

THE LIFE SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

News for the men and women who served in the USAF and civilians who work in Government or industry in the Aircrew Life Support business.

*Reporters: Tommy Tompkins * PO Box 372 * Equality, IL 62934 * Email: tombob@shawneelink.com
Bob McElwain * 17149 Forest Hills Drive * Victorville, CA 92392 * Email: mcelwain@charter.net
Visit our web site at: <http://www.usafals.net>
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There are some really exciting times coming up in our chosen career field. We have been working to attempt to identify and document the history behind the Aircrew Protection Career Field. I had a long special visit this summer from Mr. Don Bock. Don was there along with Chief Oscar Norberg when it all started. Don left me much of his historical information files and they are really complete. He has class start dates as well as a pile of background information and photos. This coupled with several audiotapes that Don and Oscar made for me several years ago has given much insight. They talked for several hours on the tape discussing the development and early years at Chanute.

I have also managed to talk with two life supporters who were in one of the first graduating classes of AFSC 92230, Survival Training and Personal Equipment Specialist. James Emmett Jennings also provided orders from the class start and graduation. Both Emmett and Monroe Johnson are on the graduating orders. Monroe provided his graduation certificate awarding AFSC 92230 on 18 Jan 1954. The class start date

was 11 Sep 1953. I was privileged to have worked with one of the other troops who started with that class, A/3C Earl Norcross who was stationed with me at Eglin in 1956. Both the first and second classes went to Stead AFB, Nevada for survival training in early January 1954.

Based on the above and other documentation, we have determined that the celebration of the 50th anniversary of life support should occur in the year 2003! Below you will find much more information leading to this special celebration.

Congratulations to the two new Chief Master Sergeants, Gina Noland and Steve Wyatt. Gina is currently stationed with the Joint Task Force Full Accounting (JTF) at Camp Smith Hawaii. The JTF is responsible for POW/MIA investigation in South East Asia. Gina is the first female Life Support Chief and I am sure the first Aircrew Protection female Chief. Steve Wyatt recently left the ACC staff and is currently stationed at Tinker. Steve came up through the "Thunderbirds" and may be the first Chief that served with that special organization. Also, Mike Freebury has put on his Chief Stripes effective 1 Dec 2002. Again, our congratulations to all and best wishes as they meet their new challenges.

Best wishes in retirement to Chief Terry Ache, Chief Bill Pressley, Chief Mark Jones, Chief Walt Horseman, SMSgt Danny Keith, and MSgt Jim Craft. All great life supporters! Jim has already signed on with Battelle and continues to provide his knowledge and background to the Human Systems Wing. I know Danny has some projects in work and Mark Jones has moved to Carbondale to a Lead

Marketing Position with Gentex. Mark took Skip Clawson's position as Skip and Joann started in their "second" retirement in Florida! Good Luck to all!

I was very fortunate again this year to attend SAFE in Jacksonville Florida. While at SAFE Chief Art Wade, who lives in the area, came over to visit and we had several great visits and dinners! Skip Clawson, John Damron, Jerry Johnson and I thoroughly enjoyed our time with Art! What a gentleman! Art went to Chief Bob Burris's funeral while we were there and provided us a review. Bob was also special and will be missed at the 50th reunion.

Others at SAFE who some might remember were Kenny and Pearl Marks, George and Lou Braue, Cal Crochet, Bill Harrison, Jake Yacobi, Al Loving, Randy Epperly, Rob Darter, Rob Hudson, Gary Winchester, John Fair, Bill Wood, and Mark Jones. John Fair is now working with Scot Inc and has moved to Chicago. Gary Winchester is on board with Wel Fab and glad to be back in the business!

We are looking forward to a great big turnout in June at the 50th reunion. Bob McElwain and KB Kinchen have some plans working and I hope to have our history down pat and documented in a handout! I am sure that there will be much to add and correct and I will be ready and willing to get together to make it better and more complete. Search your files, orders, PAM's, Zerox, graduation certificates, photos, etc, for any information that will advance our history. Please bring everything you've got!

In closing, we recognize that prior to Sep 1953/Jan 1954 there were many

troops such as Charlie Kiehl, Jimmy Cartwright, Leaster Williamson, Don Bock, Oscar Norberg and many others that were full time "Aircrew Protection". We have "Special" presentations for any who led the way and attend this year's reunion!

Cheers, Tommy

CHILI SEZ

I begin this time with the sad news of the passing of five family members and the injury of another. A lot of you don't know William Burrell; he is the son of retired CMSgt Sandy Burrell. It saddens me to say that he passed away last month. William attended every reunion with his dad and was special to the reunion attendees. He seemed to enjoy every moment at our reunions whether he was in the middle of everything, or just by himself. It's ironic that other than his dad, the other person who often made sure that William was included in everything was also taken from us this year. That person was Bob Burris.

