



AIRCREW LIFE SUPPORT AIRCREW FLIGHT EQUIPMENT VETERANS AND RETIREES NEWSLETTER

News for the men and women who served (civilian, government or industry) in the Personal Equipment (PE), Aircrew Life Support (ALS) or Aircrew Flight Equipment (AFE) professions. The views expressed herein are that of the individual mentioned and do not represent the views of the retired, active duty, ANG, Reserves, or veteran members of the PE, ALS, or AFE career fields.

Reporters

Tommy Tompkins, P.O. Box 372, Equality IL 62934
Allen "Al" Loving, 515 Silk Tree Lane, Chesapeake VA 23320
Bob "Chili" McElwain, 12320 Roadrunner Lane, Victorville CA 92392
Dave Chitwood, 9792 Corbett Place, Manassas Park, VA 20111

Email: tombob@shawneelink.net
Email: aloving@cox.net
Email: bob.mcelwain@charter.net
Email: pantoum5@gmail.com

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Dec 2023 Edition

Looking Forward

By Dave Chitwood

Hope everyone had a very happy Thanksgiving! We had a light, but successful reunion in Virginia Beach. Steve Wyatt provides a very nice recap in this newsletter. We're looking at lessons learned, taking suggestions, and we are already hard at work planning next year's annual reunion. Details are still being hammered out, but it will be 27-29 August 2024 back in Las Vegas at the Tuscany! We're hoping to return to our robust attendance numbers. See you there!

On a somber note, just since the last newsletter, we've already lost several more of our dear members and friends. Time is relentless. Please

take a moment to reflect as you read these names.

FINAL ROLL CALL

SMSgt (Ret) Donald Elrod	Jun 2023
SSgt Mark Hess	Jul 2023
MSgt (Ret) Dale "JD" Harding	Aug 2023
CMSgt (Ret) Leaster Williamson	Aug 2023
SMSgt (Ret) Roy Arterbury	Aug 2023
MSgt (Ret) Scott Ferguson	Sep 2023
SMSgt (Ret) Brad Fielding	Oct 2023
CMSgt (Ret) Dennis K. Struck	Nov 2023
MSgt (Ret) George Anderson	Aug 2023
CMSgt (Ret) John Lucarini	Nov 2023

We offer our sincere prayers and condolences to the families of our dear departed. They are already missed.

Board Election Results

During the reunion, ballots were cast, and your newly elected board consists of:

President: John Patti
Vice President: Kevin Hill
Treasurer: Mark Jones

From The Field

Congratulations to our newest Active Duty CMSgt selects!

PULLEY, JOHN H	HAF AF/A3TH
VELAZQUEZ SANTANA, LEMUEL	48 OSS/OSL
POPE, RANDALL B	PACAF/IGI
RIOS, RYAN S	51 OSS/OSL
DOUGLAS, RYAN J	AFGSC/A3OL
QUICK, PATRINA L	19 AF/A3OA
HAYNES, CLINT A	AMC HQ/A3TL
EVANS, SEDRICK F	PACAF/A58

As per our resident historian CMSgt (Ret) Tommy Tompkins, the new Chiefs will be the 87th thru 94th AFE Chiefs, and 275th thru 283rd Chiefs in the 70 year history of the career field!

Reunion Recap

By Steve Wyatt

The 26th Annual USAF Aircrew Life Support and Flight Equipment Veterans and Retirees Reunion was held in conjunction with the 61st Annual Survival and Flight Equipment (SAFE) Symposium, 10-12 October 2023 in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Reunion center was at the Doubletree Hotel Pavilion adjacent to the Virginia Beach Conference Center. CMSgt (Ret) Steve Wyatt was the moderator for the business day's event and served as MC for the farewell banquet on Wednesday evening. For those who were unable to attend, you missed a truly enjoyable career field gathering with colleagues and friends.

Numerous individuals and industry partners assisted in event planning and provided labor and monetary support so all guests could enjoy the reunion festivities. Although only open on the first evening, the hospitality room was "staffed and

stocked" for conversation and an enjoyable ice breaker for each guest.

