



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.

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Visit our website at www.usafals-afe.net

Dec 2018 Edition

Looking Forward

By Dave Chitwood, Group Vice President

This has been quite the eventful year. It's been a year filled with devastating loss due to hurricanes and wildfires. It's been a year where we lost several members of our PE/ALS/AFE family – retired, separated and even active duty.

Such losses are a reminder that life is precious and fleeting. Rekindling and nurturing old friendships is more important than ever. We have members who retired before many of us were born. Attending our reunions keeps their stories and memories alive and helps us understand how we got where we are. Not to mention they're highly entertaining!

If you're not a regular reunion attendee, I ask that you consider becoming one – and bring a fellow veteran/retiree with you! We welcome new members, new ideas, and suggestions to make each reunion fun for all.

Our 2018 reunion was a resounding success, and we're already working hard, planning next year's annual reunion. Hotel reservation information is included in this newsletter to help get you started with your planning. Additional registration and event details will be outlined in the May newsletter. Please spread the word and encourage fellow veterans, retirees, Active, Guard, or Reserve to join us. All are welcome!

Additionally, If you haven't already, please visit <http://usafals-afe.net/> and register to become a member of the USAF Personal Equipment/Aircrew Life Support/Aircrew Flight Equipment website. It is THE place to find the latest information related to the profession, annual reunions, past and present newsletters, historical data, and much, much more!

From The Field

We start off by offering hearty congratulations to the new active duty AFE CMSgt selectees:

SMSgt Juston Demke
SMSgt Justus Hanks
SMSgt Cynthia Schmitz
SMSgt Stephanie Walker

We wish you the best as you continue to lead the career field!

And 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.

A Note From Robert Chad Le Beau



Attached is a photo of TSgt. Billy J. Hood, Personal Equipment Shop Chief, 375th Air Base Wing, Scott AFB, Illinois. They flew T-33's and had the old P-4B Flight helmets with the MS22001 Oxygen Masks. The photo was taken

in 1960. Maybe someone will remember him? He started it all for me and if it wasn't for him there would be no ALSET Tester in AFE today.

TSgt Hood was my first contact with USAF PE when I attended a 1960-Armed Forces Day Scott AFB Air Show at age 14. The PE Shop had a big display of survival equipment on a board and a T-33 ejection seat you could sit in. He gave my father and I a guided tour of the PE shop after the Air Show. I was hooked on flight equipment after that and today I have a vast collection of all eras flying helmets and oxygen masks and even a T-33 ejection seat.

The Air Show was also impressive with parachutist and stunt flyers, it was my first and I went on to make 2,397 parachute jumps and become an Air Show performing stuntman for 3 years with a Husband & Wife Wing Riding Team (the Flying Pierces) after my active duty AF years.

I performed the American Flag parachute Jump to open the Air Shows and the car-to-plane transfer and a cut-away parachute at the end of the Air Show. I joined the Air Force in 1966 with 200 parachute jumps and they made me a Medic for 4 years???

Years Later (1979) I joined the Missouri Air Guard (St. Louis) and entered into the parachute shop as a rigger, later transferring over to the Life Support Shop and attending USAF Life Support School at Chanute AFB in 1990. We flew F-4 & F-15's at the time. It was during this time I knew we need better test equipment than all the old stuff we were using. It took a few more years to develop the ALSET Tester but I am proud that today it has made life in the career field easier for all my fellow AFE brothers and sisters.

So that explains a how I have that photo I took of TSgt Bill J. Hood back in 1960.

Best,
Robert Chad Le Beau
A.A.I.

Chief's Corner - CMSgt Ken Boteler

Greetings to all that may read this! I have come to the end of my career in the world's greatest Air Force. I was very fortunate to have been able to serve an amazing 30 years. I entered the Air Force on 1 December 1988, so my official retirement date will be 1 December 2018.

I was extremely lucky to have a very diverse career in the Air Force. I started off in the Supply career field; and did pick-up and delivery, receiving and local purchase receiving. This experience came in handy when I crossed trained into then Life Support.

