



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 Email: tombob@shawneelink.net
Allen "Al" Loving, 38 Crestwood Drive, Newport News VA 23601 Email: aloving@cox.net
Bob "Chili" McElwain, 12320 Roadrunner Lane, Victorville CA 92392 Email: bob.mcelwain@charter.net

Visit our web site at www.usafals-afe.net

December 2016 Edition

Looking Forward

By John Patti, Group President

I would like to start off with saying "Thank You!" for your vote of confidence in selecting me as the next President of our Veterans & Retirees Group. Joining me on the newly elected Board of Directors is:

Dave Chitwood-Vice President
Bob McElwain-Secretary/Treasurer
Al Loving-Past President

I and your Board will strive to provide you with an up-to-date newsletter with what is happening throughout our career field along with pertinent news that may affect our members.

We also work hard throughout the year in the planning and execution for our annual reunion. The annual reunion would not be possible without the help and support provided by the many volunteers who step up to participate as a member of our Reunion Committee and, without question, our fantastic industry partners.

As a reminder, our 2017 reunion will be held in Newport News, VA. In the very near future, the Reunion Committee will be seeking support from the membership to help in making our next reunion another resounding success. Please volunteer if called upon as we always need help in organizing key reunion functions and events. Your assistance will be most appreciated.

Also, if you talk to fellow veterans and retirees or active, Guard or Reserve AFE troops spread the

word about our Group and ask them to attend the next reunion.

Finally, Al Loving has done a wonderful job as our first Group President and as the Editor of our newsletter. I would like to say "Thank You!" Chief for all your hard work. Also, Dave Chitwood will pick up the reigns as Editor of the newsletter. Please congratulate and thank Chief Chitwood for jumping in to the newsletter business. As I announced in the recent email message, Al is stepping back and passing the newsletter to Dave with the publication of this edition of the newsletter.

Again, thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing all of you in Newport News, VA, September 18-22, 2017, for our 22nd annual reunion. There will be more reunion details provided in the May 2017 edition of the newsletter.

From The Field

We offer hearty congratulations to each of the uniformed and civilian AFE professionals who have been selected for promotion since the last newsletter to include our newest active duty AFE SMSgt's selected for promotion to CMSgt. They are:

Matthew Filsinger (*Currently serving as a Senior NCO Academy Instructor*)
Brian Rutlege (*Currently serving as a Career Assistance Advisor*)
Jennifer Cirriciono
Juancarlos Cueto
Shawn King
Daniel Lewis

Again, congratulations one and all!

To those who will soon or may have retired from the military or civil service since the last newsletter, please accept our sincere thanks for your dedicated service to this Great Nation and the United States Air Force.

Here are a few key command or wing AFE leadership retirements that we are aware of:

CMSgt Chris Moore retired on Nov 16.
CMSgt John Rozell retires on Dec 16.
CMSgt John Fontenot retires in Dec 16.
CMSgt Dale Lawrence retires in Jan 17.

Chili Sez is Back!

By Bob McElwain



I'm happy to say that as you can see, "Chili Sez" is back. My hiatus from the newsletter was due to too many responsibilities, some of which I'm happy to say have been taken over by other members. No, I'm not taking over the newsletter, I'm just making sure that my comments are prefaced with my old logo and title. If you don't know the history of Chili Sez, I encourage you to read the "About Us" page on our website (www.usafals-afe.net).

Still Need a Backup for the Website: I'm still looking for someone with a little Word Press experience to back me up as our website webmaster. What is WordPress? WordPress is an easy to use website and blog creation tool that was used to create our website. It's not mandatory to know your way around WordPress, but you must own a computer, have basic computer experience and be online. If you are interested, please contact me at bob.mcelwain@charter.net.

Proposals for the Next Two Reunions: We are accepting proposals for reunions 2018 and 2019. If you are interested in having the reunion in your local area or elsewhere, please find a hotel to host the reunion and fill out the attached reunion work sheet with the help of hotel management. Email the completed worksheet to bob.mcelwain@charter.net **NLT 4 Sep, 2017**. Your proposal (worksheet) will be reviewed by our 2017 reunion attendees for consideration for our

next two reunions. The two proposals with the most votes will determine the location of those reunions.

