



## ***THE LIFE SUPPORT/FLIGHT EQUIPMENT NEWSLETTER***

*News for the men and women who served in the USAF or civilians who work in Government or industry in the Aircrew Life Support/Flight Equipment business. The views expressed herein are that of the individual mentioned and do not represent the views of the entire retired, active duty, or veteran members of the Aircrew Life Support/Flight Equipment career field.*

Reporters: Tommy Tompkins PO Box 372 Equality, IL 62934 Email: [tombob@shawneelink.com](mailto:tombob@shawneelink.com)

Bob McElwain 14133 Buckskin Court Victorville, CA 92394 Email: [bob.mcelwain@charter.net](mailto:bob.mcelwain@charter.net)

Visit our web site at <http://usafals.net>

Dec 2009 Issue

Good wishes and great health to those AFE Chiefs retiring this year and early next year. Al Reams retired this month, Danno Kalsow is scheduled in February and Rick Bruck later next year. Chief Keith Geltz will be replacing Al Reams at AETC but the other positions have not yet been filled. Those folks who attended this year's reunion will remember that Keith presented the update briefing on the career field.

Our congratulations to the new Chief Master Sergeant Selectees, "Von" Anderson, Mike Lightner, John McEnaney, Ricky Wagner and Brian Clark. Looks like there are opportunities soon for MAJCOM Positions!

Over the years we have had several articles about Life Support Officers from the past and it would appear that we would be able to, with all of the active duty and retirees who get the news letter and click on the web site to be able to get one for every issue. Either LSO or AFE would be great.

Over the years I had the opportunity to work with several as LSO's, Pilot Physician or

Flight Surgeon. "Doc" Hickman, Sam Puma and "Andy" Anderson at Eglin and it was great having them flying in the squadrons. Doc Hickman made house calls to 33TFW troops and their families! When was the last time you ever heard of that happening? Later I worked with "Andy" Anderson as the USAF Regional Hospital Commander at Langley, Col Sam Puma at AFOTEC, Col Tom McNish (seven years in the Hanoi Hilton) the TAC Pilot Physician for the HGU-48/53P Helmet Tests and Col Doc" Sears for most of the TAC/Brooks Test Projects.

Timmy Morrow and Roger May had the pleasure and good luck to have Tom Travis as an LSO at Seymour Johnson and later as a Pilot Physician at 1<sup>st</sup> TFW. Lt General Anderson retired in 1997 and Major General Tom Travis is still on active duty! For this issue Ed Chewning is updating his article on Lt Gen Marc Rogers, his LSO at Holloman! Surely there are more and many more stories. Let's hear from you troops!

With Bob McElwain's pending retirement and the loss of the help that has been provided by NASA and the folks at Edwards it is time to transfer ownership of the newsletter once again. We are coming up soon on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of what has become the newsletter and Bob has been an effective manager for many of those years. I know that Bob will keep active in the Web Site so we are really not losing him. Retired Chief Al Loving takes over as of the next issue!

Good Luck to both Al and Bob!

Cheers,  
Tommy

### **Former Squadron Life Support Officer (LSO) Makes 3<sup>rd</sup> Star**

Back in the fall of 2000, I wrote the article below for my former LSO, the then B/G Select Marc Rogers and inclusion in the December 2000 edition of the Life Support Newsletter. In late June of this year, General Rogers pinned on his third star and became the Inspector General of the Air Force, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force.

Since pinning on his first star in October 2001, General Rogers has had several joint and command assignments. Prior to his current assignment as AF IG, he was Director, Standing Joint Forces Headquarters; Director, Transformation Headquarters AFMC; Director, Capabilities Integration, Headquarters AFMC; Commander, 19<sup>th</sup> AF; and Vice Commander, USAFE.

As I said in my previous article, having Marc as the LSO of the 8<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron made coming to work enjoyable instead of making it drudgery. Congratulations

Lieutenant General Rogers!!! Promotions well deserved.

### **Ed "Fast Eddie" Chewing**

### **Former Squadron Life Support Officer (LSO) Makes Flag Rank**

It is not often that an ex-fighter squadron Life Support NCOIC gets to report on one of his former LSOs making O-7. In this case, I get the privilege of doing that. While Colonel (Brigadier General select) Marc Rogers, 49<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing Commander isn't the first LSO to garner this position; it is a recognition I know he justly deserves.

