

THE LIFE SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

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Dec 2000 Issue

There has been a lot happening since the last newsletter and the 5th Life Support Reunion. Just after the reunion I was at SAFE in Reno and got to spend some time with Fred Foss. Fred had missed the reunion due to a previous commitment with the Reno Air Show. Fred and I talked and visited around the booths with Bill Wood, Skip Clawson, John Damron, George Braue, Bill Harrison, Al Loving, Cal Crochet, and many others. I introduced him to Bill Vincent, John Fair, Ken Rennie, and Randy Loving and Bob Hudson. We looked for Jake "The Snake" Yacobi but he was off doing what ever he does. Fred worked with most of those above and several of us, including me. He perfectly fits the "Life Support Icon" title. We went over the reunion and those who had attended for the first time Roger May, Jim Fletcher, Ray Blanchette, Dave Chitwood, Al Loving, Gale Bradish, Harold Donley, Larry McCarty, and Bob Hudson. We also discussed the fact that for the last two years the MAJCOM Senior Master Sergeants who conducted briefings at the reunion were promoted on the next list. Just a coincidence or maybe the commands send their best!. We also had Command Chiefs Rich Robichaud, Air Material Command (MAC), Dave Chitwood, Air Combat Command (TAC) and Bryan "Beetle" Bailey, Pacific Air Command (PACAF) in attendance. Gary Winchester left some good Staff Summary Sheets (SSS) for the troops to follow to get to the reunion! Trying to explain how much fun all had was very easy. Even friends and relatives who accompanied the life supporter

have really enjoyed it. Who could have had a better time than Sandy Burrrell's son and Jim Rooney's brother as well as MacDonald Nance's brother? The facilities and program set up by Bob McElwain, Kemper B. Kinchen, Ed MacKenzie, and Jim Rooney were outstanding. The hospitality suite really got into reminisces. When Art Wade, Leaster Williamson, Bob Burris, Willard Oost, Roger May, Tim Howard, John Weir, Howard Donley, Ray Blanchette and others starting telling "stories" it was quite a hoot! I don't intend to leave anyone out but these are my memories. Next year you come and I will promise that you will have your own! When Leaster Williamson started talking about the last days of the Army Air Forces and the first days of the USAF we all listened. Art Wade as usual was taking it all down on photos. What else can be said about Art Wade that isn't covered, he is a Life Support Icon and really personifies "Gentleman".

I also have been privileged to attend a "Return to his Unit" get together at La Margaritas in San Antonio for Chief J. B. Watsbaugh who is leaving the National Guard Command Chief position. JB will be returning to his unit in St Joe Missouri. He has really advanced Life Support in the Guard during his tenure. He will be missed but he is still around to ease in his replacement, Chief Walt Horseman who is moving up from the Baltimore Guard.

Walt was the “jeep” Chief for only a few days in November as I was also privileged to attend the Pinning On of Rich Robichaud on 1 Dec 00. What a professional ceremony put on by SMS Steve Skaggs and the AMC Staff. The Scott Chiefs Group as well as friends and relatives participated. Erin Morrow provided a moving rendition of the National Anthem and Tim Morrow delivered a very moving and challenging invocation. Major General Roger Brady, AMC DO was the presiding officer. Rich Lahn and Tim Morrow “pinned on” the “Old Chief Stripes” and Rich’s Father, Ludger Robichaud and friend Ms Stephanie Marks pinned on the current Chiefs Stripes. In attendance were three of Rich’s predecessors Dennis Struck, Tim and Dawn Morrow, and Rob Bentley. Also attending were Rich and Ms Vicky Lahn, Mike Freebury, Ken Rennie, Bret Curran and troops from the Scott Life Support community. Each of these retirement or promotion ceremonies I attend is better than the one before. It is evident that a lot of work and dedication has gone into each and the pride in our people and career field is evident.

I was not able to attend Chief Al Cricks' retirement but Al Loving has provided a recap. Also Bob McElwain has placed Al's retirement comments presented at the Phoenix Workshop on the Life Support Web Site.

A retirement ceremony honoring CMSgt Alan D. Cricks' 30 years of military service was held at the Main Base Chapel, Langley AFB VA, on Thursday, 9 Nov 00. BG Ronald F. Sams, HQ ACC/IG, was the Presiding Officer. SMSgt Steve Wyatt and MSgt Dave Johnson along with the HQ ACC Inspector General and Aircrew Life Support functional staffs planned and executed a simply outstanding retirement ceremony and retirement dinner later that evening. Family

and friends from as far away as Texas attended the ceremony and dinner. Life Supporters in attendance included Chief Al Loving, Chief Dave Chitwood, Chief Todd Nelson, MSgt Mike Freebury, MSgt Mike Grignano, and MSgt Kevin O'Neal. We wish Al, Tantawan and their family all the best in retirement. Hope to see you at the next reunion.

