The luau was very commercialized, but acceptable. Overall, a wonderful event and enjoyed by all.
  - j. Class Dinner. The dinner was held on Friday night. Classmates and their families had all day to shop or vegetate or both. 28 classmates and their families attended. I thought the meal was excellent. It was a fitting celebration of the week we had spent together.
- IV. Phase 3 Cruise. Thirteen classmates and families attended. It was my first cruise and I enjoyed it immensely. Pretty sure everyone did. Mahalo to Everett for helping classmates make their arrangements.
- V. Phase 4 AAR. Really had trouble scheduling enough time to complete the AAR in a short timeframe. So here we are, about six months after the Hale Koa part of the mini-reunion was completed. Overall, I thought the mini-reunion went extremely well. It has been my privilege to coordinate it. Now, it is on to the next mini-reunion at the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta from 2 – 8 October 2015! Mike