As many of the readers of the Life Support Newsletter will probably remember from their days in the fighter world, your squadron would get a couple shiny new 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenants from the respective aircraft RTUs and the squadron commander would call them in and tell them he had two jobs available, LSO and SNACKO. After much arm-twisting, coin flipping, card cutting, and dart throwing, the winner would proudly announce that he would take the SNACKO job and the "looser" got the LSO job. More often than not, the good ones who gave a s\_\_t about Life Support only lasted a short time in that position. The ones the NCOIC had to tell, "No sir, you and the commander can't take the MK-13s, PRC-90s, Gyro-jets, and compass out of your survival vests to go deer hunting", seemed to hang on forever.

This was not the case of the then 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Rogers. I was the NCOIC of the 8<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Squadron at Holloman AFB, NM from December 1979 to March 1983. In January 1982, a young 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. named Rogers walked in the 8<sup>th</sup> Life Support shop and cheerfully announced that he was our new LSO. "This is a switch," I thought. I can truthfully say that was one of the best days I ever had in my Life Support career. Marc

truly cared about the people in our shop and his responsibilities as the LSO. He always played an active part in our Life Support program, was there for guidance when I required it, went to bat for us when we needed it, however he always let me manage the “nuts-and-bolts” of our program. Marc and his wife Debbie became very close friends with my wife Elizabeth and myself and it a very sad day when he left us for another position within the squadron. As of the writing of this article, Colonel Rogers has not received an official date for “pinning on” for his first star, but I’m sure it won’t be his last one. *Ed “Fast” Chewing*

### **CHILI SEZ**



After his outstanding twenty-four years of military service and then twenty four more years of civilian service, Kemper B Kinchen retired on 17 Dec. Kemper has been vital to the success of our annual reunions and plans on continuing his involvement. As a matter of fact, it was his persistence that led to the first and all subsequent Life Support reunions. Without Kemper I probably wouldn’t have started our website. Because of his mentorship to a lot of his subordinates and co-workers, some of our past and present senior Life Support/Flight Equipment members would not experience some of the success they enjoy today. Kemper was always trying to educate the troops or anybody that would listen on life support matters. As a matter of fact, he is the only guy I know that can still tell you what the AF functional code is for a base life support shop!

His old-school demeanor may have scared an airman or two at first but those that worked with him understood that he just wanted to share what had been passed on to him by the likes of people such as Hank Counts, John Weir, Ray Struble and other original icons of our career field. The side of him that I admire the most is his willingness to lend a hand. If he hears that you need help with something no matter what it is he will go out of his way to provide the help. I for one thank him for everything he’s done for the career field and me.

Known as KB to all who knows him, Kemper entered the Air Force in Jun of 1961 and worked as an administrative clerk until May of 1965 when he crossed trained into Protective Equipment. The rest of his career was all life support (with the exception of a few months in the Norton AFB Finance shop). After serving the country for slightly more than 48 years, a career dedicated to ensuring the safety of aircrews came to rest when Kemper called it quits. KB is headed back to his home town and I’m sure he will always be available to talk life support. He asked me to pass on the following. “I will be going back to my roots in Ponchatoula/Hammond, LA. Shirley and I will be enjoying the laid back atmosphere north of the Big Easy (NEW ORLEANS). Stop by for some good old SWEET TEA!!!” Good luck to you buddy!

### **COMMENTS FROM THE FIELD**

A suggestion from John Blankinship to include an update on new flight and survival equipment used in the career field will be included in our newsletter whenever possible. The active duty folks can help us with this as I am not always privy to all the new stuff that’s out there. Without divulging any classified information can, someone share with us some of the equipment that has been replaced with new equipment? You can start with the MBU-5/12 P masks, the CSU-13P anti-g suit and other equipment from the

1970s and later. I could list some of the equipment I know about, but I think we would rather hear it from someone on active duty.

