

THE LIFE SUPPORT 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 business.

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Dec 2001 Issue

Another year has almost passed. They seem to go so fast lately. That's why it is so good to keep in touch with everyone, yet we have had very little input this year. We must have your inputs and suggestions and most of all your support to keep this effort going and more importantly growing. E-mail has really helped as we can get the word out fast to those who are on-line, but that also carries with it a responsibility for all to keep Bob and I informed of any changes to your e-mail address. Thanks to Terry Ache, Bob Mendez and Walt Horseman we have added most of the Reserve and Guard Shops to our e-mail listings and so the newsletter will reach many more Life Supporters this issue. We are asking that they pass the word, get their troops on the web site and provide us their background and addresses. This alone should add many.

I have been working on the history of Life Support leading to a 50 year Reunion/Celebration in 2003. I realize that we had many troops performing "Life Support" duties prior to that both as parachute riggers and in the parachute loft. I have arbitrarily established the first class of graduates from the course at Chanute that were awarded AFSC 92230 Survival Training and Personal Equipment as the starting point of our AFSC. I have orders showing what I think was the second class. I also have their graduation orders but these orders list some troops who had not started with them. That is where I get my opinion that there were previous classes. Most of the information prior to my days at Chanute Nov-54-Jan 55 has come from Jim Jennings who provided the orders and Armando Salas who went to the basic course at Chanute in 1953. I still need to do some additional research and will continue to do so. If anyone has any further information, old orders, PAM's where the Xerox has not turned black or class pictures it would be a help as we research. Marty Stage has been attempting to get some background, Specialty Training

Documents and old copies of AFR 39-1 with AFSC Descriptions but has not had much luck to date getting the information from the Historical guys at Maxwell Field. One of the Life Supporters on the September 1953 awaiting training Special Orders, along with Jim Jennings was Earl Norcross who was later stationed with me when we both worked for Jimmy Cartwright at Eglin. As you can probably tell I am really enjoying putting this together.

We have had a few promotions and retirements this year. Jim McKenna, Bill Lott, Jimmy Jean and Mike Freebury all rose to the Chief Master Sergeant Rank. Congratulations to all and we wish them the best. Scheduled retirements were put on hold (Stop Loss Program) due to September 11th. Danny Keith was affected by "Stop Loss" and Bill Pressley, Larry Cuffee, and Mark Jones may be if it extends into 2002. Glenn Kurtz reports that Chief Robert Reeves Jr. retired from the Texas Air National Guard 181AS in August after 32 years of service.

Some recent retirees have continued their careers in Life Support. Randy Epperly is working at Conax Florida Corporation as the USAF Representative, Mike "Vito" Grignano has established the US office for Labelle, and Bob Utley is back in San Antonio working for Specpro. Bob is working special projects for the Life Support System Program Office. Great to see these guys and others continue and provide their knowledge and expertise to the aircrews that we all support. On that note I would like for you to take a look at a poem written by our own Danny Keith titled ["Your Life Is Our Business"](#).

Several of us had planned to attend Danny Keith's retirement but as I mentioned above it has been postponed. We will provide a report on that next newsletter. Al King did however provide the following report on Chief Tommy Marshall's retirement earlier this year:

It was a well-planned and organized event, which propelled CMSgt (Retired) Tommy V. Marshall into the civilian sector last Thursday evening and Friday morning. All of the AETC superintendents were on hand for both events. The dinner Thursday evening was casual and reflected the charm and concern of the hostess, CMSgt Marshall's lovely wife. As the family and friends settled into the evening the retiree table in the back of the ballroom became the life of the party. Tommy Tompkins, Joe Lynch, Rob Darter, and Bill Wood were in attendance to represent the Retired Life Support Chief's group; Alfonso Gonzalez and Skip Goodman were also on hand. The dinner was superb and reflected well upon the Randolph Enlisted Club. Chief Marshall's last official act of leadership was to disperse each table to the buffet line....he did this in his traditional commanding fashion. However, many of the attendees are still wondering why he had them cha-cha single file around three sides of the room only to end up ON THE SIDE OF THE ROOM FROM WHICH THEY STARTED! Many gifts were presented, including a gift from our LG brethren (egress and survival) and his four children. The night was highlighted with his Mother's address to the audience concerning her son...whom she could not recognize based on the honorable descriptions rendered by the previous speakers. Also worth noting was the comment made by his son, "Dad I guess this means we don't have to do open ranks inspections anymore".

