

THE BEACON

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452 AMW public affairs

Senior Master Sgt. Paul Mitt, detachment chief, 163rd Reconnaissance Wing, answers questions about the MQ-9 Reaper at March Air Reserve Base on June 20. Members of the Norton-March Aircrew Association traveled to March ARB from all over the U.S. to reconnect with past airmen, participate in a base tour and attend various social activities.

Approximately 60 current and retired Airmen and their families attended the second annual Norton-March Aircrew Association reunion here, June 20. Association members traveled to March Air Reserve Base from all over the U.S. to reconnect with past Airmen, participate in a base tour and attend various social activities.



U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Russell S. McMillan

“It originally started about 20-30 years ago over small barbecue gatherings,” said event organizer and retired Master Sgt. Tom Block, as he referred to how large the reunion has become. Airmen from Norton Air Force Base continued to keep in touch after the base was selected for base realignment and eventual closure in 1994, Block said. Aircraft and equipment were transferred to March Air Force Base until it too was selected for realignment and officially became March ARB, April 1, 1996.

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The intent of the reunion is to bring together all the aircrew and support personnel that flew out of Norton AFB and March ARB on a consistent basis, explained Block. The now tax exempt organization has doubled in membership in the past two years and is expected to grow more.

“I used to fly with all these guys from 1979 to 2007, said retired Senior Master Sgt. Frank Shaw, who attended the reunion for the first time. He was a loadmaster with the 729th Airlift Squadron and explained he was one of the first reservists to qualify on the C-17 Globemaster III in 2005. “It’s great to see everyone again.”

During their tour of the base, NMAA members visited and learned about the C-17 Globemaster III, KC-135 Stratotanker and MQ-9 Reaper. Many members were very interested and impressed with the aircraft March ARB maintained, for many were more familiar with the C-141 Starlifter, which was eventually retired in 2006.

“It will definitely make more folks interested [seeing the MQ-9 Reaper] and recruit for a younger crowd,” commented retired Senior Master Sgt. Frank Owens regarding any current recruiting efforts needed.

“I have worked with many of them over half their life, said Lt. Col. Ken Goode, chief of mission control, 729th Airlift Squadron, March ARB. “Their work and career was here at March or Norton. This reunion was a way to stay connected, like an alumni group.”

“We thank Lt. Col. Goode, the 452 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 452nd Operations Group, 729th Airlift Squadron and the base commander on down for all the support,” Block said.

The NMAA will be scheduling future reunions every two years and intends to have them held at March ARB, explained Block. But to assist with managing the growth and operations of the nonprofit association, the next reunion will be planned by a seven-member planning group chaired by the former 452nd AMW commander, Col. Timothy J. Wrighton.

To learn more about the organization, future reunions and possible volunteer opportunities, please visit: <http://www.norton-marchaircrew.org/>