### **Request for Military Records**

Jim Rooney received a notice from a fellow veteran that he wants to pass on in case you might not have heard about it. The subject is "DD-214 & Military Health System Offers New Subscription Service". I took a look at it and found I could order just about anything I might need concerning my military history. You might find it helpful at some future point in time. The web site is [www.vetrecs.archives.gov](http://www.vetrecs.archives.gov).

Apparently the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) is working to make easier for veterans with computer access to the Internet to obtain copies of documents from their military files that may have been lost or whatever.

### **DID YOU KNOW**

The U.S. census bureau is now looking to hire census takers for the 2010 Census. Veteran's Preference applies to these jobs. They say that most of their hiring will be next spring. If you are interested go to their Job site at:

<http://2010.census.gov/2010censusjobs/>

\*\*\*\*\*

Check out your local military facility and see if they can use you as a volunteer. Retiree activities office members currently need volunteers at more than 100 offices at active-duty, Reserve and Guard bases worldwide.

As reported by the Air Force retirees service, "All of the retiree activities offices are suffering for a new group of people to

volunteer because the core of (current volunteers) are getting sick, getting older and passing away. "None of the retiree activities offices have a surplus of people; we need their time, their efforts and their talents at these offices."

Volunteer opportunities for retired military and their family members occur in several areas, depending on the base. Most bases have openings in areas like the hospital, clinic and pharmacy administration sections; thrift shops; legal offices; family support centers and the retiree activities office itself. Retiree activities office volunteers assist retirees with several actions including: serving as an information center for space-available travel, Tricare and base services; offering referrals for financial assistance and pay matters; counseling active-duty Airmen nearing retirement; and providing literature on retirement issues.

\*\*\*\*\*

There is a link on our web site for assisting active duty personnel with writing EPRs, and awards with writing examples. For more information go to our web site and scroll all the way down on the left hand side and click on the links page.

### **REUNION**

We had another good reunion and once again I forgot to thank the following for their thoughtfulness and support:

Al Loving for hosting again.

Ed Kishbaugh for the Flight Equipment that was on display.

Frank and Mary Provenzano for the bags that were included in the reunion handout bags.

Eddie Aguilar for his help with the hospitality room.

Bob Duren for suggesting that we have a VA representative at the reunion and Mr. Pro for making it happen.

CMSgt Keith Geltz for supporting us with an outstanding update briefing on the career field.

All the attendees especially the first timers Andy Baker, Steve and Evelyn Wyatt, Jim and Debie Buday for coming. Additionally, it was great seeing Chuck and Ann Warren again!

I would also like to thank the following contributors to our hospitality room:

Essex Industries Inc, Wel-Fab, East/West, Gentex Corp, Stratus System Inc, Bill Wood and Tommy Tompkins

A special thank you goes out to the following former H. Koch & Sons employees:

John McNaughton, John Masterson, Joe Muklevicz, George Braue and Rolfe Swain

As indicated, a VA representative was at our reunion and he provided us with a checklist on what to do if you or your retired military spouse dies. That checklist is at the end of this newsletter.

If you have not attended any of our reunions that have been held in Laughlin, NV you'll get one more chance. Reunion 2010 will also be held there and will most likely be the last. Future reunions will be held elsewhere and their location will be announced in this newsletter and our website. KB provided the following comments: "We will again come

together in Laughlin at the recently renovated Riverside Hotel/Casino. Plans are for an outing for the wives (manicure/spa) over in Bullhead City at the Laughlin Ranch. Also looking forward to going to the Grand Canyon Caravans with a luncheon. There is a new golf course on the property and a picnic along with a river cruise is scheduled. Dates for the reunion are 4 – 7 October 2010".

### **SICK AND SHUT-INS**

Keep Gerald Sutton and Bob Beal in your prayers as they are both battling health issues. As I understand it, Bob is in the hospital recovering from having a Ventricular Assist Device implanted in his chest and Gerald is fighting cancer.

### **CLOSING COMMENTS**

I recently spent two days at the Kennedy Space Center where I got the chance to see last month's Space Shuttle launch. It was an experience that will probably stay with me till the day I die. As a lot of you know, I help recover the Space Shuttle here in California at the NASA Dryden Flight Research Center, but never had I experience an in person live launch before. I think I can retire now (which I plan on doing sometime soon); I have witness the two most fascinating things I think in aviation history, vertical takeoffs of the SR-71 and now a shuttle launch.

