

THE LIFE SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

May 98 Edition Tommy Tompkins, Reporter Bob McElwain, Ed

Greetings. Lately it has been my duty to report on the passing of several icons of Life Support. This issue brings much of the same. It makes me think that there is no time like the present to contact old friends that we have meant to for some time but for various reasons have not. First to announce that **Chief Gladden Henry Heath** passed away last year. I only recently found out about it. When you hear of a death or other significant event please let me know. Chief Heath was one of my first supervisors at Eglin in 1956. He had quite an impact on my career as well as many others. I have heard from both of Chief Heath's boy's Justin and Richard. Both are retired military. Justin was a KC-135 type and Richard was a loadmaster with many combat missions. Justin was also a Life Support officer at Wright-Patterson. I knew both of them as young boys so it does not seem right that they are old enough to be retired. I also learned the **Chief Manuel Jerrell** passed away last year. I am not familiar with Chief Jarrel's career and hope to hear from someone who knew him so that I can pass on the information. **Bob Shannon** who was a key worker at the Safety Center for many years also passed away early this year. Bob was a past President and Honorary Life Member of SAFE. Kenny Marks reported that Bob's expertise and energy were responsible for saving many lives of our US flyers during the Viet Nam era. Both **Larry Thomas** and **Stan Wojdan** of Conax Corporation passed on early this year. Larry was the President of Conax until Dec 97. Stan was the Vice President of Program Management and responsible for SEAWARS and UWARS. This year we also lost a true friend of Life Support, **Chief Ron Ziegler**. Col. Cal Crochet, Chief's Billy Goss and Manny Gomez, Mr Tom Halis of CONAX, Mike Rossmiller and Bob Campbell attended the funeral. Cal provided the following: "Ron now is at peace with God and at rest upon a hill within the Santa Fe National Memorial Cemetery. I know that he is pleased with this location because he now has a view of the entire area. This may sound corny but little things like that meant a lot to Ron. He was truly a wonderful person who loved everyone. He cherished the Life Support profession, was proud of his uniform and held his country in the highest esteem. There is no question that everyone who knew him will sorely miss Ron. For he touched the hearts of many." Thanks Cal for those words. I know that I personally will miss Ron's phone calls and e-mails and the Labor Day weekend lunches in Dayton with Ron, Chief Wennen, Pete Hanley, Greg Dean, Royce Terrell and others.

PIONEER LIFE SUPPORT AND SURVIVAL EXPERT DIES

Hans Siewers, a renowned expert in Arctic survival and USAF aircrew life support equipment passed away earlier last year. Hans was a retired Air Force civilian emplctic survival and USAF aircrew life support equipment passed awfe support matters. Cal Crochet who worked with Hans at Hq SAC provided these comments.

"Hans was born and raised in Norway where he became an expert skier and, having lived in the mountainous area of Norway, honed his skills in the art of cold weather survival. Hans began his Air Force military career during World War II as a member of the Greenland Ski Patrol, a Norwegian organization assigned the mission of rescuing American aircrews who were forced to abandon or crash-land their aircraft over the Greenland Cap while ferrying aircraft to and from the United States and Europe.

Following the war, Hans was personally recruited by the late General Curtis LeMay, the legendary Commander-in-Chief of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), and assigned the responsibility of training SAC aircrews in the art of Arctic Survival. In this capacity, Hans became one of the founding members of the SAC Survival School at Fort Collins, Colorado. This school has moved several times and is now located at Fairchild AFB, Washington where it is now the USAF Survival School. Hans was recruited once again by General LeMay and assigned to SAC HQ at Offutt AFB, Nebraska. There Hans spent the remainder of his career where he was instrumental in the development

and acquisition of SAC aircrew life support and survival equipment. Hans retired from the USAF in 1973 and, once again, moved to the mountains of Colorado where he continued to enjoy one of the loves of his life - skiing. A recognized expert in life support equipment and Arctic survival training, Hans dedicated his life to serving USAF aircrew personnel. Rest in Peace Hans Siewers and enjoy the ski slopes of Heaven."

That's quite a group that has gone on to the "Big Survival Kit Packing in the Sky". I plan, starting with this issue, to highlight some of the younger troops that are replacing these icons of Life Support. These are the ones that Chief John Shield's referred to as our "Super Stars". I contacted Chief Al Loving of Hq ACC (TAC) and SMS Rich Robichaud at Hq AMC (MAC) for their inputs. I plan to highlight one or two each issue.