As you can see a lot is happening in the Aircrew Protection area. A lot of these are happening close to your homes. The Panama City Group meets frequently and takes trips to Ft Walton Beach to visit with Leaster Williamson. I know that the retired and active troops in the Langley and Scott area get together quite often, as do the troops at San Antonio. There are quite a few retired in the Austin, Ft Walton Beach, and Ft Worth areas. The only Guard/Reserve Troops who make it to the reunion are Chuck Warren and Riley Crumley! I know there are more out there! This is also true of Las Vegas, Tucson, Phoenix, Sacramento, and Omaha. How about thinking about starting “unofficial chapters” and get together and plan a trip to the next reunion. If all can't make it send a contingent like Panama City does. In Chief Oscar E. Norberg's last words to me, “before it's too late”.

Where are you Chris Bush, Rex Robnett, Les Ray, Frank DePasquale, Bill Baxter, Spider Webb, John McGarvey, Al Felton, Al Foy, Doc Halliday, Cecil Pixley, Jack Stotts, Gene Thornton?

In closing, I have been working on a “history” of Life Support and have many old documents and orders including cassette tapes from Oscar Norberg and Don Bock on the starting of our career field and tech school, but I really need more in the 1950-53 area. As I figure it the first 922 Tech School

graduated Survival Training and Personal Equipment Specialists in the '51-'52 area which would mean that this year or next will be the 50th anniversary. I have asked Marty Stage to see if he can get the early STS and JPG's from the repository at Maxwell Field. Any help will be appreciated.
Cheers, Tommy

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, 49th 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 1st 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 "loser" 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 1st Lt. Rogers. I was the NCOIC of the 8th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Holloman AFB, NM

from December 1979 to March 1983. In January 1982, a young 1st Lt. named Rogers walked in the 8th 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 Chewnig*

Personal Spotlight

(Note: Recently, the editors of the Life Support Newsletter decided that, space permitting, at each issue, we would pick at random one of the members of the Life Support Retiree's Group, and provide a short highlight of their career in the Air Force and what and where they are now. The first individual to garner this distinction is SMSgt (Ret) Bob Weaver.

SMSgt Bob Weaver is certainly one individual who has seen his share of various types of aircraft and life support equipment come-and-go with his 45 years of active duty and civilian time spent in the career field. Many of us remember him when he was on the TAC IG team, singing doo-wop songs

from the 50's while he was going over your equipment.

Bob joined the Air Force in July, 1955 in Indianapolis, Indiana and was sent to Basic Training at Sampson AFB, NY. Following completion of basic, he was "pipelined" to Holloman AFB, New Mexico and entered the Life Support career field. Shortly after arriving at Holloman, Bob was sent to technical school at Chanute AFB, Illinois. Over the years, with many PCS's to bases as varied as Spangdahlem AB, Germany; McGuire AFB, NJ; Kirtland AFB, NM; Bien-Hoa, RVN; Langley AFB, VA; and finally TAWCs at Eglin AFB, FL. Bob worked on aircraft such as; F-100s, -101s, -102 & 6s, B-24s and 47s (now we're getting back there), and F-104s. A lot of us came to know Bob with his time spent on the TAC IG team. I can truthfully say that I stood a TAC MEI inspection when Bob was on the team with CMSgts Robert "Tommy" Tompkins and Ray Sturble. While it was no picnic, Bob conducted a fair, objective, thorough, and a "by-the-book" inspection, all the while singing his hits from the 50s. (On an aside, I did pretty good in that inspection).

When his active duty career drew to a close, Bob kept his hand in Life Support, working as a Civil Service Life Supporter at Eglin AFB, Florida. What a career! Bob now resides in Shalimar, Florida where he devotes a considerable amount of his time to working for Habitats for Humanity. He is the father of six and a grandfather of 16. Bob, our hats are off to you. Thanks for your dedication and many years of outstanding service devoted to our country, our Air Force, and the career field. *Ed "Fast" Chewing*

CHILI SEZ

As you can see Ed is back on the payroll! We look forward to his next input. You too can send us your ideas and suggestions. If you have something you'd like to share, send it in. We need all the help we can get!

Web Site Moved

If you have not visited our web site since July of this year then you will be surprised to learn that the site has moved to a new location. Our site can now be found at: [http://webpages/charter.net/mcelwain](http://webpages.charter.net/mcelwain) There is a link on the site to our new web page, which is dedicated to our active duty brothers and sisters. An address list will be set up on that page for any active duty person that wants his personal address listed there. So far I've had very few takers.