While stationed at Kadena AB in the mid 70's I would marvel as SR-71s would take off from the base. After what seemed like a few feet off the ground the pilot would point the nose almost straight up and climb out of sight in a matter of seconds, it would make your heart skip a beat watching them. It gave me the chills and made me proud to be a member of US Air Force every time I saw this great aircraft take off like that. To watch the launch of the Space Shuttle gave me the

same kind of thrill. From the moment the engines started until the shuttle was a dot in the sky, it was truly amazing to see almost seven million pounds of thrust shoot the rockets and shuttle up with huge plumes of steam, smoke and a brilliant path of flames. It humbles one to see that kind of power with the naked eye, TV just can't give you the same experience.

Just like the SR-71 is no longer flying, opportunities to share the thrills of space shuttle launches are on their own countdown to extinction as they are being retired just like me in 2010. The beauty of it all is that I will retire knowing I was involved in both the SR-71 and the Space Shuttle programs.



**Former and retired Life Support/Flight Equipment personnel in attendance at KB's retirement are (from left to right): Phil Wellner, Dave Stratton, Lawrence Brooks, KB, Willie Harris, Amos Johnson, Mark Kraus, Bob McElwain, Steve Bromley, Cliff Hebbeler and Wason (Haku) Miles. More photos are on our website.**

As I retire "CHILI SEZ" and pass this newsletter on to Al Loving I ask that you help Al by checking your e-mail address on our address list to see if it's correct. If you are receiving the newsletters via snail mail and have an e-mail address, he needs to know what that address is so we can save on mailing cost. Al's contact information is: 38 Crestwood Drive Newport News, VA /23601/ 757-591-0880/ [aloving@cox.net](mailto:aloving@cox.net). Enjoy the holidays and I'll see you at our next reunion.

## **Quick Tips for VA Survivor Benefits**

One of the more difficult tasks a survivor faces after the death of the veteran is completing the numerous claims forms for VA survivors' benefits. The anxiety and fear of the unknown - who to call, what to do, or where to go for help - can be an unpleasant experience. To help ease the burden and to ensure you will have the necessary details for filing a claim, here are some basic quick tips.

### **Documents Needed**

	<b>The veteran's discharge certificate or DD 214</b>
	<b>The veteran's VA claim's number or Social Security number</b>
	<b>The veteran's death certificate</b>
	<b>Government life insurance policy (if any)</b>
	<b>A copy of all marriage certificates and divorce decrees (if any)</b>
	<b>A copy of each child's birth certificate (or adoption order)</b>
	<b>Veteran's birth certificate to determine parents' benefits (if applicable)</b>

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Benefit Description</b>
<b>Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC)</b>	<p>This benefit program pays a monthly payment to a surviving spouse, or dependent child, because of a service-connected death of a veteran.</p> <p><i>(See attached information sheet for program details)</i></p>
<b>Parents' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)</b>	<p>This <b>income-based</b> benefit program pays a monthly payment to the parent(s) of a military service member or veteran who died from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a disease or injury incurred or aggravated while on active duty or active duty for training <i>OR</i></li> <li>- an injury incurred or aggravated in line of duty, or certain diseases while on inactive duty training <i>OR</i></li> <li>- a service connected disability.</li> </ul> <p><i>(See attached information sheet for program details)</i></p>
<b>Death Pension</b>	<p>This is an <b>income based</b> benefit paid to eligible surviving spouse of a deceased wartime veterans. The VA pays the difference between your countable income and the yearly income limit established for this program.</p> <p><i>(See attached information sheet for program details)</i></p>
<b>Home Loan Guarantee</b> <b>(Note: To be eligible, the veterans death must be service-connected and the surviving spouse must be in receipt of Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC))</b>	<p>A VA-guaranteed loan offers a number of safeguards and advantages over a non VA-guaranteed loan. The interest rate is competitive with conventional rates with little or no down payment required. VA-guaranteed loans are made by private lenders, such as banks, savings and loan associations, and mortgage companies. You must apply directly to the lender. Your real estate broker can assist you in finding a lender.</p> <p><i>(See attached information sheet for program details)</i></p>
<b>Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA)</b>  <b>(Note: To be eligible, claimant must be eligible for Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) or the spouse of a 100% service-connected veteran)</b>	<p>CHAMPVA is a comprehensive health care program in which the VA shares the cost of covered health care services and supplies with eligible Beneficiaries.</p> <p><i>(See attached information sheet for program details)</i></p>