My first duty station as a Life Supporter was Pope AFB, NC. I spent 3 years then decided that I wanted to try and fix the Air Force and the quality of enlistees; so I volunteered and was selected to become a recruiter.

I recruited for about 3 years in Waukegan Illinois, then went on to be a job counselor at the Des Plaines MEPS for about 1 ½ years. Once I completed this tour I returned to Life Support and found myself in Columbus MS. From there I was fortunate to get a call from Chief Mendez asking me if I would like to go to the school house, which I gladly accepted and packed my bags for Sheppard AFB to become an instructor.

Going to Sheppard was truly a challenge and a rewarding experience to be able to instruct and be involved in the development of the career field. So, as you can see, I was not a typical born and raised Life Supporter.

While I was at Sheppard, I was tasked along with Mr. Everett, and Mrs. Redfern to attend the Life Support and Survival Equipment merger meetings at Langley. What an event this turned out to be. Initially, we were giving free reins to come up with a plan for a newly merged technical school to produce what would be our newest AFSC, 1P0X1 Aircrew Flight Equipment.

I can tell you this; the first draft we came up with was a very robust and longer technical school, with different tracks. One for heavies, fighters,

helos, bombers, and trainers. Unfortunately, this drove too large of a manpower bill for instructors and the overall cost. So, it was struck down and we had to go back to the drawing board and come up with something within budgetary constraints. I can honestly say that I was not a fan of what we had to present, and not merging the school house at the beginning of the merger. I said it then and I will say it now.....this caused a huge training burden on the field and we truly were not producing a 1P0X1. We felt the effects of this for many years.

As I left the school house and headed to Minot AFB, ND we faced a true identity crisis. We were getting folks out to the bases as 1P0X1A and 1P0X1B. Truly at that point we were still Life Support and Survival Equipment. We had not changed the culture at the school house, so our brand new AFE's felt that they were still Life Support or Survival equipment since we were still technically running two separate school houses.

That was then. Now fast forward to today...we have been merged for around 11 years now. In that time frame, I got to run wings at Minot, Osan, Little Rock, and Kadena as an AFE Superintendent. I spent my last six years as an Operations Group Superintendent at Kadena and Ellsworth.

What I have experienced and observed in that time frame is two separate career fields work extremely hard to truly merge. We may have not gotten everything right, but what I can say is that we have come a long way since that first year as a merged career field.

What I have witnessed is a group of truly dedicated Airman that call themselves AFE! From our lowest ranking Airmen to our Career Field Manager(s), we have some of the hardest working, dedicated, and innovative Airman that you could ever ask for. Our Superintendents have a tough job in trying to run an AFE program, while trying to balance the needs of a Squadron and Group Commander for bodies. With that being said, I would like to give my two cents on where I think AFE should go from here.

I believe in order for us to continue to evolve as a career field, we need to invest in a few areas. The first one is our training. Currently, it seems like our training is not very standardized. I believe we should look towards creating and maintaining virtual reality training. If this platform is utilized correctly, AFE would have a standardized training platform, plus it falls in line with our Generation X'ers and Generation Z's.

The second area that I believe we need to invest in and bring back is our 7-level training. I understand that for quite some time this training was no more than a two-week drinking opportunity. However, if properly built and utilized; I believe that we could help our new SSgt take on and become more successful in their new rolls as NCOs, and NCOICS.

Well, with that being said; I believe that I have rambled on long enough. I truly believe that AFE has a great future ahead of it. There will be challenges, no doubt about it. But what I saw as I was ending my tour, was truly a bunch of hard charging individuals that will take all of those challenges head-on and will ensure that AFE succeeds in what our most important job is...ENSURING THE SAFETY OF OUR AIRCREW.

Ken Boteler, CMSgt (Retired)

Reunion Recap By CMSgt (Ret) Steve Wyatt

Before recapping our 2018 Career Field Reunion, I'd like to reiterate that the USAF Personal Equipment, Aircrew Life Support, Survival Equipment, and Aircrew Flight Equipment (PE/ALS/SE/AFE) Veterans and Retirees Group is open **to all** Active Duty, ANG and AF Reserve members regardless of rank both past and present. I would strongly encourage you to attend our next reunion being planned for Las Vegas Nevada in close proximity to Nellis AFB. Please join us next year to see what you've been missing!

