



JANUARY – June 2026



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❖ WELCOMING FROM THE PRESIDENT



As President of the Boeing Leadership Association of Southern California for 2026, it is both an honor and a privilege to welcome you to what promises to be an exciting and impactful year with BLASC.

Together, we are building more than a professional network. We are cultivating a community of leaders committed to growth, connection, and excellence. This year, I am especially energized by the opportunities ahead as we continue to deliver meaningful events designed to inspire, develop, and connect each of you. Your voice is essential to that mission, and I encourage you to share your ideas so we can continue shaping an organization that truly reflects and serves its members.

Our community is already growing, with new members joining us in 2026, and this momentum is something we can all be proud of. I invite each of you to be an ambassador for BLASC. Share your experiences, invite your colleagues, and help us expand the reach and impact of our organization. Growth is strongest when it is personal, and your involvement makes all the difference.

For those looking to take a more active role, there are exciting opportunities to get involved. We are currently seeking a Vice President of Membership, a vital position that helps strengthen our connections and supports our continued growth. If you are passionate about building

community and making a difference, I encourage you to reach out and learn more about joining the 2026 board.

In alignment with Kelly Ortberg’s vision of developing leaders and fostering meaningful engagement across the company, BLASC is committed to expanding professional development opportunities this year. We aim to create more intimate, small group experiences where members can connect directly with Boeing leadership, gain insights, and build relationships that support both personal and professional growth.

We will also be launching a member survey soon, an important opportunity for you to share your perspective and help guide the future of BLASC. Your input will play a key role in shaping what comes next.

I invite you to join me in making this year our most impactful yet. Together, we can strengthen our community, elevate one another, and continue building an organization that inspires leadership at every level.

## ❖ FEBRUARY GMM



**Boeing Leadership Association of Southern California**  
proudly presents:  
**Tuesday, February 24, 2026, GMM**  
Featuring: Gil Rud of the Blue Angels

Gil Rud's journey from rural North Dakota to the cockpit of the U.S. Navy Blue Angels is a testament to his dedication and skill as a pilot. His memoir, "From the Prairie to the Pacific: A Blue Angel's Journey," offers a glimpse into his life's adventures, from flying combat missions in Vietnam to commanding the Blue Angels and an aircraft carrier. Rud's experiences reflect his growth as a leader, his commitment to service, and his ability to overcome challenges with humility and resilience. His story is a reminder of the importance of discipline, legacy, and heart in achieving excellence and service to others.

**Old Ranch Country Club**  
3901 Lampson Avenue, Seal Beach, CA, 90740  
Helicopters to Super Hornets

**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED BY Thursday, February 19, 2026**  
[WWW.BLASC.ORG](http://WWW.BLASC.ORG). Your reservation commits BLASC to pay the facility for your dinner. Cancel or change RSVP on the [WWW.BLASC.ORG](http://WWW.BLASC.ORG) page. Please contact [joan@blasc.org](mailto:joan@blasc.org) for questions regarding registration and [WWW.BLASC.ORG](http://WWW.BLASC.ORG) for questions about the event.

**GUEST ARE WELCOME**  
Please RSVP for each service individually. The cost for each guest is \$45. Please contact Joann regarding registration. No refunds for cancellations after 12:00 PM Thursday, February 19. Check-in Square will be collected the evening of the event at the check-in table.

**RETIREES-\$40**  
Please RSVP online. For questions contact [joan@blasc.org](mailto:joan@blasc.org).

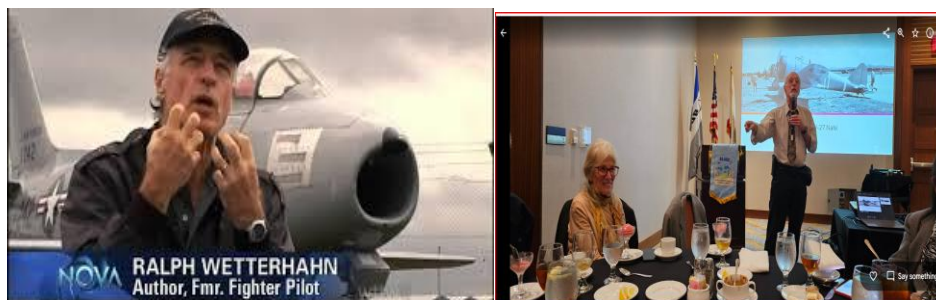
**AGENDA**  
5:00 Networking, with Wine Tasting  
6:00 Open Meeting, Introduce New Board & Announcements  
6:15 Invocation & Pledge  
6:15 Dinner  
7:00 Keynote Speaker  
8:00 Adjournment

**Menu**  
Dinner: Assorted Rolls & Butter, Baby Fields Salad, Rosemary Roasted Chicken Breast, Chocolate Ganache Cake, Tea & Coffee station  
Vegetarian and Gluten Free options available



## The “Indiana Jones” of Aviation Captivates BLASC

The Boeing Leadership Association of Southern California (BLASC) gathered at the Long Beach Marriott on February 24, 2026, for an evening that blended camaraderie, good food, and a once-in-a-lifetime storytelling experience. The featured speaker, Ralph Wetterhahn, is not just an aviation expert—he’s earned the nickname the “Indiana Jones of Aviation” for his fearless pursuit of lost aircraft, hidden wrecks, and untold stories from the past.



From the moment Ralph took the stage, the audience was hooked. His presence was commanding yet approachable, and his stories unfolded with the kind of energy that made listeners feel like they were right there beside him—in a jungle clearing, on a remote island, or high above the clouds in combat.

Ralph's journey began as a fighter pilot, graduating from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1963 before serving three combat tours during the Vietnam War. He flew 180 missions in the F-4 Phantom and A-7 Corsair, downed a MiG-21 in the now-famous "Bolo Mission," and completed 144 carrier landings. Later, he logged over 1,000 hours in the F-15 Eagle. But as impressive as his military record is, it's what came after that makes his story truly extraordinary.

In what many would call a second career; Ralph transformed into an aviation archaeologist. With boundless curiosity and respect for history, he has traveled to some of the most remote and challenging places on earth—Cambodia, Guadalcanal, the Russian Far East, the Philippines—tracking down aircraft wrecks and unraveling mysteries surrounding missing-in-action service members. These expeditions are not just technical recoveries; they're deeply human stories that provide closure for families and honor the sacrifices of those who served.

His work has been featured in documentaries on *NOVA*, Discovery, and National Geographic, including *The Last Flight of Bomber-31* and *Missing in MiG Alley*. He's also the author of several acclaimed books, including *The Last Battle*, which won the prestigious Colby Award. Each story he shared blended adventure, history, and emotion in a way that left the audience both educated and deeply moved.



As he recounted his adventures—sometimes dangerous, sometimes painstaking, always fascinating—the room was silent except for bursts of laughter at his dry humor and the audible gasps when he revealed an unexpected twist or discovery. His passion for uncovering the truth was infectious, and his respect for the aviators who came before him gave every tale a powerful sense of purpose.

The evening wrapped up with a brief Q&A and a book signing, where members eagerly leaned in to learn more about Ralph, his most memorable discoveries, and what drives him to keep searching. It was clear that his talk struck a chord, reminding everyone present of the value of



perseverance, curiosity, and honoring history.

The February meeting was more than just another event on the calendar—it was a rare opportunity to step into the shoes of a modern-day adventurer and see aviation history through the eyes of someone who has lived it, fought for it, and dedicated his life to uncovering it. BLASC members left inspired, energized, and grateful to have been part of such a memorable evening.

❖ **June GMM**