How to Report a Change of Contact Information:

Members are still calling or email us (Al or myself) with their change of address, phone number or email address and it's not necessary unless they are not registered members of our website. If you are a registered member you can update your profile with the new information yourself. Here's how: Login to the website and click on "Edit My Profile" located in the upper right corner under your name. IMPORTANT: You must be logged in to be able to edit your information and you can tell if you're logged in if you see your name in the upper right corner of the site. After clicking on "Edit My Profile" make the necessary changes to your information.

If you do not own a computer or for some other reason are not registered on our site, you must call, email or write to us with your changed information.

Fill Out Your PE/ALS/AFE Assignment History:

You were supposed to complete the section on your PE, ALS or AFE assignment history when you registered on our website. If you didn't or only completed part of it, go back and complete it by logging in to the site and follow the instructions above on "How to Report a Change of Contact" information. Click on your name and then "Edit My Profile". Scroll down until you see "Assignment History".

The assignment history is that of our military veterans and civilian counterparts. The information you provide is very important to our history.

Thank You: Thank you to the Reunion Committee and to all who attended and played a key role in orchestrating the 2016 reunion. The success of the reunion could not have happened without the \$1070.00 donated towards our Vietnam Veterans Challenge, the \$1930.00 donation from individual members and sponsors, and the \$502.00 from our raffle sales.

A thank you also goes out to Bobby Clark of Wel-Fab for his donation towards our reunion. His contribution was not received in time to have his name or company's name printed on the poster recognizing all who donated funds towards our reunion.

And finally, I thank Al Loving for the outstanding job he has done as our newsletter editor. Only Tommy Tompkins, myself and Al know how the newsletter is formulated, edited, and distributed to our members. After approving the final draft, think of what it must be like to stuff two or three hundred envelopes with the newsletter, lick the envelopes and then put stamps on all of them. Don't forget you must address the envelopes and take them all to the post office. That effort has been performed with great patience and complete dedication by Al Loving since May 2010. This is in addition to his responsibilities with SAFE! His faithful, quiet and effective service will not be forgotten. Thank you, Al, for the brevity and clarity you brought to the newsletter content, and for your dedication to this organization.

Troops and Second Careers

Here's a link to a July 2016 Stars and Stripes article about former troops building second careers in military science fiction you might find enjoyable: www.stripes.com/former-troops-building-second-careers-in-military-science-fiction-1.417224.

Veterans in Blue VII - John Lukens

Through the Veterans in Blue project, veterans from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom share stories of their time in the Air Force and how it made a difference in their lives. Someone you might recall or know, MSgt (Ret) John Lukens, was one such veteran that contributed to the project. John was the 347 TFW Aircrew Life Support Superintendent at Moody AFB GA.

CMSgt (Ret) Steve Wyatt (provided the information and link) worked for John as a Buck Sergeant at MacDill in the 56th TFW 82-84.

“Colonel” Ronald Fogleman was our Wing CC with the F-16A/B's at the time.”

Here's the link to John's story and video:
<https://twitter.com/usairforce/statuses/796849937031925760>

In Search of...

Charles Treser is looking to connect with anyone that might have knowledge of the whereabouts of a SMSgt (Ret) Saul G. Valerda (SP). His last assignment was as Superintendent of the 552 AEW&C Wing Life Support Section when the Wing was at McClellan AFB, CA. Charles was the NCOIC (TSgt) there from 1970 to 1972.

If you have any leads for Charles, please email him at cgtreser@aol.com.

VA National Cemeteries Now Offering Pre-Need Eligibility Determinations

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced it now provides eligibility determinations for interment in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Through the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program, upon request, individuals can learn if they are eligible for burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery. “MyVA” is about looking at VA from the Veterans’ perspective, and then doing everything we can to make the Veteran Experience effective and seamless,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “This new program reaffirms our commitment to providing a lifetime of benefits and services for Veterans and their families.” Interested individuals may submit VA Form 40-10007, Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery, and supporting documentation, such as a DD Form 214, if readily available, to the VA National Cemetery Scheduling Office by: toll-free fax at 1-855-840-8299; email to Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov; or mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.

VA will review applications and provide written notice of its determination of eligibility. VA will save determinations and supporting documentation in an electronic information system to expedite burial arrangements at the time of need. Because laws and personal circumstances change, upon receipt of a burial request, VA will validate all pre-need determinations in accordance with the laws in effect at that time.

VA operates 135 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers’ lots in 40 states and Puerto Rico. More than 4 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA’s national cemeteries. VA also provides funding to establish, expand and maintain 105 Veterans cemeteries in 47 states and territories including tribal trust lands, Guam, and Saipan. For Veterans buried in private or other cemeteries, VA provides headstones, markers or medallions to commemorate their service. In 2016, VA honored more than 345,000 Veterans and their loved ones with memorial benefits in national, state, tribal and private cemeteries.

Eligible individuals are entitled to burial in any open VA national cemetery, opening/closing of the grave, a grave liner, perpetual care of the gravesite, and a government-furnished headstone or marker or niche cover, all at no cost to the family. Veterans are also eligible for a burial flag and may be eligible for a Presidential Memorial Certificate.

Information on VA burial benefits is available from local VA national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov>, or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 800-827-1000.

To make burial arrangements at any open VA national cemetery at the time of need, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at 800-535-1117.

Revised TRICARE Pharmacy Network Began December 1

Walgreens pharmacies join the TRICARE retail pharmacy network on Dec. 1, 2016. CVS pharmacies, including those in Target stores, will leave the network on the same day. The revised network will have more than 57,000 locations, and still ensures timely access to retail pharmacies for TRICARE beneficiaries.

Express Scripts, Inc. (ESI) manages the TRICARE retail pharmacy network under a contract with the Department of Defense. ESI reached a new network agreement with Walgreens, but not CVS.

Most pharmacy locations in the network aren't changing, including other major chains like Rite Aid and Walmart, grocery stores, and thousands of community pharmacies around the country. About 98 percent of TRICARE beneficiaries still have a network pharmacy within 5 miles of their home.

If you fill a prescription at CVS after Dec. 1, it will be a non-network pharmacy. This means you will have to pay the full cost of the medication upfront, and file a claim for partial reimbursement. Starting on Dec. 1, you can transfer your prescription to Walgreens, or any other pharmacy in the TRICARE retail pharmacy network. TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery and military pharmacies may also be lower cost choices for some beneficiaries.

The ESI website has more information on the revised network, and can help you find a new

retail pharmacy location near you, or call ESI at 855-778-1417.

Final Roll Call

We have been advised that the following members of our "family" have made their Final Roll Call:

- Lt Col (Ret) George Braue
- CMSgt (Ret) William (Bill) Wood
- CMSgt (Ret) William (Vince) Vincent
- CMSgt (Ret) Gary Winchester
- CMSgt (Ret) Jimmie Cartwright
- SMSgt (Ret) Joe Page
- SMSgt (Ret) Larry Crawford
- SMSgt (Ret) Johnnie Damron
- SMSgt (Ret) William (Bill) Lipscomb
- MSgt. (Ret) Dominic Compana
- MSgt (Ret) William Schroll II
- MSgt (Ret) Frank Birkenseher
- MSgt (Ret) LC Ford
- Former TSgt Dan Merten
- SSgt (Ret) Bill Parham

We offer our sincerest condolences to the family and friends of our dearly departed.

In Closing

By Al Loving, Past President and Newsletter Editor

Once again let me say thank you for the honor to serve as the first elected president of the USAF ALS/AFE Veterans and Retirees Group and your newsletter editor for the last several years.

Finally, plan now to attend the next reunion and please...**spread the word!** I'll see you in Virginia in September 2017!

Mark your calendars now for the 22nd Annual USAF PE/ALS/SE/AFE Reunion being held September 18-22, 2017, at the Marriott Newport News at City Center, in Newport News, Virginia. September 18 and 22 are the travel day. The 2017 reunion details will be announced in the May 2017 edition of the Aircrew Life Support and Aircrew Flight Equipment Veterans and Retirees Newsletter, on the Group website (www.usafals-afe.net), and on social media.

WE WISH ALL A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!