Bob attended all of our reunions as well, right up until the end. He passed away on his return trip home from this year's reunion. After he and his wife, Virginia departed Laughlin, NV they stopped to see a friend in Arizona and one in New Mexico. They departed NM on 24 Sep on their way to San Antonio, TX to visit their son. Bob went into a diabetic coma that night in Kent, TX and didn't come out of it.

Charles Bergman informed me that we lost a life supporter in the Rantoul area. MSgt (Ret) John Cullen, who was an

instructor at Chanute for many years in the Basic ABR and officer OZR courses. He passed away on 11 Aug 02. John served in the National Guard from 1949 to 1950. He served in the AF for 26 years before retiring in 1976. After retiring, John worked in the transportation department at Chanute AFB for 17 years. John had many friends in the Rantoul area and was the local Director of Military Retiree Affairs. The Rantoul City School central office recently employed him.

John and Bob are gone but will live on in the history of life support. Bob Burris helped many troops during his career, officer and enlisted alike and will never be forgotten. We're going to miss his presence, laughter and smile at next year's reunion. His passing out of reunion hats (especially to William Burrell) to the attendees will never be forgotten.

John Cullen will go down in history as one who helped shaped and molded a lot of outstanding life support troops right out of tech school. John's name will be added to the list of instructors that we are putting together of troops who taught where it all began, Chanute AFB, IL.

I was informed at this year's reunion that Earnest Johnson also passed away. If you don't know Ernie, I'm sure you've seen his face before. He was the guy modeling the survival vest in the survival kit tech order and in our CDC book. According to his military assignment history (which can be found on our web site), Ernie's military career started back in the 1940's when he was a parachute rigger. He retired in 1966 while performing duties at HQ PACAF.

Bob Weaver informed us about the passing of Danny Kittrell. Danny was the civilian (retired officer) down at Eglin working the CWDE decon last year.

According to Bob, Danny left this world on 10 Nov 02 in the Fort Walton Beach, FL Medical Center. Tommy Tompkins stated that Danny had been sick and in the hospital since March 02, and that when he last saw Danny he was in great sprits even though he knew he was sick.

On behalf of all life supporters, I extend heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of William, Bob, John, Earnest, and Danny.

Last, but not least, an A1C assigned to the 75th FS at Pope AFB, NC was struck by a motor vehicle while attending to her dog. She bent over to pick up her dog when she was struck from the rear and ended up landing face down in a ditch. She was in critical condition with a severed left leg, crushed right thigh, multiple head contusions and possible internal injuries. The last news I received on her is that she may be medically retired if medical conditions warrant. She can be reached at the following address:

**Emily Pullman
2824 NC, Highway 20
St. Paul, NC 28384**

**75th Fighter Squadron Life Support
2479 Surveyor Street
Pope AFB, NC 28308**

Reunion

Our 7th reunion was held in September 02 and was attended by several new faces. The new attendees were: Eddie Aguilar,

Allan & Erma Bailey, Robin & Sue Beal, Jim & Laura Demay, Jerry Imada, Brian & Valery Rook, Tom & Donna Sherman, and Gloria Watts. For a complete list of attendees visit our web site. For the results of our annual golf tournament see below.

Life Support Retirees Reunion Golf Tournament

Our 2002 Reunion Golf Tournament was a total success. We had excellent participation with 15 golfers teeing it up at the Mojave Resort Course. Ed MacKenzie, as always, was responsible for the tournament set-up and his hard work insured that we all enjoyed the morning of golf. Well Done, Ed.

Our Golf Tournament would not be as much fun if we didn't have a few prizes and gifts to hand out. This year, active duty life supporters were most generous in donating prizes for our tournament. We would like to acknowledge the continued support of CMS Rich Robichaud, HQ USAF/XOO, CMS Beetle Bailey, HQ ACC, CMS Chris Holt, HQ PACAF, and CMS Greg Copeland, HQ AFSOC. Also, we want to thank the following sponsors/individuals for their continued support:

*Gentex West – Brenda Von Kleist
Scott Inc – Rob Darter
Wel Fab – Gary Winchester
H. Koch & Sons – Ken Marks*

This year we fielded four teams to participate in “The Scramble”. The reverse order of finish was as follows:

Fourth Place: John Weir, Will Oost, Bill Lynn and Jim Rooney.

Third Place: Gary Winchester, Dave Nelson and Fred Cernetisch

Second Place: Al Loving, Mike Rossmiller, Jerry Imada and Marie Balla

First Place: Ed MacKenzie, Allan Bailey, Tim Farkas and Shirley Farkas

Our lady golfers, Marie Balla and Shirley Farkas, were presented special gifts donated by HQ PACAF Life Support. Prizes were also presented to the following individuals:

Longest Drive: Jim Rooney and Ed MacKenzie

Closest to the Pin: Dave Nelson and Tim Farkas

After a one-year absence, the Life Support Retirees Perpetual Golf Award returned for presentation to a “worthy” life support retiree. This trophy is entrusted to the selected individual for one year and is to be returned to the Reunion the following year for presentation to another “worthy” recipient. This year’s recipient was Al Loving. Good luck with your putting Al.

