

The Life Support Newsletter

Special Chief John Shields Memorial Issue

Dec 97 Edition Tommy Tompkins , Reporter Bob McElwain, Ed. \$.15

This issue is dedicated in the memory of **Chief Master Sergeant John Shields** who passed away the morning of 26 October 1997.

We begin with a letter from **Anita Shields**.

Dear Friends, I cannot begin to thank you for your wonderful support and loving concern shown to myself and our children during John's illness and death. Your phone calls and e-mail messages over the past two years gave him strength and courage when he was frightened and helped him keep his sense of humor when days were rough. He was a soldier in the truest sense, always working the issues and manipulating the system anyway that he could to get the job done and never afraid to be out in the front leading the pack. He was a fun and loving husband and kept me laughing all these years, and as he jokingly said so many times his children turned out grand in spite of him. He was so proud of them and they are a tribute to his integrity and honesty as they have the same traits. We owe a special tribute to **Chief Tim Morrow** who came to our house as a guest and wound up as family, guiding and holding us as a brother would have, taking charge and easing the way through a very hard week. To each of you we extend our gratitude and appreciation. The Life Support Community is truly a family and I know that John will live on in your memories. **Anita Shields**

And John's son James adds: "From his son, I am very pleased to have been his son and a part of his military family as well and I am grateful for all the support given us."

Tommy Tompkins reports the following:

The memorial service and Funeral led by **Chief Timmy Morrow** was exceptional. Every thing went smooth, no bumps, very professionally conducted. The dinner Thursday night with John's two boys and son-in-law was a stroke of genius by Timmy. They were somewhat apprehensive according to Anita, but after hearing many stories from all the "old timers" they were totally convinced of our love of, and respect for their father/father-in-law. We all stayed and talked until they threw us out of the restaurant by closing up. The memorial service the next morning was full with extra folks in the back, family, friends, and John's fellow employees from Conax. Tim spoke as did both of John's boys as well as Larry Thomas and Rick Stewart. The funeral service was conducted with full military honors. The Honor Guard from Mac Dill AFB was sharp and

well trained. Timmy again conducted and **Chief Al Loving** presented the Burial Flag to Anita and family. The final salute was crisp and timed perfectly. The bugle rendition of Taps was moving to all.

Life Support Family attendees as I remember them:

Timmy Morrow, Jim Rooney, Ellie Hanley,

John Damron, Al Loving, Jim Cooper, Ray Blanchett, Bill Wood, John and Lou Weir

Hank Counts, John Wesson, John Fair,

Rick Stewart, Jim Brookhuser,

John Brislan, and Tommy Tompkin

From the desk of Bob McElwain

Lost and Found:

John would have been very happy to know that we have found some more Life Supporters. The following retired Life Support personnel have been located and are now on distribution for this newsletter:

Billy Grimsley/5147 Maria Dr/Panama City, Fl 32404/904-785-0783

Dan Garcia/7223 Timber Creek/San Antonio, Tx/78227/210-610-1540

Lawrence Erdmann/4188 N. Gregorio Circle

Tucson, AZ 85705

William Simon/5216 West Lane/McHenry, IL 60050/815-344-8119

Lew Smith/1134 Linn Lane/Las Vegas, NV 89110/702-452-0047

Brad Fielding/PSC 61 Box 5293/APO AE 9642

Charles Loden/11601 Golden Gates Ave NE

Albuquerque, NM 87111/505-299-3723

Williard Oost found Billy Grimsley. Lawrence Erdmann found us via the reunion announcement in the Air Force Times. He wrote me requesting information on the reunion and

indicated that he was in Life Support at the 49 FIS at Griffiss AFB from 1961 – 1965. **Frank Provenzano** found **Lew Smith** (former T-Bird Life Support Team member and 57 FWW Superintendent) who is employed as Chief of Security at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