On the following morning at 10:30 hrs, Chief Marshall was retired by Maj General

Welser AETC/DO. The General did an outstanding job recapping specific names and phrases from past reports on Chief Marshall. Not once did he rely on anything but memory. His efforts spoke volumes concerning his respect and admiration for the chief. Before the ceremony ended, the chief spoke of his past experiences in uniform and the importance of taking care of the young troops, or as he called them, "the future Chief Master Sergeant's". He challenged those following him to replace him in the ranks. His challenge was accepted by one young NCO who until then was committed to separating from the Air Force. The chief attributed his successful career to a firm but loving mentor program filled with many outstanding NCO's and SNCO's. He specifically wanted to thank SMSgt (R) Lazarus G. Ellis a.k.a. Old Soldier, for his leadership and guidance. He spoke of the special bond between life supporters and the legacy our retired brothers left us. When he spoke of the retired life support reunions he shared his pride in the group he was about to join. As they presented Chief Marshall the American flag (our symbol of commitment and sacrifice), the emotion ran high. On more than one occasion he closed his eyes gathered his intestinal fortitude and moved on. When the flag was delivered and the orders read, Chief Marshall took his rightful place among so many other unsung hero's that have committed most of their lives to the protection of those magnificent men (and women) in their flying machines. To Chief Marshall's credit he has produced a young officer cadet and a young Airman Marshall to complete the next phase of military history in the Marshall household.

I for one will miss not having him in the pattern but as he came in for a landing on Friday and engaged in his final post flight I thought of all those past life supporters who lead the way and those of us that are not far behind Chief Marshall. One thing appears to be certain; the cycle of life support doesn't end unless you want it to. As the life support wheel continues to grind out its future, I'm sure others will step up to the challenge and embrace the philosophy so aptly expressed in our motto "YOUR LIFE IS OUR BUSINESS". Al King

**Cheers and Keep in Touch
Tommy**

CHILI SEZ

Wouldn't it be nice if the world today were like it was before 11 Sept? The world has changed and in so many ways since that day. This is the basis of this communication. One of the changes I'd like to mention is the change of attitude regarding the proposed Life Support Hall of Fame. Back in June of this year I suggested to the life support community that we should have a hall of fame. I drafted up the criteria and sent it out for feed back. Everything was positive; everybody thought it was a great idea. Then came this year's reunion. Time to put the final touches on the proposal. We only had a few minor things to work out like making sure we included civilians, and where to put the plaque, etc. Unfortunately, the proposal was not acceptable to the majority of the reunion attendees. The general *consensus* seemed to be that squadron technician or wing superintendent type individuals could never be recognized with this type of proposal, only individuals that

worked in higher levels or positions. It was suggested that we should not have a hall of fame because the little guy would never win or be recognized. I believe most retirees that are against the proposal may have not had access to the written proposal to review prior to the reunion. All reunion attendees agreed to take some time and thoroughly read the proposal, and come back next year and readdress the issue.

I am asking all of you who care about having a hall of fame to do the same thing. Review the proposal and after you have thoroughly read it let me know what you think. Changes/additions to the original proposal have been highlighted in red (I've included civilians). For those of you who have not seen the proposal a draft copy can be found on the life support web site. If you don't have a computer and you want me to mail you a copy just let me know. Remember, you have until the next reunion to get your inputs to me.

As you read the proposal keep the following in mind: Everyone cannot be a hall of famer. Those individuals selected for recognition should be people who have achieved distinction. Those selected should be recognized for their long-standing achievement in life support and their position as a professional role model.

Reunion 2001

This year's reunion was almost cancelled due to the events of September 11th. Although the thought of air travel made a lot of people nervous, many retirees flew from all over the country to be with us. We had our usual turn out with the following first time attendees:

Barr, Dale & Jill

Barrett, Gary

Blankenbaker, Irvin & Patsy

Bock, Don

Brown, Edgar & Burma

Graves, Andy & Kristin

Harris, Willie

Lau, Roger

Milligan, Howard & Darleen

Pace, Dan & Shelly

Weaver, Bob

Some of the attendees expressed an interest in hosting a future reunion and were told to send us a proposal. A different location would be a nice change but I don't think anybody can beat the total cost of having it in Laughlin, NV. All are welcome to contact KB for what's needed to host a reunion and then check out their local community and let us know what the cost will be. Don't forget to consider travel cost.

Don Bock, a first time reunion attendee and I spent some time together talking about the history of the life support school at Chanute AFB. We also talked about a possible life support display at the former AFB. Don spent a lot of time at Chanute (1949 – 1984) as an instructor, instructor supervisor, and training evaluator of the graduates of the C3ABR92230 course. According to Don, the USAF Survival Training course started at McCall AFB, ID then to Stead AFB, then to Chanute (a lot of you old timer all ready knew that, didn't you?). Don was full of stories about the school and some of the instructors. Do any of you remember the Bausch twins? Richard and Robert Bausch were instructors back in the late '60's. One of them was my instructor but I don't remember which one. Richard is a famous writer and has published eight novels and five volumes of stories. His stories have appeared in The Atlantic, the New Yorker, Esquire, Harper's, Playboy and numerous literary journals. One of his novels, The Last Good Time was made into a feature length motion picture starring Maureen Stapleton. His brother Robert is also a writer and a novelist; the two may well be the only identical-twin novelists in literary history.