HIGHLIGHT

MSgt Michael J. Freebury is currently the Air Mobility Command's Intra-Theater Airlift Manager. In this position, MSgt Freebury develops, plans, coordinates and implements policy for Air Force-wide C-17 and C-130 weapon systems. Sgt Freebury is the primary aircrew life support IG augmentee. He is also the functional manager for all aeromedical evacuation life support issues. MSgt Freebury continues to improve AMC's aircrew life support program effectiveness and wartime capability. Mike was the key figure in the C-130 integration back into AMC and Mike is taking the lead at standardizing the life support equipment configuration aboard C-130s. Mike is a dynamic SNCO! His selection as the 1997 HQ AMC Senior NCO of the year and 1996 HQ AMC Inspector General Senior NCO of the year is evidence of Mike's professional standards. He was assigned to HQ AMC to fill the first-ever AMC Inspector General position in February 1996. He was later assigned to his current position on 1 May 97. His previous assignments include Griffiss AFB, New York, Kunsan AB, Korea, and McChord AFB Washington where he held various NCOIC positions within the squadrons.

HIGHLIGHT

MSgt Karl M. Wicker is the Air Combat Command electronic, trainer, rescue, and recon aircrew life support superintendent. In this capacity, Karl provides direction for operational implementation of ALS objectives, policy and procedures and reviews, evaluates, and approves wing ALS supplements and operating procedures for these operations. Karl is also the command focal point for ALS technician training programs, the aircrew life support management system (ALSMS), and realistic training reviews. Karl's expert management of vital aircrew life support equipment has dramatically enhanced the USAF aircrew's capability to meet any combat challenge and emerge victorious. With troops of this quality I know that Chief's Shields, Heath, Ziegler, and Jarrell would be pleased.

Keep the cards and letters coming in. We need them to keep this newsletter informative. We had great response from the stamp request!!! We also have lost contact with some folks. Please remember to send us a change of address. We have the capability to find you thanks to Chief Jim Cooper and Chief Terry Ache but it is much easier if you send in a change of address or e-mail. We have a lot of new names, addresses and e-mails since the last newsletter. An updated listing and this newsletter are posted on the Life Support Web Pages that Bob McElwain will tell you about.

That's about all for me. Cheers and Keep in Touch. Tommy Tompkins

In honor of the late CMS John Shields, this column will be forever known as:

CHILI SEZ

Hope you all like the new format for the newsletter. This is not the only thing that's new, check out our web page. The site contains copies of the last two newsletters, reunion information, and the updated address list that Tommy mentioned. **SMS Danny Keith**, HQ ACC used his service provider to also do a life support web page. There is a link to it at the bottom of my web page. We need feedback on both pages so check them out and let us

know what you think. For the latest on VA issues for veterans, active duty, reserves, and guard personnel (to include clarification on enrollment for VA health care) check out the other links at the bottom of my web page.

Speaking of VA benefits, **Col. Crochet** received an e-mail from a military retiree that addressed changes Congress is considering. It stated in part the following:

1. Revamp BAQ and BAS to the area of the country the member is based, rank is not a consideration.
2. The Department of Agriculture is doing a study to reduce Enlisted BAS. This would be returned to the member as a base pay increase (subject to taxes).
3. People now enlisting can only expect to get 35 to 40% retirement upon 20 years of service. All retirement is not guaranteed; it can be eliminated legislatively.
4. Downsize medical treatment to requirements only for war (sorry about those dependents). In a meeting of state governors it was determined that the issue of schools is a states' rights issue; the bad side of this decision is that the base schools will also fall under state control. This means that military members will have to pay tax in the state they are stationed in order for their children to attend school; further base schools will run the risk of being eliminated because states will not keep them open for so few students attending.

Last year a flood of telegrams to Congress by alerted military members defeated the dreaded HI – 1 that would have gutted retirement pay for ALL retirees. As an example this bill, if passed would have cut a Chief's retirement pay by \$201.00 a month for the life of the retirement! THE PROPOSAL WILL BE BACK UNDER A DIFFERENT NAME IN THE 105th CONGRESS. One of the proposals will cut retirement pay at age 65 by 40%. This "offset" means that there will be a "cap" on the amount you get from the government and all those years you spent in service will not be worth much when you reach 65! Still another proposal is to withhold active duty retirement until age 65 like the Guard/Reserve retirements are now. Currently only 48% of the Senators and 32% of the members of the House of Representatives have served in the military. Most of them see us as "parasites", getting all those "special benefits" we don't deserve. They have not had to go through the hardships we have and they can't relate or do not care to relate to our contributions. We are a "soft target" because the country is "secure" because we have done our job so well.