William Simon also responded to our ad in the AF Times. The following is part of what he wrote. "I originally enlisted in June of 1955. My first duty station was with the 62nd and 63rd FIS at O'Hare Int'l Arpt. I was there from Feb 56 to Oct 57, at which time I was assigned to the 323rd FIS at Harmon AFB, Newfoundland. In March of '61 I was stationed at Lockbourne AFB with the 87th FIS. In November I was assigned to the 4756th ABGp, Tyndall AFB. I stayed there until Oct '63 when I went to Bermuda. In September of '66 I was assigned to the 49th Instructor Sqdn until Dec '69 when I joined the 531st TFS, and later the 22nd TASS at Bien Hoa AB, RVN. In Dec 1970 I came back to the states and was stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB. While I was there I went between the base Life Support section and the SAC side. In August I left the Life Support field and cross-trained into Personnel. I retired on 1 Aug '77 at Malmstrom AFB. My last two years were spent as Missile Site Manager."

Randy Loving e-mailed me about Brad. He wrote: "Talk about a blast from the past. I just had **Brad Fielding** roll into my office. He is a retired MSgt that ran HQ PACAF for awhile about 17 years ago. He spent most of his career at Torrejon. He won't be able to make the reunion, but asked me to pass his hellos back to everyone. He lives near Madrid, Spain."

Ron Ziegler discovered the last lost and found. Ron said he was mailing a package one morning and struck up a conversation with an old fellow waiting for the shop to open. After awhile and much talk about overseas, he let it drop that he used to check ejection seats and survival kits in F-102's. Ron said he asked him if he was in Life Support and he said yes! His name is **Chuck Loden** and he stated that among other places he was stationed in the Philippines, Nam, Selfridge, and retired from Payne Field where he worked with **Don Burdette**.

REUNION RECAP

Nothing but good news to report from the reunion. To begin we had a total of 25 new attendees and their guest. They were:

Jim and Elaine Bainter

Bob and Nancy Biggs

Skip Clawson, Jim Demay,

Samuel Duran, Allan Homstead,

Lawrence and Faye Erdman,

Fred and Shirley Foss,

Joe and Margie Gondek,

Leaster and David Hosford,

Nancy Lemons, Robert Jungers,

Richard and Ann Jordan,

Brian Lauffer, Randy Loving,

Ken and Pearl Marks,

John and Vicki-Lynne Reed,

Enoch Robertson, Lew Smith,

Charles and Sandra Sandusky

Bill and Mary Skinner

Thomas Thompson, Quinn Wester,

Richard Traufeld and Marie Balla

Other attendees were as follows:

Cesare Bruno and Brenda Camille,

Sandy and William Burrell,

Robert, Virginia, and Kelly Burris

Cal Crochet, Leo Gomez,

Riley and Elwanda Crumley,

Joe and Margie Gondek,

Dave and Betty-Jo Heitman,

Tim and Sharron Howard

Kemper and Shirley Kinchen

James Llewellyn and Chris Barton

William Lynn and Mary Surdyka

Ed and Wilma Mackenzie,

Bruce Maynard and Jan Stroud,

Bob McElwain, Don Muir,

Russ and Robin Newman,

Williard and Mary Oost,

Frank and Mary Provenzano,

Mike and Jeanette Rossmiller,

Al and Georgi Schneider,

Jimmy Shaw, Art Wade,

Chuck and Ann Warren,

John and Lou Weir,

Leaster and Irene Williamson,

Bill Wood, and Ron Ziegler

The reunion was once again a big success, however, had John been there that would have made it even better. Also missed were the folks who did not (or could not) show up from last year. We missed you and want you back next year! The people who did attend voted to have another reunion next year (in the same place, and about the same time), so **KB** committed us to do it again next year. For those of you who have not attended one of our reunions we would like to know how you feel about what you've read or heard about the reunions. Attached is a survey that we would like everyone to fill out and return to us. Ideas from you is what we need if we are going to make changes to what is all ready considered by those who have attended, a successful event.

