



HMM-265 Veterans Association, Inc.

December 10, 2021

Fellow Marines:

The 2021 reunion in New Orleans is behind us and it merits a short after-action report as the first step in planning for 2023.

In December 2019, following an email query that drew only six responses, your Board of Directors selected NOLA for the 2021 reunion and contracted with Don Duszynski at Meeting Professionals Expectations (www.MeetingPro.com) to help with hotel selection and contract negotiations. At that time the first human cases of COVID-19 were being diagnosed in Wuhan, PRC. Subsequent planning for the NOLA reunion was constrained because the entire travel/hospitality industry was disrupted by the ensuing pandemic. Don was instrumental in overcoming these obstacles, especially with the hotel negotiations and contracts. Despite being short-staffed, like almost everyone in the hospitality industry, the Crown Plaza did an outstanding job for us with a very reasonable room rate, quite a few extra amenities, and a complimentary hospitality suite that was the best we have ever had. We were so pleased with his work that the Board asked Don to do the 2023 reunion as well.

Don made a short presentation at the business meeting during the reunion, the highlights of which are as follows:

Don explained that Meeting Professional Expectations (MPE) is very proud of their site selection and meeting support services to organizations both national and international. In essence, they are about “connecting people with places” - ensuring the best possible location and price for meetings, events and conventions. Best of all, their services cost the client nothing! As compensation for arranging the meeting, MPE receives a fee from the hotel property chosen. This fee doesn't affect room rate or any other hotel costs associated with the meeting.

MPE belongs to a national association of providers and facilitators within the travel, hospitality, and entertainment industries. Every year Don attends several meetings with representatives of those providers where he tries to find the best matches for his clients.

Don creates a profile for each client as a way to let the providers know our basic needs. He already has submitted our profile to a good many providers and has received many enthusiastic responses from cities wishing to earn our business in 2023. The highlights of our profile include that:

We are a Marine Corps Veterans' group with a large cadre of pilots, air crew and other support personnel having served together in Vietnam. Thus, many members and spouses are in the 70 to 80+ age bracket. Many seniors have mobility issues and some are unable to participate in strenuous activities. However, the makeup of our group is getting younger as we begin to attract Marines from later eras, so the venue should provide for a wide range of needs, interests and preferences.

The principal purpose of the reunions is to enjoy the fellowship of old comrades and remember and honor those members who have died. The attractions of the venue city are important, but the principal magnet is reuniting with fellow squadron mates.

The venue city requirements:

An airport served by most airlines, with multiple flights daily serving multiple destinations. The airport must be accessible within a reasonable amount of time and cost. The host city and surrounds must feature attractions that appeal to a wide range of tastes and preferences.

The venue hotel requirements:

A hospitality room (the Hooch) in which the group is permitted to serve its own drinks, including alcohol, and snacks and, ideally, will have a wet bar, refrigerator, and comfortable casual seating for 40+ people. Also, the host city should have some attractive restaurants and other attractions within reasonable walking distance. Total nightly room cost, including all taxes and fees, should not exceed \$200, and complimentary guest room wi-fi and at least one in-house restaurant should be available.

Don submitted our RFPs (request for proposals) with these conditions to more than 80 CVBs (Convention and Visitors Bureaus) and/or hotels across the country in the last 3-4 months and those contacts generated the "enthusiastic responses" noted above. There are too many responses to list each one and the thoroughness of the replies received range from modest to outstanding. After discussions with many of our members and based on his experience with us and other groups, Don has pared the responses received to a list of the states/cities that seem to best fit HMM-265.

That list is attached to this letter. Please review all opportunities and please select three preferences. Send these directly to our webmaster Chuck Johnson, at webmaster@hmm-265.org, or drop me a note to the return address on the envelope no later than January 7, 2022. You may provide short explanations for your choices if you care to.

Thanks in advance for your input, and we hope to see many of you in 2023.

Semper Fi,



Bob Basye, President
HMM-265 Veterans Association, Inc.