

THE LIFE SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

December 1999

Mike Grost Memorial Issue

Seasons greetings to all and best wishes for a very good New Year. As I was working on this, I heard from **George Braue** of the untimely death of **Mike Grost**. Words at this time fail me so I will use excerpts from **Skip Goodman's** e-mail.

“Mike was for years the Martin-Baker representative and in 1983 he formed the Life Support Equipment Investigation Laboratory which led to the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory to support the Joint Task Force-Full Accounting in its mission to resolve the status of those who remained unaccounted for or Missing-in-Action (MIA) from the S.E.A. Conflict, which led to the creation of the Laboratory Life Sciences Artifact Section. For over a 35 year period he performed over 400 aircraft mishap, MIA involved, and life sciences equipment related investigations: worked on numerous engineering and test programs: taught thousands of aircrew personnel in escape system science and survival: and trained over 3000 military and civilian personnel in life sciences equipment investigation procedures. He was a truly unique person who dedicated his life to improving the aircraft accident investigation process. He put mission before himself and brought the best out of those who worked with him. He will be sorely missed.”

From Rich Lahn: “In all my dealing with Mike I never was turned down, put off or otherwise ignored when I went to him for information and accident investigation expertise...He was truly the best...I know he cannot be replaced, but I also know that the training and expertise he provided to countless others will continue in his memory...”

From Chuck Hunnefeld: “Mike was a Life Support Icon that will be sorely missed. His unparalleled knowledge in accident investigation, life support/egress equipment and his ability to teach the next generation is well known in our community. His

wit and humor only surpassed these attributes. He has touched almost everyone in our community, and we are better for it.

Well-said Skip, Rich and Chuck our thoughts are with his family.

This year was the first that Polly and I had the opportunity to attend the annual Reunion. What a good time we had and the hotel and food were outstanding. We had heard and read before what an exceptional job Chili and K.B. had done and now we were there to appreciate it.

The meeting, briefings and “around the room” with each attendee providing background and history of their life and career really brought back many fond memories. It was quite emotional in parts and uplifting in others. The Hospitality Suite each night was the place to be. **John (RC) Wilson** assisted and it could not have been better. With all the war stories (maybe stretched some), remembrances and the background of the Colorado River it was awesome! I know that the word “Icon” is overused but nothing else seems to fit when you talk about **Art Wade, John Weir, Bob Burris, Bill Lynn, Leaster Williamson, and Fred Foss** who led the way and set the goals for the rest of us to meet or exceed. I was lucky enough to have both John and Fred “guide” my career and received much help from Art and Bob while on overseas TDY’s and was stationed with Leaster at Stead when the career fields were combined. I know each of you have similar memories.

We also had a few “active duty” in attendance. **Linda Bloomer, Bill Lipscomb, Rob Bentley, Rich Robichaud** (who provided an excellent brief and as **Rob Bentley** predicted is one of the two new Chiefs this year), and **Gary Winchester** were all there. Gary is now “retired” and he and Peg are in their new home in Henderson NV.

The picnic, catered by **Jim Llewellyn**, was as advertised and there was plenty of excellent food and camaraderie. The golf outing was great and windy. **Bill Goss** won the farthest drive and I (who last played over three years ago) won the closest to the pin. It was the expert instructions from my team members **Jim Rooney, Gary Winchester** and **Bill Lynn**. **Jim Rooney** always takes me as a teammate on these outings and lists me as his handicap!

The tours were enjoyed by all and the gambling by most. **Harvena Fowler** who was supplied routinely

with nickels by **Billy Grimsley** held the record we heard for one setting at one machine. They were part of a Panama City contingent that included **Bob and Virginia Burris, Barbara and Robert Duren, and Mary and Willard Oost**. They have social gatherings throughout the year. In addition, they have been invited to visit the life support shops on Tyndall. Neat idea!

Frank Provenzano was everywhere helping to make this reunion special. He has the energy and I see in the AF Sergeants Association Magazine that Frank has won the AFSA Volunteer Service Person Award for 1999.

For me it was special seeing and visiting with **Carl Jennings** who was at Chanute with me and made the Vietnam Trip when they cleared house of all TSgts at the schoolhouse. It was great seeing **Billy Goss** who along with **Dennis Struck**, and **Ron Zeigler** provided the push to get the newsletter going. Was great to see so many old friends like **Sandy Burrell, Riley Crumley, Leo Gomez, Dave Heitman, Joe Lynch, Ed MacKenzie, Chuck Sandusky, Norm Crawford, Walt Thompson, Richard Traufeld, Bill Vincent, Bill Wood**, and newly retired Chiefs **Chuck Warren** and **Chuck Hunnefeld**. And to meet so many new folks and their families.