Carl Jennings, another former instructor at Chanute was also at the reunion. He showed me a lot of old class pictures. I saw photos of some of the retirees when they were no strippers!

Our stamp fund was in need of help and several of you came through magnificently. Some people sent in stamps, some donated money. The biggest donation came from this year's reunion attendees. They contributed a whopping \$513! Bob Weaver donated two hundred dollars of this himself. Guess what? This is the second \$200 donation from Bob in two years! We thank all contributors, but special thanks have to go out to Bob. What a charitable guy! I think he's done enough though. It's time for the people who have never contributed to show their support for this newsletter.

Speaking of donations, the reunion attendees would also like to thank Bill Wood and Tommy Tompkins for the hospitality room. Although Bill and Tommy were the only contributors, we still managed to have a memorable time. Andy Graves contributed \$100 towards next year's reunion. Thanks Andy, for the money and the good times this summer. I would also like to thank our guest speaker, Lt Col (Ret) Paul Robinson and the man responsible for convincing him to join us, Frank Provenzano. Our next reunion will be held in Laughlin from 16 – 19 September, 2002.

Golf Tournament Results

Our 2001 Life Support Retirees Reunion Golf Tournament was long on fun but a little short on participation. Due to the terrible events of September, many of our regular attendees/golfers could not participate. However, we still managed to get the round in. Ed

MacKenzie outdid himself once again. We played the Mojave Resort Course, which is a beautiful, challenging golf course. Ed, we all thank you for your hard work.

Our sponsors, as always, were most generous and we'd like to acknowledge the following:

Gentex Corporation Gentex West

Survival Inc Scott Inc

Skip Clawson Tommy Tompkins

Bill Wood Joe Lynch

Rob Darter Al Loving

Tom Rooney Brenda von Kleist

The support we receive every year from the active duty Life Support community is significant. With everything that's going in the world today, our Chiefs still found time to drop something in the mail to support our Reunion. The continued support of the gentlemen below is greatly appreciated.

HQ USAF/XOO, CMS Todd Nelson

HQ ACC, CMS Brian Bailey

HQ AMC, CMS Rich Robichaud

HQ PACAF, CMS Chris Holt

HQ AFRC, CMS Bob Mendez

This year three teams participated in "The Scramble" and each participant received prizes based on the order of team finish. The order of finish was as follows:

First Place: Ed MacKenzie, Mike Rossmiller, Dave Nelson and Bunny Haig

Second place: Jim Rooney, Tom Rooney and Shirley Farkis

Third Place: Al Loving, John Weir, Bill Lynn, Will Oost

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

Men's Longest Drive: Jim Rooney and Dave Nelson

Closest to the Pin: Ed MacKenzie and John Weir

Next year we hope to rebound with a larger turnout. Plan to attend the Reunion and join Ed and me for a little golf. Please remember to send your golf fees in early so Ed can get us the best deal. Best Wishes for the Holidays – Jim Rooney

The following was forwarded to me for consideration for publication in this newsletter. After reading it I thought it was worth sharing.

A LSO Perspective

On October 6, 1980, I entered the Air Force as a Second Lieutenant. Not many days after that I had my first encounter with "Life Support." While the instructors were greatly enthused with their job of training us things like water survival, egress, hanging harness, and various other life support related items, we, the crew members just took what they had to say with a grain of salt. After all, life support isn't something you ever use. These thoughts stayed with me through the years. As crewmembers, you would look at the schedule and see you are scheduled for some type of life support training. You could only hope that the class would get canceled, you'd be scheduled to fly, or maybe you could get a waiver. Most of the time though, you had to attend. If the class we attended was ACDE or hanging harness, our goal was to either not dress out or just have the new person do it. After all, as "experienced" crew members, we had dressed out at least once in our career, so why do it again? Most of the time, that worked. I can remember only once in my 20-year career when crewmembers actually wanted life support training. That was when Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM took place. As word got out that there could be a possibility of chemical warfare, people were doing all they could to get an ACDE class. Even people who had just taken the class within two weeks wanted the class. And guess what? They all wanted to dress out. But then things changed, we didn't die from chemicals and for crewmembers, life support training was again a burden.