Before going any further, please understand our attendance this year was very light. As such, please make sure to mark your calendars now for the 27th annual reunion being planned for 27-29 August 2024 (travel 26th and 30th) at the Tuscany Suites Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Tuscany's proximity to Nellis AFB and the USAF Air Warfare Center makes it an ideal spot for golfing, outdoor activities, and of course, visiting on-base facilities and various Las Vegas attractions. Your newly elected and seated Board of Directors has already begun preparing for what is sure to be another great reunion for each of us in 2024. This year's reunion totaled around 40 attendees. We have set a community goal and challenge for at least 200 attendees at our 27th annual reunion in Las Vegas next year. We encourage your support in reaching this goal and respectfully solicit more participation from AFRC, ANG, and Active Duty members. This is your career field, and with all our friends on the various Facebook pages and ALS/AFE Website, we should be able to increase reunion attendance. Highlight your calendar today!

The 26th reunion, (*being the 70th anniversary of our career field's establishment*) opened by honoring our flag with the Pledge of Allegiance led by SMSgt (Ret) John Patti. SMSgt (Ret) Bob McElwain welcomed all attendees and provided his perspective and remarks on the importance of our Annual Career Field Reunion and gathering. Attendees were also welcomed by letter from the Mayor of Virginia Beach, the honorable Mr. Buddy Dyer and the USAF Aircrew Flight Equipment Career Field Manager, CMSgt Christopher Randel.

The first day of the reunion Tuesday, 10 October was a business type meeting. This forum allowed participating attendees to discuss any group concerns and to receive up-to-date information on current Veterans Administration and program developments affecting the 1P0X1 career field. Reunion attendees were also allowed to tour the SAFE exhibit hall to interact with vendors and industry partners displaying both lifesaving equipment and new products. We also wish to

thank CMSgt (Ret.) Al Loving for his efforts and involvement in making this happen for our group.

Reunion speakers and presenters included the Commander of VFW Post 392, Mr. Troy Wagers and Mr. Bob Dechamplain. Mr. Dechamplain is a certified VA Claims official who provided an exceptional briefing in discussing the recently approved PACT Act. The proximity of nearby Oceana Naval Air Station also allowed for base visits and self-guided tours of the installation.



Finally, rounding out the week's activities was our semi-formal farewell banquet on Wednesday evening the 11th in the Doubletree Hotel Cedar room. Special video presentations were shown by Bob McElwain during the evening meal. Bob also conducted a career field historical equipment quiz with nice gifts presented to individuals providing the correct answers. CMSgt Joseph Rust, the HQ ACC AFE MAJCOM Functional Manager from nearby Langley AFB provided our keynote and farewell address. The Chief provided a historical perspective of our career field and brought attendees up-to-date on some of the most recent developments "post-merger". The hotel and restaurant staff did a remarkable job catering our banquet needs and ensured everyone was comfortable with the smallest of details being promptly attended to. We closed our reunion by holding a missing man candle vigil and remembrance ceremony. This ceremony also reflected a change in our 2024 governing Board of Directors while emphasizing our new leadership will never forget the service and sacrifices of our departed colleagues.

The 2023 ALS/AFE Retirees Planning Committee wishes to thank everyone who attended and played a key role in organizing and executing this 70th special anniversary reunion. We look forward to another excellent event already being planned for Nellis AFB and Las Vegas area in 2024. Again,

please mark your calendars now, and plan on joining USAF friends and colleagues for our 27th reunion in 27-29 August 2024 at the Tuscany Suites & Casino.

In closing, we again thank all industry and Individual sponsors for their support and look forward to welcoming each of you to fabulous Las Vegas under a blue Nevada sky.



From the Dinosaur Den

*By Al Loving
Chief Dinosaur*

I hope this finds all in good health and ready for the upcoming Christmas Season.