Suicide rates Air Force wide average one every five days! Not just the lonely kid in the dorm but a Colonel, Lieutenant Colonel, Captain and Major to mention a few. Some reasons being the erosion of military quality of life. So many suicides have occurred that suicide prevention classes, (named stress management classes), are mandatory at some facilities and during basic training.

There are 19,000 users of food stamps in the military. 7,000 use the commissary and the rest shop off base to avoid the embarrassment (where food cost more).

Pat Schroder, D-Colorado is resigning which will allow the opportunity to change the Survivor Benefit program. As it now stands when a member appoints his/her spouse to receive survivor benefits the money will be taken out of his/her check until the member dies even if the spouse dies before the member or they divorce! If the member remarries and wants his/her current spouse to receive survivor benefits they have to start paying all over with no refund from the first deposit!

Get involved and call your representatives and ask them if they plan to vote "yes" or "no" on the various bills that will effect your future, (don't take the political "double speak" they as an answer), GET A YES OR NO. If the politicians had not received a "wake up call" from all those telegrams, we would now have a cut in our retirement pay! The politicians are not working in our best interest. If you care about things that effect you and your family's future join a group that is looking out for it!"

For free e-mail delivery of weekly news for Federal employees and retirees visit FEDWEEK'S website at: <http://www.fedweek.com>.

OTHER NEWS FROM OUR READERS

Chief Otis (ADTAC Jack) Jackson informed me that he recently was under the knife for prostate cancer. He says he's feeling fine now and that his doctor thinks he will be ok. Early detection was the key so keep that in mind. Otis also expressed how proud he was of Timmy Morrow and his conduct during John Shield's last days.

William Simon asked me if life support has a new AFSC? Yes, it does! I was going to expand on this as part of the life support history information I promised you in the last newsletter. I don't have enough room to write about everything I've collected so I'll just share with you what I have on our AFSC. According to documents given to me by **Richard Traufeld** the various AFSC's held by him are as follows:

- In Nov of 1949 he was known as a "P.E. Specialist" and had a MOS of 59400.
- In Jan of 1952 he was upgraded to AFSC 64151 and was a "Unit Supply Specialist".
- In Nov of 1953 his AFSC was changed to 92250, "Survival Training & Personal Equipment Specialist".
- It wasn't until mid 1950 that the Survival Specialist became 921X0 and he remained a 922X0, P.E. Specialist.
- In Jan of 1966 our career field was known as both "Personal Equipment and/or Life Support".

Thanks Rich for your contribution to our history. If anyone else has any additional info on this subject please let me know. To continue with the rest of the story, here is what I know about the change in 1981.

- On Oct 31st, 1981 AFSC 922X0 was re-coded to 122X0 to accommodate a major restructuring of the medical AFSCS (9XXXX) and to more closely align the aircrew life support career field with the functional area it primarily supported, aircrew operations (AFSCS 1XXXX).

According to SMS Keith of HQ ACC and MSG Rennie of HQ AMC the skinny on the current change is as follows:

- In 1993 another AFSC shuffle occurred. Both enlisted and officer AFSCs were changed. Changes for both were based on the same career group number. The new AFSCs are 1T1X1 for enlisted Life Support, and L11XX or L12XX for LSOs. Other changes under our career field ladder are 1T0X1 for Survival Training, and 1T2X1 for Pararescue. As you can see the 1T identifies the career field family, Aircrew Protection.

CMS Truman Pittman is alive and well. He recently contacted Tommy to let him know that he's working at the Officer's Club at Robins AFB. He also stated that he misses the TDYs where we all got together and renewed old friendships. Guess what Truman? We miss you too. Come renew old friendships with us at the next reunion.

REUNION

As a matter of fact, you all are in invited to the next reunion. Come meet old friends, see and here what's new in life support. The dates are 21 – 24 Sep 98 in Laughlin, NV at Harrah's Hotel/Casino. As always, reservations must be made with KB. Lodging will cost you \$5 more this year (\$25 @ day) but is still a great deal. See the attached form for additional information.

SERVEY RESULTS

Thanks to the 25 people who completed and returned the survey we mailed out in the last newsletter. The results (along with the number of votes for each) are as indicated below.

REASON FOR NOT ATTENDING THE REUNION:

- Wrong time of year, the location; teach full year (one vote each).

WHERE SHOULD THE REUNION BE HELD?

- Laughlin, NV (7)
- Las Vegas, NV (3)
- Phoenix, AZ; San Diego, CA; same place as the World Wide LS conference (two votes each).
- Different location each year; Mesquite, NV; Wash, DC; San Antonio; Tucson; the mid west; at any active duty meeting; same location and time as SAFE; anyplace (all one vote each).

WHAT MONTH SHOULD THE REUNION BE HELD?

- Sept (14)
- Jun/July (4)
- Oct (3)
- Aug, Nov, and Feb (one each).

HOW OFTEN SHOULD THE REUNION BE HELD?

- Annually (21)
- Biennially (4).

For now it looks like the location and dates for future reunions will remain the same. However, there will be more activities for the spouses this year. A sightseeing and shopping trip is planned along with a skit that the ladies from last year are planning to present. The free transportation from Las Vegas was not confirmed. We checked at Harrah's in Las Vegas and were told that they do not provide free transportation to Laughlin for guest registered at their hotel in Laughlin. I guess whoever told us about the free transportation must have been mistaken (sorry about that).

Keith Licht has informed me that he is in the travel business and will look into the possibility of reduced fares for anyone interest in attending our reunion. Keith can be reached at (414) 762- 8557. Another travel consultant, Corrine Tilton in Las Vegas, NV will also book flights to Laughlin for us at a good price. Her number is (702) 737-7400.

Russ Newman, reunion contractor coordinator has a new job. He is working for B/E Aerospace in Irvine, CA. B/E Aerospace has been a long time manufacturer and supplier of commercial airline products such as in-flight entertainment systems and aircraft seats among other things. Russ' input for this newsletter is as follows:

"Well it's that time of year again. Time for your reunion planning committee to roll up their sleeves and get to work on this year's extravaganza. I can't wait, how about the rest of you?"

A sincere thanks to **Butler Parachute Systems** (first time contributor), Bill Wood, and to all of the contractors (you know who you are) for your generous cash contributions to last year's hospitality activities. Both Robin and I were very pleased to put the whole thing together. Everybody who attended both evening socials had a great time. The rooms were a bit cramped and I attribute that to the many new friends and families that attended.

In order to cover expenses for this year's reunion, I would like to ask again for help in the form of cash contributions from the contractors. Just like last year we are planning two evening socials and the picnic. The snack/buffet menu will be expanded as compared to last year. The biggest expense is of course the wine and other sprits. With a plan to expand the social events, I am soliciting for donations of \$300.00 from each company. All arrangements need to be set in motion so we need to have commitments as quickly as possible, but not later than 1 June 98. The monies will be collected by 30 June. September rolls around real fast.

If you have any special recommendations or ideas to make this year's social events even more spectacular, I'd like to hear from you. Please contact me at my home phone (310) 325-6792 or work (949) 862-8589. Remember we need contractor commitments for cash contributions by 1 June. Thanks in advance for your recurring support and I'll be in touch."

CHIEF SHIELDS' BUST

So far we have collected a little over \$400.00 for the bust. \$250.00 was donated by **Chief Struble** (thanks Ray) but much more is needed. The sculptor will cost approximately \$1200.00. If you want to donate to this worth while cause please send whatever you can to the address bellow. To ensure accuracy of the bust, close-up snapshots of the chief's side, front and back are needed. John's bride, Anita has provided us with pictures but more are needed. Please send whatever money and/or pictures you can to:

Kemper Kinchen

13681 Wanita Place

Victorville, CA 92392.

That's it for now hope to see you all in Laughlin. Until next time, **stay healthy.**

Chili

Life Support Reunion

21 – 24 Sep 98

Harrah's Hotel/Casino Laughlin, NV

Registration Form

Yes, I will attend the reunion. The following information is provided:

NAME_____

COMMERCIAL PHONE NO_____DSN_____

E-MAIL_____FAX_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY/STATE/ZIP_____

TOTAL NO ATTENDING: _____SHIRT SIZE (S)_____

NAME (S) OF ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES_____

I am a volunteer to help with the following:

REGISTRATION DESK_____PICNIC_____GOLF TOURNAMENT_____

ACTIVITIES/GIFTS/PRIZES (SPECIFY)_____

Part of the reunion will be spent on documenting some of the history of Life Support. If you have any historical information, equipment, or pictures that you would like to share with us please bring them with you. **Any information you may have on the origin/history of the first (Your Life Is Our Business) Life Support patch would be appreciated.**

COST:

REGISTRATION FEE: \$25.00 PER FAMILY, ROOMS: \$25.00 PER DAY SINGLE OR
DOUBLE OCCUPANCY, BANQUET: \$25.00 PER PERSON. TOTAL FOR EVERYTHING
IS \$150.00 SINGLE OR \$175.00 PER COUPLE.

Send money order or check NLT 30 Jun 98 and this form to:

KEMPER KINCHEN HOME PHONE: 760-245-4960

13681 WANITA PLACE WORK: 805-277-5396/5096

VICTORVILLE, CA 92392 DSN: 527-5056