The 23rd Annual PE/ALS/SE/AFE Retirees and Veterans Reunion was held 11-13 September 2018 in Biloxi, Mississippi. Reunion center was at

the Imperial Palace Hotel and Casino located on the Back Bay of Biloxi. SMSgt (Ret) John Patti, our Group President was the moderator for the business day event and CMSgt (Ret) Dave Chitwood our Group VP, Master of Ceremonies for the spouse's tribute during the farewell banquet on Thursday evening.

For those of you who were unable to attend, you missed a truly *spectacular* AFE career field get-together with colleagues and friends. Ask anyone who attended this year, and you'll understand what we mean.

Numerous individuals and companies assisted in event planning and pulled out all stops to ensure each attendee was properly registered, comfortable and cared for so they could enjoy the reunion festivities. Industry Partner's supported hospitality room needs each night to ensure snacks and beverages were available for every guest. Many individuals and AFE corporate members provided generous financial support to off-set high costs in the Gulf Coast area, covering everything from tour and transportation to picnic needs.

This year's reunion totaled around 90 attendees. We have set an AFE community goal and challenge to double that figure at our 24th annual reunion in Las Vegas next year. Please come and be a part of it! We encourage your support in attaining this goal and always encourage more participation from AFRC, ANG and Active Duty members. This is your career field, and with over 2500 friends on our various Facebook pages, we should certainly be able to increase reunion attendance. Highlight your calendar today!

The 23rd reunion opened with the Posting of the Colors by the Biloxi Senior High School AF JROTC Honor Guard and the playing of our National Anthem. After the Pledge of Allegiance, CMSgt (Ret) Ray Blanchette then followed with the opening invocation. SMSgt (Ret) John Patti welcomed all attendees and provided his perspective and remarks on the importance of the Aircrew Flight Equipment Career Field.

Attendees were also welcomed by letter from the HQ AFRC Director of Operations, Major General Kenneth Lewis, and the Mayor of Biloxi, the Honorable Andrew "FoFo" Gilich. It felt as if we had a key to the city.

For the most part, the opening day of the reunion Tuesday, 11 September was a business meeting. Our group first paused for a moment of silence at 8:46 AM to pay respects to everyone killed on this date 17 years ago.

Day one also allowed for individual and family attendee introductions. Our membership was also provided with up-to-date information on the latest program developments and equipment issues currently affecting the AFE Career Field.

Speakers and presenters included Lt Colonel John Fox, 403rd AW/53rd WRS, CMSgt John McEnaney the USAF Career Field Functional Manager from the Pentagon who provided an exceptional "State of the Career Field" briefing. Many other enlightening presentations concerning the local area, Armed Forces Retirement Home and USAF Retirees Activity Office mission were provided by guest speakers.

The Imperial Palace Management Staff provided excellent service to us each morning and evening with food and beverage service. Especially noteworthy was the support provided during the nightly hospitality suite for all attendees.

Rounding out the week's activities were a trip to Keesler AFB for a 53rd WRS "Hurricane Hunter" tour, AFE Shop visit with the 403rd AW/OSL and tours of the NASA Infinity Science Center and Armed Forces Retirement Facilities in Gulfport, Mississippi.

Our annual picnic was hosted by SMSgt Vidall Miller and the "Outstanding" AFE'rs from the 403rd AW on Wednesday afternoon at the Base Marina and park. We concluded the reunion with a semi-formal farewell banquet on Thursday evening the 13th of September in the hotel ballroom. SMSgt's (Ret) John Patti and Bob McElwain orchestrated the entire banquet.

CMSgt (Ret) Dave Chitwood MC'd the spouse's tribute with special video presentations shown by Bob McElwain. Colonel Robert Stanton the Vice Commander of the 403rd AW graciously accepted our invitation to join us and provided the keynote/farewell address.

Colonel Stanton relayed how much our Career Field meant to him personally as a mobility aviator and commander. An engraved Pen and Pencil set was presented to the Colonel by our group President as a token of our appreciation and 2018 reunion memento.



