

The Virgin Islands Consortium

World War II Navy Flyer Veteran Visits U.S. Virgin Island Midshipmen At U.S. Naval Academy

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Midshipmen from the U.S. Virgin Islands hosted a 94-year old World War II Navy Flyer veteran for lunch on November 30 at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Matthew "Matty" and Gloria Yacovino drove down from their residence in New York City to Annapolis to meet with our USVI midshipmen. Midshipman First Class (MIDN 1/C) Kobe Sutton set up the formal lunch for Matty, a World War II veteran to dine with all 4,400 midshipmen in the Kings Hall dining facility. There was great discussion at the table of 12 midshipmen that comprise the squad that Kobe leads.

Matthew joined the U.S. Navy in 1942 at the age of 18, and after Navy flight school and ordnance training, joined Navy Patrol Squadron SIXTY-TWO (VP-62) to conduct Anti-Submarine Warfare operations against Nazi U-Boats that were sinking U.S. and Allied troop ships bound for Europe. VP-62 was the first U.S. patrol squadron to operate from the United Kingdom in World War II. On May 11, 1945 and led by Patrol Plane Commander Lieutenant W. D. Ray, Matty's crew sighted U-boat U-541 off the Bay of Biscay (France), and circled the U-boat for two hours until British Destroyers arrived on the scene to force the surrender of U-541.

Matthew achieved the rank of Aviation Ordnance Chief (E-7 rank) in just four years in the Navy, and was an integral part of his PBY Catalina combat air crew. He left the Navy in 1946 and attended Rutgers University to attain a Mechanical Engineering degree, started his own engineering firm and ran it successfully for 50 years. He still designs homes and buildings while retired. Matthew owns the distinction of keeping his Professional Engineer (PE) Association certificate up to date, and at age 94 remains the oldest certified PE in the state of New Jersey.

MIDN 1/C (college senior) Kobe Sutton (major Political Science) will graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy in May and depart for San Diego, CA for Naval Special Forces training, with the special designated skill of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD). Kobe will soon be serving in worldwide operational deployments that are critical to our national security.

MIDN 2/C (junior) Nicholas Gartner is majoring in General Sciences and intends to select Naval Special Forces. He is a product of Antilles School and avid sailor. Nicholas has been on Navy's NCAA Division I varsity sailing team at Navy all three years he has attended, and helped his squad earn All-American status.

MIDN 3/C (sophomore) Hazel Acosta is majoring in Chemistry and intends to select Navy Medical Corps upon graduation. At Central HS, Hazel was selected as the ROTC Lead Cadet, an honor she earned through the respect her Sergeant Major and fellow cadets have for her as "the most competent and compassionate leader we have ever had."

U.S. Naval Academy Midshipmen graduate with an accredited Bachelor of Science degree in four years and are commissioned with a five-year commitment as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy or 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Our young VI men and women are excelling at the number one rated undergraduate engineering university in the U.S. They will take their place alongside others as our future leaders, committed to serve our Navy, Country and Community at the highest positions of responsibility.

Submitted by: Steve Shegrud, Captain, U.S. Navy (Retired) / USVI USNA Blue and Gold Officer.