Highlights of the reunion include:

- The issuance of a commemorative 1st Life Support Reunion Cap to all attendance returnees.
- Briefings on the present state of Life Support in the two MAJCOMs that supported us: HQ PACAF by **SMS Loving**, and HQ AFMC by **SMS Jordan**.

- Special briefing by **TSgt Thompson**, HQ PACAF on the effort our Country is making (and Life Support's part) regarding full accounting of aircraft wreckage analysis in South-East Asia.
- Life Support equipment demos and briefings by **Skip Clawson** and **Russ Newman** of Gentex Corporation.
- The reading of a congratulatory letter to all attendees from **Lt Col Bob Lee**, Life Support Systems Officer at the USAF Safety Center.
- The collection of some historical Life Support items/information from Skip Clawson and **Richard Traufeld** that I will expand on in the next newsletter. Note: Keep your subscription to the newsletter current, you will not want to miss out on what I have collected so far.
- Leo Gomez volunteering to pay all expenses to the next reunion for some deserving individual. *I think Leo had a little too much to drink when he made this offer, but we're thinking about holding him to it (smile).*

Thank you is again extended to everyone who supported the reunion. That goes for the attendees, the contributors to a fantastic hospitality room, **Robin Newman** for setting up the hospitality room, and to all who donated gifts and prizes. Thank you **Col Muir** for hosting. Thank you **HQs PACAF** and **AFMC Life Support** for not forgetting the ones who came before you. And last but not least, a special thanks to **Chief Jim Llewellyn** for another outstanding meal at the picnic.

The 1997 Life Support Reunion is over, now let's all get together at next year's reunion which will be 21 - 24 Sep 98. We're a family and we need to keep in touch. The next newsletter will include info on planned events, free transportation from Las Vegas, etc. By the way, do you have any news that may be of interest to the Life Support family? If so, drop Tommy or me a line.

STAMPS- STAMPS - STAMPS

Thanks to all of you who have donated stamps (*we know who you are*). We are in need of stamps again. You can help by sending whatever you can to Tommy. Tommy's address is:

Robert H. Tompkins 141 West Jackson St Equality IL 62934-0372 (618-276-4808))

If you have a computer and have not informed us that you also have an e-mail address, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft Excel then please let *me* know via the survey. We would like to e-mail this letter to you to save on postage.

Some final words on Chief John Shields:

KB would like to add that **Chief Ray Struble** has suggested that a bust be made in honor of John and displayed at the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB. That's an excellent idea, but we also think one should be made and displayed somewhere at Kelly AFB. The bust(s) would be

used to identify individuals who contribute the most to Life Support during a given time frame. For example, the names of the winners of the annual USAF Life Support Awards could be engraved on the bust. Of course this is going to cost money and will require donations. Ray is opened for suggestions on what the bust should look like but he thinks the MAJCOMs should decide. If you have any suggestions or if you are interested in contributing to this worthwhile cause please drop him a line or give him a call. Ray's address is:

Route 3; Box 51/ Ada, OK 74820 / Phone 405-436-5697

I'd like to close by repeating part of my reply to Tim Morrow's e-mail regarding John's death. My reply read as follows: "It was a real struggle for me to read about the passing of Chief John Shields. Although I knew the end was near, it was very painful to read that he is gone. Back in early 1980 he started calling me "Chili-Mac". A name I initially did not like and I told him so. But, John was persistent and continued to call me that until before long everyone was calling me Chili. In return, and because of his way with words, I started calling him "Senator Shields". I had never known anyone who could give you a bad PCS assignment and then make you feel good about it. I watched him do that several times from across the room at HQ TAC. Together he and I started the first TAC Life Support Newsletter, "TAC SEZ". He wanted to call it "Chili Sez". I'm sorry I will not be able to attend the memorial service, so please, salute the Chief for me and thank him for a name I will always be proud of. A name given to me by my mentor, my friend John shields".

Happy holidays to everyone and may John rest in peace.

Bob McElwain, aka, Chili