Left to right – Dave Chitwood, Col Stanton, John Patti

Finally, the hotel and restaurant staff did a remarkable job with catering our banquet and ensured even the smallest of details was attended to. The food and desserts were amazing.

The 2018 PE/ALS/SE/AFE Retirees Planning Committee wishes to thank everyone who attended and played a key role in planning the 2018 reunion. Please visit our website at www.usafals-afe.net to see the photographs taken during this and previous reunions. We sincerely look forward to another excellent event currently being planned in Las Vegas.

In closing, we look forward to seeing each of you in 2019 under a blue Nevada sky!

Chili Sez!

By Bob McElwain



2019 USAF Personal Equipment/Aircrew Life Support/Survival and Flight Equipment (USAF PE/ALS/SE/AFE) Reunion

Greetings everybody! I'm happy to report that the 24th Annual USAF PE/SE/ALS/AFE Reunion will be held 16 – 19 September at the Orleans Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, NV. Monday, 16 Sept and Friday, 20 Sept are travel days so start making plans to attend now. For those of you who would like to arrive a day early (Sunday, 15 Sept), you will get the discounted rate as long as you indicate you are coming in for the reunion. All veterans, retired, active duty, Guard, Reserve, and civilian personnel who are working or worked in the USAF Personal or Survival Equipment career fields, Aircrew Life Support or Flight Equipment career fields, or members of other branches of the US military in related professions and their guests are invited to attend.

HOTEL RESERVATION: Hotel Rates: \$52.00 plus tax per night Sunday, 15 September through Thursday, 19 September single or double occupancy. The hotel will waive the \$17.99 resort fee per night for the group. Early reservation at the hotel is encouraged. You can either go on-line to www.OrleansCasino.com/groups and use group code: **A9USC09** or call into Hotel Reservations at **800-675-3267!** To avoid long hold times, we recommend making your reservations on-line. Reservations must be made on or before **17 August 2019** to ensure availability and group rate. **Group rate will not apply after the cutoff date.**

Any rooms requiring triple or quad occupancy will be surcharged an additional \$20.00 per guest, per room, per night. (Children age fourteen and under, in the same room with parents in existing bedding, are free.) Room rates are subject to Clark County room tax, which is currently thirteen percent (13%) - subject to change. Additional person in the room over two (2) will be at twenty-dollars (\$20.00) per person, per night, plus room tax. Children twelve (12) and under may share the same room with parents at no additional charge.

There will be a \$6.00 plus tax daily charge for in-room Wi-Fi. Guests requesting Wi-Fi connectivity are to notify the front desk that they would like to pay for this service upon arrival.

Check out our next newsletter (May 2019) for details on how to sign up for the reunion.

Proposals for the Next Two Reunions

We are accepting proposals for reunions 2020 and 2021. 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 worksheet with the help of hotel management. Email the completed worksheet to bob.mcelwain@charter.net **NLT 1 August 2019**. Your proposal (worksheet) will be reviewed by our 2019 reunion attendees for consideration for our next two reunions. The two proposals with the most votes will determine the location of those reunions. The selected locations will be announced at our 2019 reunion.

Call for Nominations

It is also time to elect a new USAF ALS/AFE Veterans and Retirees Group Board of Directors. The election will be held at this year's reunion in Las Vegas.

This is your chance to help lead the group and stimulate and maintain the camaraderie and brotherhood within the Aircrew Life Support

(ALS) and Aircrew Flight Equipment (AFE) community.

We are seeking eligible candidates (members who attend or pledge to attend our annual reunions on a regular basis) for election to the offices of President, Vice President, and Secretary. A brief description of the duties for each of these elected Board positions are as follows:

President: The President shall be the Executive Officer of the Group and shall preside at all meetings.

Vice President: The Vice President will familiarize himself with the activities and duties of the President. The Vice President will officiate during periods of the President's absence or incapacity.

Secretary: The Secretary will record the minutes of the annual meeting and assist the board members as directed.