My background is SAC until AMC came about so my understandings of an LSO was zero. We didn't have them in SAC or in the AMC unit I was associated with. I had never heard of an LSO until my assignment at HQ AMC/DOT. This was my first experience to meet an LSO and this is where I changed my thoughts of life support. While in my assignment at HQ AMC, the current Command LSO received orders and I was selected to replace him. My only experience with life support was attending the life support classes and not really paying much attention then. I first attended the LSO course at Randolph. It was an eye opener. I learned what went on in life support and not just the training aspect of it. We learned about aircraft accidents

and life support management. I didn't know there was so much to know. Once I completed the LSO course, I was the LSO for AMC. I now had 2 weeks of experience. Fortunately, I had the experience of senior NCOs like Chief Morrow, SMSgt Chewning, and others to teach me life support. As Chief Morrow and I began to take visits to AMC bases and visit the life support facilities, life support took on a different light. I could see how much the life support technicians and supervisors took their jobs to heart. They truly cared about their jobs. At the HQ I could see how each and every life support manager wanted to make sure crewmembers had the best equipment available to do their jobs. I also saw people that thought the way I use to think about life support. I remember during the POM cycle, we were trying to get funding for a new passive life preserver. This preserver wouldn't puncture like the current adult/child ones. However, the POM officials would rather use the money for other requirements. After all, how many C-5, C-141, or KC-135 aircraft have ditched and we needed to use the devices. I remember the fight to remove parachutes from the KC-135. The people wanting to remove the chutes never flew on the KC-135. If you had asked the crewmember, the answer was to leave them on. But the crewmembers don't make those decisions. It's been a while since I've been in AMC so I don't know the parachute status; I only hope they still carry them. I have thought about life support and came up with the following analogy.

Life support is like the spare tire we all have in our vehicles. As operators of those vehicles, we never check them (tire pressure, serviceability) we just assume that they are in the trunk or under the bed of the truck and will be operational in case we need them. As a matter of fact, we don't even think about them unless they are needed. With tire technology like it is today, we never have flats, so the tires go unused. Now if we do have a flat, we expect to be able to get the tire, put it on the vehicle and drive away. It's then that we wish we had checked the tire's serviceability. Because you see, it is either flat or rotten or missing and now we're stuck. Worse case is that it is operational, but you don't know how to change it. Life support equipment is that spare tire. As crewmembers, we know that there is equipment on the aircraft, but we're never going to use it. If we did have to use it, we could probably figure it out. I'm sure we vaguely remember attending a course on how to use it. One thing we can be assured of that is not like the spare tire. The equipment is operational and serviceable. This is because technicians work on this equipment on a daily basis to ensure if that equipment is needed, it will work. The world of life support hopes the equipment is never used, but they are confident on its ability if it is used.

Life support technicians have a thankless job. When crewmembers return from a flight, they don't tell the technicians that their helmet worked great or the parachutes looked good hanging in the back of the aircraft. I'm not even sure they would be thanked even if the equipment was used, but they are there on a daily basis ensuring that crewmembers always have the best equipment possible to survive.

I would like to thanks to all the past, present and future life support technicians. Even though I never had to use the equipment you provided me for my safety, you always give me the tools need to return home to my family. Keep up the great work.

Maj (Ret) Tim Martin

I think I'll speak for all life supporters and say thanks Maj Martin for the encouragement.

With the exception of Richard Traufield we have survived another year. Art Wade made it home from the reunion ok, but had quad by pass heart surgery last month. He some how managed to step on a toothpick and ended up with a staff infection in his right foot. While being treated for the infection it was discovered that he had a full blockage in one vein and two partials in others. Art's recovery is going well but I'll bet he's glad he stepped on that toothpick. Another retiree, SMSgt Paul Perkins signed up to attend the reunion but had to cancel out due to terminal cancer. Our prayers go out to Paul, his bride Betty, and the rest of his family.

Personal Spotlight

Folks, as you know, Ed Chewning normally does the "Personal Spotlight," and as many of you know, he is an Item Manager in the C-5 Product Directorate at Robins AFB, GA. Since September 11th, Ed's workload has precluded him from getting the article completed for this edition but he's assured me there will be one in the May 2002 edition.

Here are a couple of items you might be interested in. Our active duty LS brothers and sisters have announced that the 2002 World Wide Life Support Conference will be held from 10 – 15 Aug for the AFRC units and from 12 – 15 Aug for everyone else. The conference will be held in the mountains of Salt Lake City at the Snowbird Resort.

A lot of you out there spent some time at the former Perrin AFB (either PCS or TDY to the water survival school) and might be able to help out on a great project. The Perrin AFB research foundation is seeking original photos of the base to place on the Perrin AFB website. These photos may also be placed at the Grayson County Airport terminal that is located on the flight line of the former base. They have display cases inside the terminal which currently display dozens of Perrin AFB artifacts and memorabilia. If you have any artifacts or photos that you could loan or donate to the Research foundation, please email Shannon Thomas at perrinafb@texoma.net or call John Elkins at 903-893-6400.

Have a happy holiday and let's get together at reunion 2002.

Chili