## VA and Related Benefits for Surviving Spouses

<p><b>Claim for Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) — for existing policy holders</b></p> <p>VGLI Insurance Questions Call: 800 419 1473</p>	<p><b>To file a claim for Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI):</b></p> <p>Use VA Form 29-8283 — available at <a href="http://www.insurance.va.gov/SqliSite/forms.8283.pdf">http://www.insurance.va.gov/SqliSite/forms.8283.pdf</a></p> <p>You must send a death certificate (or photocopy) showing date and cause of death of insured.</p> <p>OSGLI P.O. Box 41618 Philadelphia, PA 19176-9913 Toll Free Fax: 800 236 6142</p> <p><i>(See attached information sheet for program details)</i></p>
<p><b>Claim for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI)</b></p> <p>Life Insurance Questions Call: 800 669 8477</p>	<p>Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance is life insurance for veterans who have received a service-connected disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs.</p> <p>The basic S-DVI program, also referred to as "RH Insurance", insures the eligible veteran for up to \$10,000 of coverage.</p> <p>Veterans who have the basic S-DVI coverage and are totally disabled are eligible to have their premiums waived.</p> <p><b>To file a claim for Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI):</b></p> <p>Use VA Form 29-4125 — available at <a href="http://www.insurance.va.gov/inForceGliSite/forms/29-4125.htm">http://www.insurance.va.gov/inForceGliSite/forms/29-4125.htm</a></p> <p>You must send a death certificate (or photocopy) showing date and cause of death of insured.</p> <p>Mailing Address: Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office and Insurance Center P O Box 7208 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19101 Toll Free Fax Number: (888) 748-5822</p> <p><i>(See attached information sheet for program details)</i></p>

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Benefit Description</b>
<b>Financial Counseling Available to holders of Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI)</b>	Beneficiary Financial Counseling Services (BFCS) is an extra benefit offered <i>only to the beneficiaries of Veterans' Group Life Insurance policies</i> . As a beneficiary, you can take advantage of free professional financial advice. Counseling services are provided by <b>FinancialPoint®</b> . Toll-free Telephone (anytime): 1-888-243-7351 <i>(See attached information sheet for program details)</i>
<b>Burial Benefits A Spouse Should Consider Upon The Death Of The Veteran</b>	VA Burial Allowances Burial Flag Headstone and Markers Presidential Memorial Certificate Military Funeral Honors <i>(See attached information sheets for <b>Burial and Plot-Internment Allowances</b> and <b>VA provided Burial Flag</b>)</i>

### Related Benefits

- **Social Security Administration** — [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov) or call **1-800-772-1213**, you can use the automated telephone services to get recorded information and conduct some business 24 hours a day.

Telephone Assistance for people with hearing impairments: **1-800-325-0778**, between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday.

- **Military Records DD Form 214, Report of Separation** - [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

To obtain a copy of the veterans DD Form 214, Report of Separation (or equivalent form). Your request must contain certain basic information to locate the service records. This information includes:

- The veteran's complete name used while in service
- Service number
- Social security number
- Branch of service
- Dates of service
- Date and place of birth (especially if the service number is not known).
- Place of discharge, if known
- Last unit of assignment, if known
- Place of entry into the service, if known.
- All requests must be **signed** and **dated** by the veteran or next-of-kin.

Mail Request to:

National Personnel Records Center  
Military Personnel Records  
9700 Page Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100  
**314-801-0800**

- **Internal Revenue Service** — [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or call **1-800-829-1040** for telephone assistance for individuals. Hours of Operation: Monday — Friday, 7:00 am. — 10:00 p.m. your local time (Alaska & Hawaii follow Pacific Time).

Telephone Assistance for people with hearing impairments: Toll-Free **1-800-829-4059** (TDD)