Life Support History

MSgt (Ret) Paul Swindell e-mailed me with some life support history. He stated that in Feb of 1963 he and three other 922s, SSgt James Stanford, Maurice Ouzts, and Warren Quade were the first life supporters that he knows of to be sent to Army Airborne School. After completion of the course their AFSC was changed to "P922X0" and they found themselves performing parachute duties for the next two years. With the "P" prefix Paul said he had an assignment as a jumper, was assigned as an augmentee to two special ops squadrons, was an instructor and jumper at the TAC Sea Survival School, and assisted Lt Col Theodore Harris of HQ TAC in jump testing parachutes. Paul said he was able to make over 218 jumps from 9 different aircraft in 6 different countries. Paul also

stated that in August of 1962 a LSO by the name of Maj. Wayne Williams and six 922s (Maurice Ouzts, James Stanford, Donald Parker, Warren Quade, Paul, and someone else that he can't remember), started the TAC Sea Survival School. By 1965 the school had graduated 1,300 crewmembers. Twenty graduates had been forced to either bail out or ditch their aircraft at sea with all having managed to survive. Fourteen bailed out at sea in Viet Nam and credited the training at Langley with saving their lives. Paul closed by saying "Not too many people knew that 922s started this school."

Retired CMS Mike Yuhas has donated some important historical life support documents. Life support training posters from the 1960's were on display and given to me at this year's reunion. According to Mike, in the early 1960s troops sent in ideas for the posters to the 8th AF Life Support Staff. The staff had them converted to posters and distributed them throughout SAC (and the other MAJCOM Headquarters) as training aids. Below is a picture of one of the posters. The poster was too large to fit in my scanner so some of it is not shown. The part that's not visible says "Your Breath". The bottom of the poster indicates that it is to be displayed 1 - 30 September 1966. I'll try to include a picture of one of the other posters in future newsletters.



As we all know a lot of people out there collect life support equipment. I don't know of anyone other than Tommy and myself who are collecting historic life support documents, or information, i.e., technical orders, regulations, training manuals, pictures, etc. The donations you all send in are appreciated and will one day be put on exhibit at some chosen location. I'm open for ideas for a temporary or permanent site!

And The Winner Is.....

In the last newsletter I challenged everyone attending this year's reunion to come prepared to decipher what the meaning is of the acronyms below. The contest was held and a special prize was awarded to the person with the most correct answers. CMS Beetle Bailey of HQ PACAF was declared the winner! CMS (Ret) Ray Blanchette came

in a close second. Here are the answers as determined by retired CMSgts Tommy Tompkins and Leaster Williamson, along with contacts at ACR, H.Koch & Sons, and Gentex Corp.

"AN/URC" as in radios: Army/Navy Universal Radio Communicator

"AN/PRC" as in radios: Army/Navy Personal Radio Communicator

"AN/URT" as in beacons: Army/Navy Universal Rescue Transmitter

"CNU" as in survival kit: Container Unit

"CSU" as in g-suit: Clothing Special Unit

"CWU" as in exposure suit/coveralls: Constant Wear Unit

"F-2B" as in 20-man raft: Flotation-2 Bouncy Unit

"HGU" as in helmet: Helmet Gear Unit

"M" as in survival rifle/fire starter: Munition

"MBU" as in oxygen mask: Mask Breathing Unit

"MA" as in sun goggles/clothing: Unknown

"MB" as in survival kit: Martin Baker

"MD" as in survival kit: Manual Deploy

"ML" as in survival kit: Unknown

"MK" as in flares/desalter kit/mirror: Mark

"MC" as in knife: Military Cutlery

"PCU" as in lowering device/torso harness: Personal Clothing Unit

"SRU" as in minimum survival kit/survival vest/sleeping bag/survival tool: Survival Rescue Unit

*I asked Beetle how did he manage to beat out all the retirees? He said it was easy, "I had four months to research the answers." **The retirees are demanding a recount!***

New Chiefs

As a courtesy we like to list CMS promotions just in case you might know or remember the selectees from your active duty days. This year two people made it to chief. They are Chris Holt and Greg Copeland.

Reunion 2000

Reunion 2K was a blast and we're doing it again next year from 17 - 20 Sept at the same location. For more details on this annual event see our next newsletter.

Thanks again to the companies and individuals for their donations towards the hospitality room. You all have come through each and every year for the active duty and retired life supporters and we appreciate your generosity. Our heartfelt thanks go out to: Bill Wood, Gentex Corporation, H. Koch & Sons, Scot Incorporated, Survival Incorporated, and George Braue & Associates.

Below are two e-mails that I received (one from a first time attendee) that sums up what went on at this year's reunion.

