

Peacocks at NPS

Greetings Smitty,

The latest edition of Aerograph mentions one Captain Neil O'Connor, now a somewhat seasoned citizen. I believe it is a less well-known fact about Neil O'Connor that he is the one who designed our NWS Logo. I met Neil and Mrs. O'Connor on only one occasion, and we were never stationed together, but we kind of kept track of each other over the years. A gentleman among gentlemen to be sure.

The following shore-based sea story might prove amusing to some, so I am attaching it for your perusal. It was sent by me to my friend Zane Jacobs, in response to his query. (Zane Jacobs, AGC USN retired, was living in Seaside. Long time friend.)

CAPT R. Claude "Frenchy" Corbeille, USN (Ret.)

Howdy Zane,

You made mention of the peacocks on display at the Naval Postgraduate School grounds. I can provide the background on how they got there.

In October 1966 my class was graduating, and I was the only member who had finished work on his thesis. The class leader appointed me and one other fellow, who was settling for a bachelor's degree and not writing a thesis, to procure a tree for our class to plant somewhere on the school grounds. That was the ongoing tradition at that time and may still be so. My partner in crime, one LT Charles Donald Witt USN (went by Don), killed in Vietnam riverboat action a few months later, suggested we do something more constructive than plant a tree for dogs to pee on. We mulled it over some, and came up with the thought of peafowl, believing they would go a long way in lending color to the place. A search of the want ads (no e-Bay yet) disclosed a farmer out Carmel Valley about 30 miles who had some for sale. We motored out to his place, explained our needs (wants) and he agreed to donate two peacocks and two peahens to our project. We figured four would be sufficient.

Next step was to approach the admiral to see if our intended class gift would be appropriate. The flag secretary was pessimistic, but the admiral was quite the reverse. We planned to bring in our peafowl on a Saturday morning, and he had the Public Works folks working well into the night Friday building a suitable enclosure. Said enclosure took in the tops of two eucalyptus trees! Definitely not your typical bird cage. Saturday morning Don and I retrieved the birds, stuffed them in gunny sacks

and put them in my new Volkswagen Square-back Sedan (which never smelled new again after that transport). We hauled the sacks into the enclosure, amid much hoopla and fanfare, including Monterey Peninsula Herald shutterbugs and reporters, and emptied the sacks. The admiral was most pleased and our traditional departing gift to the school was delivered.

I was back in the area in the summer of 69, TAD to Fleet Numbers from Pacific Missile Range and noted that the peafowl had multiplied. The huge cage was left open so the birds roamed (and crapped) all over the place. I was sitting in the barber chair, the window was open, and a beautiful peacock flew into a live oak tree right outside the window, spread his tail, and let out a loud raucous call. I commented to the barber on what a pretty sight it made, hoping to lead up to the fact that I was one of the folks who was instrumental in establishing their presence.

The barber responded with "Yea, some goddam class graduated a few years ago and left them bastards here, and now they're all over the place, squawking and yelling, even into the night". I decided he didn't really need to know of my role in the peafowl procurement, and not wanting to jeopardize the outcome of my haircut, I merely muttered something along the lines of "I always wondered where they came from".