As I write this, the plans for next year’s Reunion and celebration of our career field anniversary are still being worked. However, be assured that Ed MacKenzie is working on the golf tournament. Please remember to sign up and send in your money early. Hope to see everyone next year – Jim Rooney

The year 2003 marks a landmark event for the Aircrew Life Support career field - our 50th anniversary. Together, we're celebrating 50 years of providing our

country's military aircrews with quality life saving equipment and training. Our anniversary year will culminate in June 2003 with a four-day reunion and gala celebration at the Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas. The reunion dates are 16 -20 June 2003 with the 16th and 20th being travel days. Everyone is highly encouraged to attend.

We are expecting to see a lot of the people that could not attend our September reunions because of school, farming chores, etc. To encourage early registration, the first 50 people to send in their registration form will be refunded \$10 of their registration fee. To see who has registered, visit our web page and click on "Reunion".

Unless you make special arraignments, check-in at the hotel will not be earlier than 1500 hrs, 16 Jun 03. After checking in visit our booth (which will be set up in the hotel lobby from 1400 - 1700 hrs) to sign in for the reunion. The hospitality room will open at 1700 hrs on Monday, 16 June so stop by and bring an appetite. To guarantee reservations fill out the attached registration form and send it in to the address indicated.

The reunion will feature a golf tournament, a bus tour of the local area, and a special ceremony and banquet. All events will be informal and dress will be casual. Active duty personnel are required to be in an appropriate uniform for our opening activities on Tuesday morning, 17 June.

Reunion Support

I'm going to need a lot of help with next year's reunion so I'm asking all the

vendors who were at the Life Support Workshop in Snowbird, UT this year to help out. Information on becoming a sponsor can be found on our web site, but it's basically the same information I handed out to you all at the workshop. All donations are needed by 1 May 2003, however, if you like, special arrangements can be made for you to send your donation directly to the hotel, but please let me know before you do that so that I can set it up.

We are having a special 50th anniversary coin made up and it will be available at the reunion. Somehow I forget who I talked to about having them made. All I remember is that it was a TSgt at the World Wide Workshop last August. We need to discuss the design of the coin and the quantity. If that's you please contact me ASAP!

I need everyone to dig out his or her old military related photos and see if you have any of yourself taken with a famous military or civilian personality. I'm putting a special presentation together in honor of our 50th and your pictures are needed. I would also like to have some other pictures. If you are attending next year's reunion, send me an old picture of yourself in any military uniform and a second one of what you look like today. Both will be included in the presentation and/or added to our web site. Please give me as much info as you can about any pictures you send. I'll need to know the usual who, what, when, and where.

Several other people besides Kb and myself are working feverishly to help put this special celebration together. I want to thank the following for their support ahead of time: Ed MacKenzie, Frank

Provezano, and Jim Rooney. Together we promise to make next year's reunion a most unforgettable affair.

Stamp Fund

I received letters from Maynard Fielding and Bruce Maynard along with a check from both for our stamp fund. Maynard reports that the fishing is good in Galicia, Spain and wishes he were younger so that he could sail around the world. Other donations for stamps came from the reunion attendees who contributed over \$500! Two hundred dollars came from Bob Weaver, and someone sent in a roll of 100 stamps! Thanks to all who donated this year. We really appreciate your generosity.

First Females in Life Support

Gina Noland is the first female (and African American female) to make CMSgt in life support, but who were the first females in the career field? I am trying to find the answer to that question and so far most people think Nancy Smith is one of them. Nancy spent time at the tech school back in the early 1980's. I'll bet she is full of war stories about some of the first women in our career field. Sure would be nice to see Nancy at next year's reunion. Anyway, according to information I received from TSgt Wildo, an Aircrew Life Support Instructor at Sheppard AFB, a Chanute AFB chronology indicates that in April 1973 A1C Vickie Stevens was the first WAF to earn the Life Support AFSC. The first female life supporter I saw was in 1974 at McGuire AFB, but I don't remember her name. Think about the

first time you saw a female in life support and let me know if it was around or before 1974. I need to know her name and when and where you saw her before the next reunion.

Come on and join us in Las Vegas next year. Aircrew Life Support is 50 years strong, let's celebrate! We are hoping to see a lot of people we haven't seen since their discharge or retirement. I hope one of them will be you. If I don't see you in June, may your holiday season be filled with joy and peace.

Bob,
A.k.a., Chili