Just a note to tell you how much Betty and I enjoyed the camaraderie and fellowship of our first reunion. We were able to meet again many good friends and acquaintances made as a result of a common good...saving of aircrew lives through dedicated maintenance of their life support equipment and exceptional dedication to life support training. A high point of day one was the presentation on MIA location and recovery efforts. I might add this was a very heart-moving presentation. The tour to the London Bridge was a special treat and the banquet was a culinary delight. It was very refreshing to see Roger May come away with his substantial megabuck win. Yes, some folks do leave Harrah's a winner. The Casino seemed to make every effort to ensure our comfort. Betty and I are very much in favor of returning to Harrah's. I strongly encourage each one of this year's and prior year reunions to contact just one of their old life support buddies and encourage them to attend. I made my decision to attend based on having attended two funerals of fellow Life Support Chiefs. I think it is better to see our good friends alive and well, rather than attending their funeral and missing that valuable opportunity. My congratulations to you and KB for all the fine work. A special thanks to Ed for the fine golf outing. Keep up the wonderful work. It is hard to think that we could do this without you.

Ray and Betty Blanchette

The 2000 Life Support Retirees Reunion Golf Tournament is now history. By any measurement; participation, sponsorship, fun and fellowship; this was our best outing. Once again, Ed MacKenzie did a great job in setting up the event at the Emerald River Golf Course. Thanks again, Ed. Our

sponsors this year were most generous and we'd like to acknowledge the following:

Gentex Corporation, Skip Clawson

Gentex West, Brenda von Kleist

Safety Equipment International, Gary King

H. Koch & Sons, George Braue

Survival Inc., Joe Lynch

Scott Inc., Rob Darter

East-West, Al Loving

Bill Wood

Tommy Tompkins

Brian Lauffer

HQ PACAF Life Support, CMS Brian Bailey

HQ AMC Life Support, CMS Rich Robichaud

This year eight teams participated in "The Scramble" and each participant received prizes based on the order of team finish. The top two teams tied with a score of "69". The tie was broken using the "Winchester Tiebreaker", i.e., going backwards from hole 18. The order of finish was as follows:

Team 8: Larry Garcia, Dave Nelson, Fred Cernetisch and Roger "Big Bucks" May

Team 7: Jim Fletcher, Gary Winchester, Tommy Tompkins and Ray "AFLAC" Blanchette

Team 6: Larry McCarty, Don Uddman, Bill Lynn and Chris "Sunshine" Holt

Team 5: Jim Rooney, Tom Rooney, Shirley Farkas and Ed "The Shot" MacKenzie

Team 4: Larry Erdman, Faye Erdman and Brian "Hit the Ball and Drag Beetle" Bailey

Team 3: Rob Hudson, Jerry Clark, Dale Braddish and Rob "The Rookie" Darter

Team 2: Rich Robichaud, Jimmy Shaw, Al Loving and Joe "Homey" Lynch

Team 1: Roy Arterbury, Don Muir, Gary King and Dave "I'll bring them next year" Chitwood

In recognition of their sportsmanship and ability to survive the day, our two lady golfers, Faye Erdman and Shirley Farkas, were presented special gifts donated by PACAF Life Support. Prizes were also presented to the following individuals:

Men's Longest Drive: Jimmy Shaw

Women's Longest Drive: Shirley Farkas

Closest to the Pin on #3: Roy Arterbury

Closest to the Pin on #13: Dave Nelson

The Life Support Retirees Perpetual Golf Award was presented to Jimmy Shaw. The recipient of this award is required to carry the "Trophy" for one year and then return it to the Reunion the following year for presentation to another "worthy" retiree.

If you are reading this article and have not attended a reunion, you are missing out on a lot of smiling and fond memories. Come next year and see what I mean.

Jim Rooney

Jessie L. Johnson

It saddens me to inform those of you who knew Jessie that he passed away on 29 Oct 2000 of colon cancer. If you had the opportunity to visit the Edwards AFB Life Support shop within the past few years then you probably met or saw Jessie. He was the little African American guy with the big friendly smile. As one of the troops in his shop said, "I'll never forget that smile." Jessie was a 20-year parachute rigger until his retirement from Mather AFB on 31 Jan 1981. After retirement Jessie continued his work for the USAF as a housing inspector, a survival equipment specialist and then later entering into the life support career field. Jessie began working at Edwards AFB in Mar 1993. Since his arrival at Edwards he has been a mainstay in the life support shop. In 1997 he was the HQ AFMC Life Support Civilian of the Year. He will be remembered as a mentor to many and a friend to all who have worked with him.

So ends another reunion, another newsletter, and another year. Hopefully we can all repeat these words this time next year. Stay healthy, enjoy the holidays and we'll see you in 2001!

Chili