Nominations for office and Members who have interest in an elected office are to contact John Patti as soon as possible but NLT 1 August 2019 at Phone: (864) 245-0715 Email: johnpatti7@gmail.com.

The Aftermath of Hurricane Michael and the California Fires

The fire that began in Northern California became the country's deadliest in over a century. The Camp Fire, as it is now called nearly destroyed the town of Paradise, CA and has resulted in more than 8,000 homes lost, the death of at least 85 people with hundreds still missing and unaccounted for. That fire has finally been contained after burning for more than 2 weeks.

The Southern California fires killed 3 people and destroyed over 1600 buildings, mostly homes in the areas of Malibu and unincorporated areas of LA County. This fire was fully contained by Nov 21st.

I don't know of anyone in our profession that was affected by these fires, but the results of the hurricane in the southeastern part of the country is different.

That storm tore through Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and finally southeastern Virginia was both devastating and remarkable.

When it was over, Tyndall AFB was in ruins. There were no reported injuries, in part because nearly all personnel had been ordered to leave in advance of the hurricane's landfall.

Helicopter footage of the base showing hangars that had easily survived past storms was riddled with gaping holes and many of the buildings were "a complete loss." The marina, its structures, and docks were also destroyed.

All base houses sustained severe or significant roof and siding damage. Some dorms at Tyndall fared well, but others sustained severe damage and stood open to the sky.

The eye of the storm cut directly over the base. Splintered or bent trees and stormproof roofs only a few months old were peeled like old paint and were scraped away. An F-15 on display at the base entrance was ripped from its foundation and pitched onto its back amid twisted flagpoles and uprooted trees.

According to an article that I read, "The destruction of an air force base can only be matched in scope by the pounding that Hurricane Andrew gave Homestead Air Force Base, just south of Miami, in 1992. That Category 5 storm, with winds estimated at 150 m.p.h., smashed hangars and left battered fighter jets and mammoth cargo planes in pieces on the runway. Nearly all of the surviving planes and personnel were reassigned to other bases.

Two years later, it reopened as a smaller, Air Force Reserve base". The article also stated that after sustaining catastrophic damage many have expressed concern that Tyndall Air Force Base will go the way of Homestead. But "Tyndall

will be rebuilt, and it will be an example of a modern U.S. Air Force base”.

As of early December several Tyndall Air Force Base services have returned to operation nearly 50 days after Hurricane Michael walloped the base.

Roughly 3,500 airmen are now stationed on Tyndall, while 575 are currently assigned on temporary duty there.

Some of the permanent-party airmen have been given hardened lodging, and some of them are residing in Tent City, along with TDY personnel.

If all this devastation happened on Tyndall AFB, imagine what the town of Panama City must have gone through.

When the storm was over, I posted the following on Facebook: “Now that the storm is over, I've been worried about my friends in the Florida Panhandle area. Anybody know if Leaster and Irene Williamson, Wil and Mary Oost, Barbara Duren and others are okay?” Below is the answer Deborah Crumley posted.

“There are some things you wish you had not seen. We are in the Panama City area, staying at Riley Maze Crumley's sisters in Panama City Beach. We did find that Will and Mary Oost are safe, although they did sustain damage. In fact, although we knew where they lived, we had a terrible time finding it. We went to Fam Camp, it's not there, we decided against going on base. I still cannot wrap my head around it all. What you have seen online or on TV does not do it justice. Please remember everyone in your prayers. But let's not forget the rest of our nation that has suffered great loss. I tagged everyone I know so please pass this info on to other Air Crew Life Support members.”

I was relieved when I read that, but I'm still concerned about the other friends in that area that I've heard nothing about.

Enjoy the holidays and take care of yourselves,
Chili

Final Roll Call

We have been advised that the following members of our “family” have made their final roll call:

- SMSgt (Ret) Johnny W. Vaughn
- TSgt (Ret) Frigaard
- MSgt (Ret) Ron Lorusso
- CMSgt (Ret) Jack Parkhurst
- Ellen Abraham
- Eric Clausen
- MSgt (Ret) Bill Sparman
- Col (Ret) Donald Muir
- MSgt (Ret) Dennis Meadows
- SMSgt Mike Mumford
- SSgt Shane Appleton
- MSgt (Ret) Errol Moss
- CMSgt (Ret) Brian W. Seth
- TSgt (Ret) Paul Stuhltrager, Jr

This has been a particularly difficult year as we lost several dear members including two still active duty. We offer our sincerest condolences to the family and friends of our dearly departed.