The 2023 meeting of the **Order of Life Support System Dinosaurs (OLD) Club** was held during the 61st Annual SAFE Association Symposium this past October in Virginia Beach, VA. This year's meeting was well attended - 50 current and prospective members. The newest member in attendance was CMSgt (Ret) Martin Austin (Dino 318); the oldest member in attendance was Mr. Charlie Kane (Dino 158). I also want to welcome the following new members to the Order:

- 301 Joseph Lynch
- 302 Lori Basham
- 303 Jerry Reid
- 304 Bob McElwain
- 305 Randy Loving
- 306 JeanFontenot
- 307 Stephen Merriman
- 308 Joseph Notaro
- 309 Stella Norrvi
- 310 Dr. Rob Yonover
- 311 Steven Bromley
- 312 John Hampton
- 313 Stanley Desjardins
- 314 Christopher Moore
- 315 Paul Olson
- 316 Philipp Ostertag
- 317 Stephen Wyatt

Of particular note, 2023 is the 70th anniversary of the existence of the USAF's Personal Equipment (PE), Aircrew Life Support (ALS), and Aircrew Flight Equipment (AFE) profession. It was a distinct pleasure to be able to participate in the celebration festivities that were held to honor and recognize the 70th year of existence of the career field and to speak with those PE, ALS and AFE professionals, and Dinosaurs in attendance to celebrate this remarkable milestone.

I look forward to welcoming you to the next OLD meeting that will be held during the 62nd Annual SAFE Symposium in Virginia Beach, VA in 2024.

Until then, be well and enjoy your time with family and friends this holiday season

Chili Sez!

By Bob McElwain



THE OLD ADDRESS LIST: Many people have asked me if the old address list of retirees is still available. I still have it, but it was only updated occasionally. It may not be completely accurate but if you would still like to have a copy email me and I'll send it to you.

OUR REUNION: I was a little disappointed at the turnout at this year's reunion. Only 18 people registered and 5 of them were from the Virginia Beach area. Although we try to accommodate as many people as possible by spreading the reunion location around, it doesn't seem to help. What do we need to do to get you to attend the reunions?

The coronavirus pandemic has taken a toll on reunion attendance but that was two years ago! I can't guarantee anything, but we have not had a reported problem with it at either of our last two reunions. Many of us have personal or family

health issues that keep us from attending. We understand and hope that you can attend a future reunion.

Is it the cost? The biggest expense for attendees who come from out of town is the travel and hotel costs. Rooms can cost over \$400 for a three-day reunion, and that is before taxes. We always try to get the best price via group rates but a guaranteed increase in attendance may help lower that cost. Is it the location? Having the reunion in popular retirement areas such as San Antonio and Virginia Beach has not produced any significant increase in attendance and surprisingly has resulted in the opposite, a decrease in attendance. Is it the wrong time of the year? Let us know so we can make the necessary adjustments if possible. We'd like to know what you think we should do to increase attendance at our reunions. Send your comments to me or anyone of the reporters of this newsletter.

Thanks to all who made the reunion possible with donations, especially Steve Wyatt. Thank you, Steve, for all your wonderful suggestions, especially the fundraiser. We collected enough money to pay for the reunion. Until next year, Happy Holidays!

PROPOSALS FOR REUNION 2025 AND 2026:

If interested in hosting one of our reunions in your area download and complete a copy of the reunion worksheet located online at: <https://70531f.p3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Worksheet-For-A-Future-Reunion.pdf> or visit our website at www.usafalf-afe.net and look for the worksheet under the Reunion tab. Email it to bob.mcelwain@charter.net.

In Closing

By Dave Chitwood, Newsletter Editor

Just since 2020, we have listed an astounding 51 of our beloved colleagues in the *Final Roll Call*, including 10 regular attendees, some perennial favorites, and a founder of the group.

As Bob mentioned, our reunion attendance was really light this year. Perhaps many in the area

were busy with SAFE duties related to their business ventures. But as you balance your own priorities, family...school...business... we ask that you please consider placing a premium on reconnecting with some of the people you served with. For some, unfortunately, it may be the last opportunity to see their smile and swap war stories (some of which may actually be true).

Please plan on joining us 27 – 29 August 2024 (travel 26th and 30th) for our 27th annual reunion

at the Tuscany Suites & Casino in Las Vegas! Details will be provided in the May Newsletter.

Whether you served a tour or two, or made a career out of it, rest assured we want to see you! Come on out and see old friends or meet new friends for life! You will not regret it!

Be on the lookout for details of the 27th Annual USAF PE/ALS/SE/AFE Reunion being held in Las Vegas! Please visit our Group website (www.usafals-afe.net), and on social media to stay abreast of the latest.