We were only represented by two of the Officer corps, **Don Muir and Al Schneider** (was good seeing Al and **Georgie** (Al has not changed one damn bit). Need to have more next year. We need some adult leadership! Missed were **Mike Hampton, Jim Cartwright, Kenny Marks, Cal Crochet, Tony Vanhaastert, and Macdonald Nance** who tried but could not make it.

Our best to them. As I said it was my first time to the reunion but I will never miss another one if I can help it. I offer a challenge to everyone who attended to bring one or two "old life supporters" to the next reunion. My challenges and candidates are **Fast Eddie Earl Chewning and Tim Morrow**. These are my thoughts but yours could and should be here also just drop a line or use the web site.

I also had the privilege in November to attend both the "pin on" of **Chief Dave Chitwood** as he takes over the reins at Air Combat Command and the retirement ceremony for **Chief Al Loving**. **Karl "Wick" Wicker and Steve Scaggs** did an outstanding job in organizing and running the ceremonies. Each of these that I have the privilege to attend just gets better. In

attendance were **Rob Bentley, Mo Davey, Tommy Marshall, Sam Lavine, Larry Cuffee, Bill Pressley, Joe Lynch, Bill Vincent, Timmy Morrow, Milt Yopp, Stevie Culbreth, Al Cricks, Dave Chitwood, Danny Keith, Steve Wyatt, Dave Johnson, John Contorno, Randy Loving, Dan Chambers, Kevin O'Neal, Jimmy Jean and Bill Wood**. Also in attendance was **Nancy Cooper**. It was my first chance to meet and visit with her since the death of "Coop" she's a very special lady and I felt that she wanted to stay in touch. **Tim Morrow's lovely bride Dawn** as well as **Brenda Brennen** was also there. The retirement plus the promotion party at **John Shields** old hangout out the King Street Gate made for a great day!

While there I learned that, the life support slot at Air Staff in the "Personnel Recovery Branch" that we as a community have been working on for years (not specifically Personnel Recovery but representation at Air Staff) has finally been approved and funded. It looks like the first to fill that position will be **Chief Todd Nelson**. **Steve Culbreth** also announced his retirement for early next year. I have not yet heard who will replace him at ACC Requirements but could be one of the new **Chief's Rich Robichaud** at AMC or **Randy Loving** at Davis Monthan. Congratulations, they were both well-deserved promotions. We congratulate **Chief Paul Parent** of the Vermont Guard on his well-deserved promotion.

As part of the continuing "life after life support" **Steve Culbreth** will be going to work for ANSER, Ken Rinne is working for Essex, **Bob Utley** is working with Vista supporting the SPO, **Durrell Bess** is back at the Integration Lab, **Al Loving** is working for East West and Scot/McCormick-Selph, **Joe Lynch** is working with Survival Incorporated and Scot and **Bill Harrison** is still with Martin Baker. **John Damron** "retired" from ILC Dover and he and Peg just moved into their new home in Tucson. All remain active in retirement and in life support!

Not many letters this cycle but did hear from **Al King, Maynard Fielding**, and **Richard Traufeld** (always). Some phone calls, one from **Hal Stamp** who has relocated to Florida (I missed one from **Roger and Marylou May**) and lots of e-mails (We need to hear from all to keep this interesting! We also need to add more troops...

In closing, complements once again to **Bob "Chili Mac" McElwain** and **Kemper B. (K.B.) Kinchen**

and their reunion committee. A good time was had by all!

Cheers and keep in touch, Tommy

LIFE SUPPORT GOLF TOURNAMENT

The 1999 Life Support Retirees Reunion Golf Tournament was a total success. This success was possible due the efforts of many. We want to specifically offer a well-deserved "Thank You" to Ed MacKenzie. Ed accomplished all the hard work; found the golf course, made reservations, and made sure everything went smooth. Well Done - Ed! During the past year, we went out to the community and solicited donations/support for our golf tournament. The response from the Life Support Community was most impressive. We received donated prizes from the following:

- Gentex Corporation
Represented by Chief Skip Clawson
- Conax Corporation
Represented by Chief Bill Vincent

- H. Koch & Sons
Represented by Chief Bill Wood

- IBP Aerospace
Represented by Chief Chuck Hunnefeld

- SOS
Represented by Chief Joe Lynch

- SEI
Represented by Mr. Gary King and Mr. Fred Rinke

- HQ AMC Life Support
Represented by Chief Rob Bentley

- HQ ACC Life Support
Represented by Chief Al Loving

- Chief Tommy Tompkins

The participation this year was "Best Seen to date" and consisted of 21 golfers (I use that term loosely). Each golfer contributed an entry fee that was donated to the newsletter stamp fund (\$135.00 total). All golfers were presented prizes based on the order of finish. The tournament was won by the foursome of: Gary Winchester, Tommy Tompkins, Bill Lynn and Jim Rooney. Special prizes were presented to the following individuals:

- Longest Drive - Billy Goss

- Closest to the Pin - Tommy, "I thought it went in the hole", Tompkins

- A special Life Support memento, donated by HQ AMC Life Support, was presented to Marie Balla recognizing her as the "Outstanding Life Support Lady Golfer".

- The Life Support Retirees Perpetual Golf Award was presented to Bill Vincent. 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.

We had a great Reunion this year. We hope to see more of the "Life Support Family" next year. Make plans to attend and participate in the golf tournament.

Jim Rooney

FIRST CHIEFS

Since there was so much debate amongst the retirees at this year's reunion over when the Air Force established CMSgts, I'm providing some information from AFPAM 36-2241, Volume 1, Promotion Fitness Examination Study Guide. It states the following:

"1 December 1959. The US Air Force announces the first promotions to the grade of Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt). Creation of the grades of Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt) and Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt): By the late 1950's, the Air Force faced two related personnel problems: promotion stagnation and the sometimes less-than-clear status of its warrant officers. The first problem was the severe promotion stagnation in most career fields caused by the massive influx of personnel during the Korean Conflict build up (known later as the "Korean hump"). The effect on morale of this promotion stagnation was extremely negative. Secondly, the Air Force had a number of warrant officers whom it really did not know how to categorize. Should they be treated as officers or enlisted members?"

In 1958, Congress alleviated both problems by creating two new enlisted grades: SMSgt (E-8) and CMSgt (pay grade E-9). Rather than promoting senior supervisory NCOs to warrant officers, the Air Force could now promote highly qualified NCOs to SMSgt and CMSgt. Although added

responsibility did not come immediately with the new grades, Air Force increased the possibility of NCOs gaining more responsibility over the following decades."

CMSgt(s)Rich Robichaud, HQ AMC

CHILI SEZ

What is this I'm hearing about our reunions being just for Chief's and LSOs? Someone at this year's reunion mentioned this to me and also stated that he believes that this is affecting reunion attendance. Let me assure the skeptics that the reunion is for **all** current, former, and retired Life Supporters regardless of their military or civilian status. In fact, I'm hoping that sometime in the near future the Combined MAJCOM Life Support Conference and our reunion are held at the same location and within a day or so of each other. Wouldn't that be a great? One big family, one big gathering! How about it MAJCOM CEMs can we do it? Can you guys schedule a future conference in Laughlin, NV?

I want to thank the contributors to this year's hospitality room. As Tommy said, we had good food, good drinks, a nice view of the Colorado River, and a hell of a good time! The hospitality room was, and as always, the hit of the reunion. It provided us with the first opportunity for all attendees to gather and reflect on past events, tell war stories, and talk about the people that did not attend. This was all possible because of donations that were provided by **Bill Wood, Joe Lynch, Chuck Hunnefeld, H.Koch & Sons, CONAX Corporation, and Safety Equipment International (SEI)**. Thanks to all of you for helping to create an unforgettable gathering place and the memories that will forever bind the reunion attendees together.

A big thanks to all the people who contributed stamps, money for stamps and the prizes that were awarded at the reunion.

LS ADDRESS LIST

Several people have asked me to send them a copy of our address list. If you have access to the internet, the list can be found on our web page. I will however, send anyone a copy that requests it.

LS WATCH

Brian Lauffer donated a couple of neat looking watches for give away at the reunion that had the Life Support System logo on its face. Brian is taking

orders for this watch and if anyone is interested, his address is as follows:
3829 W. 185th St / Torrance, CA 90504 / Phone: 310-323-4257 E-mail: lauffer98@aol.com

REUNION ATTENDANCE

We know everyone who would like to attend the reunion cannot because of health or financial reasons. Some cannot come because of other commitments but whatever the reason we understand and look forward to seeing you whenever you can make it. If, however, the reason you will not attend is that you are bitter about something that happened during your time in the military, I beg of you to forget it, let it go! We all had a job to do when we had the uniform on and most of us did it by the book and the best way we knew how. Are you refusing to come because you did not get along with someone in the career field? Did you have a difficult time getting along with superiors or inspectors? Whatever the problem, you survived it along with everything else the USAF threw at you. I am told that one of the best things about the reunion is the mystery of "who's attending this time that I haven't seen in years?" Almost every year a new face shows up and when that happens it is pure joy to see the warm, emotional embrace of two adversaries that have not seen each other in years. I will say it again, let it go, let it go, and come join us next year.

Below is some news on one of our regular reunion attendees, **Richard Traufeld**. Richard is recovering from cancer and although he was not in the best of health this summer, he found the strength to make it to his third consecutive reunion. **Marie Balla** sent me the following note:

"Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Our Christmas is going to be sort of low key because of Richard's health. As far as we know, his cancer is still contained and has not metastasized but he still isn't feeling too good at all. His appetite is poor. He doesn't eat enough to keep a bird alive! He has lost quite a bit of weight. His normal weight is about 175 and now he is down to about 159. I plan to just fix a Cornish hen for dinner and I'll still have leftovers just as we did for Thanksgiving. Richard also sleeps too much, he always did like the bed but come on, 16 hrs is a bit much. For those of you that don't know, one of his vocal cords is paralyzed. That came from all the radiation he had. I was quite surprised when I heard what caused that because I would have thought if anything would go wrong it would have happened within 2 or 3 weeks. No, they tell us that a patient can have side effects from

radiation up to 10 years after treatment. I know Richard isn't feeling well because he doesn't golf anymore and has dropped the bowling team. Hopefully things will get better next year. As for me, I am well and still enjoying retirement. I keep myself busy with the church lending library and I still enjoy golfing and bowling."

Our prayers are with you Richard; we are hoping to see you and Marie at reunion 2000!

Below is a list of the people that traveled from all over the country to be with us at this year's reunion.

<u>LAST NAME</u>	<u>FIRST</u>	<u>SPOUSE/GUEST</u>
Abraham	Henry	Ellen
Allen	Philip	Brenda
Anderson	George	Letty
Arterbury	Roy	Wanda
Bain	Howard	Dolores
Bentley	Robert	
Bloomer		Linda
Bruno	Cesare	Camille
Burrell	Santiago	William
Burris	Robert	Virginia
Crumley		Riley Elwanda
Duran	Sam	
Duren	Robert	Barbara
Farkas	Bob	Shirley
Foss	Fred	Shirley
Gomez	Leo	Sonny
Goss	Billy	
Grimsley		Billy Harvena
Fowler		
Heitman		David Bettye
Jo		
Hollosy	Alan	
Hunnefeld	Chuck	
Jennings		Carl Ruby
Kelly	Jim	
Kinchen		Kemper B. Shirley
King	Gary	
Langston	Houston	Pauline
Lauffer	Brian	Renee
Lipscomb	Bill	Phyllis
Llewellyn	James	Christa
Lynch	Joe	
MacKenzie	Ed	Wilma
Maynard		Bruce
McElwain	Bob	
Muir	Don	Jo Ann
Nance	Jimmy	Fanny
Oost	Willard	Mary
Parham	Bill	
Provenzano	Frank	Mary

Reed	John	
Rhodes	Al	Chan
Rinke	Fred	
Robertson	Enoch	Dorothy
Robichaud	Rich	
Rooney	Jim	Susie & Jean
Sandusky	Chuck	Sandra
Schneider	Al	Georgi
Struck	Dennis	Hilda Lopez
Sutton	Gerald	Linda
Thompson	Walt	
Tompkins	Robert (Tommy)	Polly
Traufeld	Richard	Marie Balla
Vincent	Bill	Sutin
Wade	Art	
Warren	Chuck	Ann
Weir	John	Lou
Williamson	Leaster	Irene
Wilson	John	
Winchester	Gary	
Wood	Bill	

SOME FINAL WORDS ON MIKE

Mike was looking forward to briefing the reunion attendees on his work, as we all know he never made it. May he rest in peace. Contributions can be sent to the following in Mike's name:

The National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia
1001 Connecticut Avenue, Northwest, Suite 919
Washington, DC 20036-5504
(202) 223-6848

I think the following sums up our feelings about Mike:

"It was my privilege to have worked with Mike from 1976 to 1986. We worked in the SA-ALC LIFE SUPPORT BRANCH. One of our joint assignments was to brief the USAF aircrews on the need to make a timely ejection decision. Mike was recognized as an expert and authority on life support equipment performance in aircraft accidents. When he joined us in 1976 our investigation methodology left much to be desired. Under Mike's tutelage, our life support accident investigation processes were elevated to an art. I worked with many dedicated and committed life support equipment personnel, in the officer/enlisted and civilian ranks, but none have impacted the safety and well being of USAF aircrews as Mike did. Mike was a warm, kind feeling individual, humble and very unassuming. Those of us who knew him are better off for knowing him; those who never knew him are poorer for it."

*HASTA LUEGO MIGUEL MI AMIGO QUERIDO,
VAYA CON DIOS.
Richard & Lupe Duran*