Open Season Dental & Vision Plans

In 2019, dental and vision insurance plans for retirees and their families changed to the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). The first opportunity to enroll in a plan is during the Federal Benefits Open Season. This started on Nov. 12 and ends Dec. 10. If you want FEDVIP dental coverage in 2019, you must make a plan choice and enroll during the Federal Benefits Open Season. So, if you haven't already signed up – get on it!

Paper vs Electronic Newsletter

Our newsletter is published twice a year and is posted to our website. A copy of the newsletter and an announcement regarding its online availability is emailed to registered members and mailed to those who do not have an email address on file with us. If you're receiving the newsletter via postal mail and have an email address, please

let us know. This will help us save on the cost of printing and mailing you a copy of the newsletter.

In Closing

By John Patti, Group President

As you see in this newsletter there is a recap of this year's reunion and a look at what's ahead for next year. I want to thank all the folks on our reunion committee for the articles and recap they gave us of this year's activities, and the hard work in making this year's reunion a success.

Most importantly I wanted to thank all of you who attended this year's reunion and participated in the events, I thought they were all great and educational. I would encourage all of you to attend next year's reunion and invite other life supporters to the event.

As I mentioned in our meeting, we are all getting up there in age and we need to get some enthusiastic folks to help up out, and to run for the positions of leadership within our group. We all want to see our group continue to grow.

I would like to wish all of you and your families a Very Blessed Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

I truly want to say it is an honor serving as your President and look forward to seeing all of you at next year's reunion in Las Vegas.

John Patti
President

Mark your calendars now for the 24th Annual USAF PE/ALS/SE/AFE Reunion being held at the Orleans Hotel and Casino for in September 2019. As usual, travel days are Monday (the 16th) and Friday (the 20th). Be sure to visit our Group website (www.usafals-afe.net), and on social media.

PROPOSAL FOR USAF PE/SE/ALS/AFE REUNIONS 2020 & 2021

Reunion would arrive Monday and depart Friday during a week in September
(Other months are up for consideration)

1. NAME OF HOTEL/CASINO: _____
2. ADDRESS OF HOTEL/CASINO: _____
3. COST OF LODGING FOR 25- 45 ROOMS: _____
DBL OCC: _____
ONE SUITE: _____
4. IS COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST INCLUDED? _____
5. IS COMPLEMENTARY INTERNET INCLUDED? _____
6. IS FREE PARKING AVAILABLE? _____
7. IS COMPLIMENTARY AIRPORT SHUTTLE AVAILABLE? _____
8. ARE COMPLIMENTRY ROOMS OFFERED? _____
9. IS COMPLIMENTARY BANQUET SPACE OFFERED? _____
10. DOES THE HOTEL OFFER DISCOUNTED BANQUET MENUS? _____
11. COST OF HOSPITALITY ROOM PER NIGHT (MON/TUE/WED) FOR 50-75 PEOPLE OR IS IT COMPLEMENTARY?

12. COST FOR MEETINGT SPACE (50- 75 PEOPLE) OR IS IT COMPLEMENTARY? _____
13. ARE WE ALLOWED TO BRING OUR OWN FOOD/DRINKS INTO THE HOSPITALITY ROOM? _____
14. NAME OF THE CONTACT AT THE HOTEL FOR ADDITIONAL INFO: _____
15. PHONE AND E-MAIL OF HOTEL CONTACT: _____
16. NAME OF THE PE/SE/ALS/AFE MEMBER SUBMITTING PROPOSAL: _____
17. PE/SE/ALS/AFE MEMBER'S PHONE AND E-MAIL: _____

USE THE REVERSE SIDE TO EXPAND ON ANY ITEM NUMBER ABOVE OR FOR ANY REMARKS/COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE