



The Straphanger Gazette



Volume 7 Issue 3

. Find us on the web at <http://www.araassociation.com> Jan., Feb. & Mar. 2015

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“Aerial Rocket Artillery”when called on by those who were in danger, our units were there laying it on the line.

We were proud of our Aerial Rocket Artillery Team then and still proud of it now.

The Straphanger Gazette is a quarterly publication of the Aerial Rocket Artillery Association. Issues will be published on or about the 1st of January, April, July and October. Members who have e-mail will receive a copy as an pdf.

One Baby

Two Parents

Three Wise Seekers

The Event That Changed the World!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year



President's Corner

I hope that each of you had the spirit of Christmas, which is PEACE, during the holiday season, and may it continue. May you be blessed with the most important thing, good health, for the new year. Before Vietnam, “airmobility” was not supported by many in the Army hierarchy, as they thought the helicopter too vulnerable and too expensive. There were, however, leaders like General James Gavin, who called for the development of new tactics and battle hardware that would “give its soul back to the cavalry.” Airmobility finally found support under President Kennedy and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. McNamara sent a memorandum to the Secretary of the Army on 19 April 1962 calling for a review of plans for Army aviation. He stated, “I shall be disappointed if the Army’s re-examination merely produces logistically oriented recommendations to procure more of the same, rather than a plan for employment of fresh and perhaps unorthodox concepts which will give us a significant increase in mobility.”

A board led by Lieutenant General Hamilton Howze was formed, and on August 20, gave its report to McNamara. This report proposed the establishment of an air assault division with its own organic aviation assets. Many of you were members of this new organization, the 11th Air Assault Division, and you were trained and tested before you were deployed to Vietnam in 1965 with a new name, the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). The recommendations of the Howze board, and the formation of the 11th Air Assault Division had great impact, not only on the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile), but on the 101st Airmobile Division and other aviation units.

Our reunion, 6-10 May 2015 will commemorate the 50 year anniversary of the deployment of ARA, and many of you, to Vietnam. If you have not made your reservations, I encourage you to do it soon. We will be headquartered at the Hilton Garden Inn, 1500 Bradley Lakes Blvd., Columbus, Georgia 31904. The number for reservations is: 706-660-1000. When making reservations, use the group code ARAA. Registration forms can be found in this issue.

Keep the greasy side down.

ARA 6

Notes from the Reunion Committee: We are running the Reunion Announcement again with some minor changes. The original Registration Form has dates of May 6 - 20, 2015 and should have read May 6 - 10, 2015. The corrected form follows. Also, we encourage anyone who thinks they are coming to get reservations made at the hotel. It appears that about 20% of the block of rooms have already been reserved. It's better to have a room confirmed and cancel if you can't make it than to determine that you can and discover that there are no rooms.

We are also planning for a special coffee cup for those persons who were in the initial deployment to RVN. If you were a boat person or a member of the advance party please contact Jesse Hobby (jesse_hobby@hotmail.com or 229-378-2281.

Hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and hope to see you all in Columbus.

Bruce & Patti Wilder/Jesse & Gloria Hobby - Reunion Committee 2015



18TH AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY REUNION

Columbus, GA May 6 – 10, 2015

It's hard to believe that it's been almost fifty years since the first Aerial Rocket Artillery Unit was deployed to the Republic of Vietnam as part of the 1st Cavalry Division (Air Mobile). It's also hard to believe that it's been over fifty years since those first ARA units, C Battery (ARA), 2nd Battalion, 42nd Artillery and the follow on unit 3rd Battalion, 377th Artillery (ARA), 11th Air Assault Division were activated and began planning and working out the concept of ARA that we all came to know in RVN as members of the 2/20th Artillery (ARA), 4/77 Artillery (ARA), F Battery/79th Artillery (AFA), F Battery/77th Artillery (ARA), and 77th Field Artillery Battery (Provisional) (ARA).

So, now we're going back to the Columbus/Fort Benning area for a fifty year celebration and we hope you will make plans to join us for the Annual ARA Reunion. We have some great plans and hope to see you there.

Where We Will Be Staying

Headquarters for the Reunion will be the Hilton Garden Inn located at 1500 Bradley Lakes Blvd, Columbus, GA 31904, phone # 706-660-1000. You can access their website at www.columbus.gardeninn.com to view the hotel and check out its amenities. When making reservations use group code "ARAA".

We have tentatively reserved 75 rooms – 40 Standard King Bed, 40 Twin Queen Beds, and 5 King Bed Junior Suites. The King and Twin Queen Bed Rooms are \$109.00 + tax (16%) and the King Bed Junior Suites are \$129.00 + tax (16%). The rate is good for 3 days prior to and after the reunion if you wish to come early and/or stay late. The cutoff date for reservations is April 15, 2015 but our group rate will be honored after that based on availability.

The hotel is providing our hospitality suite which has a private patio and two (2) complimentary breakfast buffets for each room daily. Parking is free.

I think everyone will be pleased with the hotel because it is in a quiet, resort like setting with a lake and beautiful landscaping.

What We Will Be Doing

We have lots to do, or you can do as little as you want. You can take in all of the scheduled activities, tours and attractions, or you can make your own schedule, or you can just hang out with friends and catch up on what's been happening since the last reunion.

Wednesday, May 6, is check in day, get briefed, meet old friends, make new ones. To enhance our meeting and greeting, we have also planned for dinner in the hospitality suite. The meal will consist of: Green Salad, BBQ Pork w/sandwich buns, Potato Salad, Cole Slaw, Baked Beans, Banana Pudding, Peach Cobbler, and Iced Tea. Cost for the meal is \$20.00 per person and includes gratuity and tax. If anyone needs a special entrée due to health/religious reasons please contact the reunion host(s) for accommodations. After the meal you can hang out in the hospitality suite, the hotel bar, or on the patio.

Thursday, May 7, will kick off our main activities. After breakfast at the hotel we will depart for a day at Fort Benning which will include a self-guided tour of the National Infantry Museum (www.nationalinfantrymuseum.org), lunch with the troops, a tour of the post, a display of modern military equipment (armored fighting and support vehicles) and combat simulators. After returning to the hotel you may choose to have dinner on the town or at the hotel and then hang out and socialize in the hospitality suite, the hotel bar, or the patio.

The schedule for the day is:

8:45 – 9:00 AM - Board buses at the hotel

9:30 AM – 12:00 PM – Tour of National Infantry Museum

12:30 – 1:30 PM - Lunch with troops in post dining facilities

2:00 – 4:00PM – Post tour and display of equipment/training simulators

4:30 PM – Return to hotel

Cost for this day's tour is \$30.00 which covers bus transportation, admission to the museum and lunch with the troops. We are using bus transportation because the post does not allow tour groups having more than three POV's. And, getting everyone to the same place at the same time is sort of like herding cats.

Friday, May 8, is another day of planned activities. After breakfast at the hotel we will again board buses and proceed to the world famous Callaway Gardens (www.callawaygardens.com) for a tour of the gardens and the butterfly center. From there we will journey to Warm Springs arriving in time for lunch at the Bulloch House (www.bullochhouse.com) and then tour the Little White House (www.rooseveltrehab.org) which was Franklin D. Roosevelt's home away from Washington, DC. We will then return to the hotel and you will again be on your own for dinner, which can be at the hotel or on the town.

The schedule for the day is:

8:45 – 9:00 AM - Board buses at the hotel

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM – Driving tour of Callaway Gardens and Butterfly Center

12:30 - 2:00PM – Lunch at Bulloch House

2:30 – 4:30 PM – Tour of Little White House

5:30 PM – Arrive back at hotel

Cost for this day's activities is \$40.00 per person which covers bus transportation, lunch and admission to the Little White House.

Saturday, May 9. Breakfast at the hotel followed by Board of Directors and Association Business Meeting. There will also be the Ladies Meeting and activities. There are no planned activities after the Business Meeting until 5:00 PM. At that time we will proceed by POV to the National Civil War Naval Museum (www.portcolumbus.org) for a private tour and our final banquet.

Menu for the banquet is: Prime Rib au Jus with twice baked potatoes and julienne vegetables and includes house or Caesar salad, rolls and butter, iced tea, dessert. Cost is \$30.00 per person (includes gratuity and tax). Again, if anyone needs a special entrée due to health or religious reasons please contact the reunion host(s) for accommodations.

After dinner you can return to the hotel for a final evening of socializing with friends.

For those who plan to come early and/or stay late or just want to do your own thing, Columbus and the local area have much to offer. For an overview go to www.visitcolumbusga.com. We can arrange for a tour of the Springer Opera House, Georgia's official State Theater, and you may also take in a show if you desire. You may also take in a guided tour of Historic Columbus or do a walking tour on your own. Visit the Coca-Cola Space Science Center. Run the longest urban Whitewater Course in the world (if you are adventurous). Uptown Columbus has a variety of dining and shopping attractions. On Mondays and Tuesdays there are mass air drops at Fort Benning. Within driving distance (1 hour) is Andersonville, the notorious Civil War Prison which is also home to the National POW Museum. You may also want to visit Providence Canyon (also known as the Little Grand Canyon). Located in Lumpkin, GA, it is the largest example of erosion in the eastern United States.

As previously stated, there is much to do in the Columbus/Fort Benning area and we will include more information in the January and April issues of the "Straphanger."

Your reunion committee – Bruce and Patti Wilder
and Jesse and Gloria Hobby.

PROPOSED CHANGE TO ASSOCIATION BY-LAWS

At our Reunion in Branson and in subsequent conversations and emails the issue of BOD representation has come up and it has been proposed that the following Articles be amended. These proposals will be brought up at the next business meeting of the Association in 2015.

ARTICLE IV – Board of Directors

Section 1. The Association Board of Directors, hereinafter referred to as the BOD, shall be composed of the President, Immediate Past President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Editor of the Association Newsletter (collectively “The Officers”). In addition to the Officers of the BOD there shall be one (1) OFF/WO representative and one (1) NCO/EM representative from each of the following: 3rd Battalion, 377th Artillery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery, 4th Battalion, 77th Artillery and one (1) representative from “F” Battery, 79th Artillery serving on the BOD.

It is proposed that the first line of ARTICLE IV – Board of Directors be amended to read as follows: The Association Board of Directors, hereinafter referred to as the BOD, shall be composed of the President, Immediate Past President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Chaplain, Web Site Manager, and the Editor of the Association Newsletter (Collectively “The Officers”).

Reason for proposed change is to include the Chaplain and Web Site Manager as members of the BOD.

It has also been proposed that the last line of this ARTICLE, which reads as follows - “In addition to the Officers of the BOD there shall be one (1) OFF/WO representative and one (1) NCO/EM representative from each of the following: 3rd Battalion, 377th Artillery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Artillery, 4th Battalion, 77th Artillery and one (1) representative from “F” Battery, 79th Artillery serving on the BOD” be deleted.

Reason for deletion is that while this seemed like a good idea when the By-Laws were re-written in 2008 and was actually put into practice for a short time it has proven to be impractical and leads to confusion in interpreting the composition of the BOD.

If/When approved these changes will also require that ARTICLE V – Officer, Duties, and Terms of Office be amended as follows:

Section 1. , which currently reads: “The Association Officers, also known collectively as the Board of Directors, are the President, Immediate Past President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Editor, with their primary duties as indicated below” shall be amended to include the Chaplain and Web Site Manager and shall read as follows “The Association Officers, also known collectively as the Board of Directors are the President, Immediate Past President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Chaplain, Web Site Manager, and the Editor of the Association Newsletter”.

The sub-paragraphs of ARTICLE V, Section 1. Will also require amendment as follows:

Current sub-paragraph G shall become sub-paragraph I.

New sub-paragraph G. shall read: The Chaplain shall be responsible for all religious matters pertaining to the Association.

New sub-paragraph H shall read: The Web Site Manager shall be responsible for updating, posting and/or removing material and renewing web site with approval from BOD. The Web Site Manager may also act as Liaison Officer if/when the Association engages an external web site management agent.

New sub-paragraph I shall read: All Officers of the Association shall actively promote membership in the Association and maintain contact with members of the Association.

Reasons for change to this ARTICLE are to maintain compliance with ARTICLE IV Section 1 and to add job descriptions for the Chaplain and Web Site Manager and to maintain sub-paragraph order.

These changes will also require that ARTICLE VII – Elections be amended as follows:

Section 3. which reads: “Unit Representatives may be filled by elections from among and by the members in good standing or by volunteers” shall be deleted.

Section 4. will then become Section 3. and Section 5. will become Section 4.

Reason for change is that approval of changes to ARTICLE IV Section 1 will negate this Section of ARTICLE VII.

This posting of proposed BY-LAWS change is in accordance with:

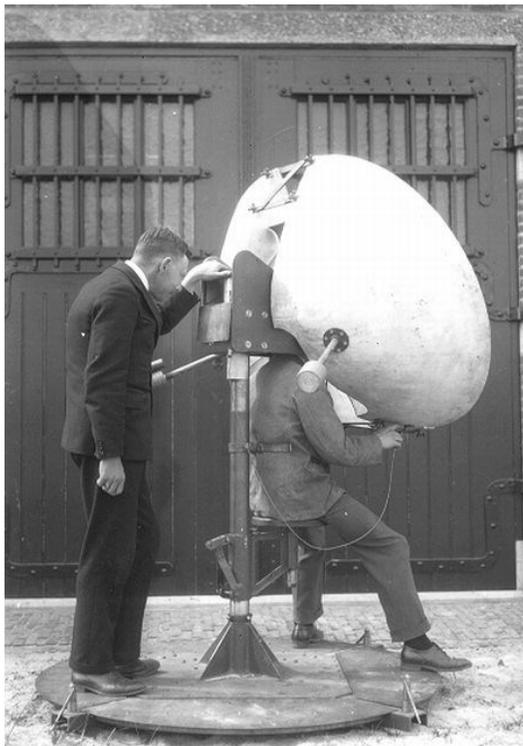
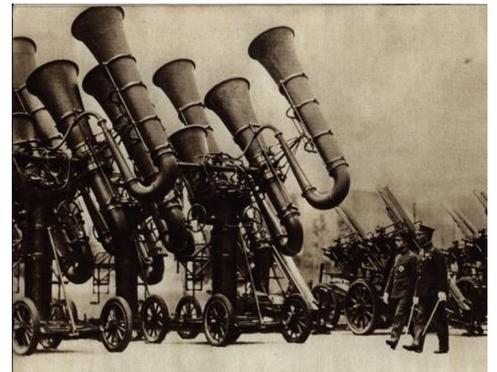
ARTICLE IX – Amendments

These By-Laws may be amended, repealed or altered, in whole or in part, by a two-thirds vote of any duly organized meeting of the Association provided that a copy of any amendment proposed for consideration has been published in the newsletter or mailed to each member in good standing at his last recorded address at least sixty (60) days prior to the vote being taken. Electronic mail (e-mail) may be used if more expedient or cost efficient.

Larry L. Mobley
President
ARA 6

How Air Attacks Were Detected Before Radar....

Old Time Acoustic Hearing Aids-



“Acoustic Ears” - on a swivel



THIS WAS FOUND IN THE BILLFOLD OF COACH PAUL BEAR BRYANT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AFTER HE DIED IN 1982.

contributed by Herb and Cindy Hirst

The Magic Bank Account

Imagine that you had won the following *PRIZE* in a contest:

Each morning your bank would deposit \$86,400 in your private account for your use.

However, this prize has rules.

The set of rules:

1. Everything that you didn't spend during each day would be taken away from you.
2. You may not simply transfer money into some other account.
3. You may only spend it.
4. Each morning upon awakening, the bank opens your account with another \$86,400 for that day.
5. The bank can end the game without warning; at any time it can say, "Game Over!" It can close the account and you will not receive a new one.

What would you personally do?

You would buy anything and everything you wanted right? Not only for yourself, but for all the people you love and care for.

Even for people you don't know, because you couldn't possibly spend it all on yourself, right? You would try to spend every penny, and use it all, because you knew it would be replenished in the morning, right?

ACTUALLY, This GAME is REAL ...

Shocked ? YES!

Each of us is already a winner of this *PRIZE*. We just can't seem to see it.

The PRIZE is *TIME*

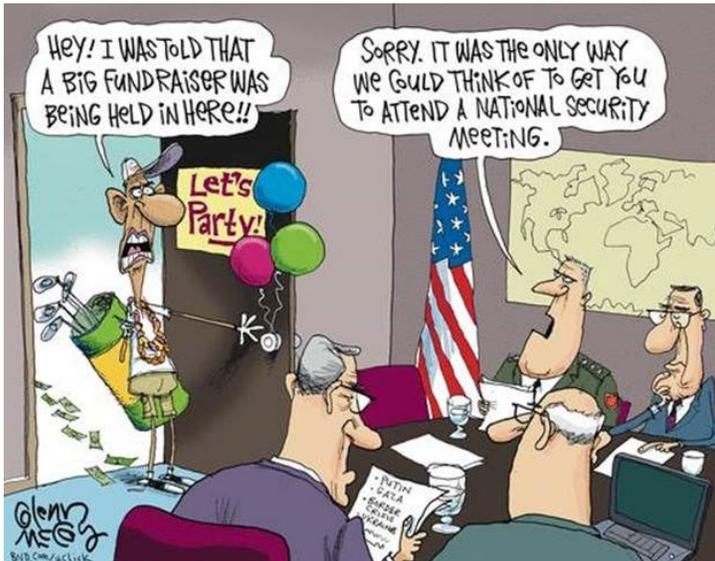
1. Each morning we awaken to receive 86,400 seconds as a gift of life.
2. And when we go to sleep at night, any remaining time is NOT credited to us.
3. What we haven't used up that day is forever lost.
4. Yesterday is forever gone.
5. Each morning the account is refilled, but the bank can dissolve your account at any time WITHOUT WARNING...

SO, what will you do with your 86,400 seconds?

Those seconds are worth so much more than the same amount in dollars. Think about it and remember to enjoy every second of your life, because time races by so much quicker than you think. So take care of yourself, be happy, love deeply and enjoy life.

Here's wishing you a wonderful and beautiful day. Start "spending".....The Magic Bank Account

Editor's Note: "The Bear" was great coach and a great molder of men. For most of us our allotted number of days are spent, but at day's end we still have our memories, our friendships and, until the final roll call, we have a chance to renew and enjoy those things. Our reunions give us that chance and we had best take it before the rotor blade flies off and there are no more chances. See you in Columbus!



AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS WERE NOT REALLY A BIG DEAL BACK IN THE 1917 RAF—

contributed by Jim Ford

WW1 ROYAL FLYING CORPS MONTHLY SAFETY REPORT December 1917

Another good month. In all, a total of 35 accidents were reported, only six of which were avoidable. These represented a marked improvement over the month of November during which 84 accidents occurred, of which 23 were avoidable. This improvement, no doubt, is the result of experienced pilots with over 100 hours in the air forming the backbone of all the units.

RESUME OF ACCIDENTS

1. Avoidable accidents this last month:

- a. The pilot of a Shorthorn, with over 7 hours of experience, seriously damaged the undercarriage on landing. He had failed to land at as fast a speed as possible as recommended in the Aviation Pocket Handbook.
- b. A B.E.2 stalled and crashed during an artillery exercise. The pilot had been struck on the head by the semaphore of his observer who was signalling to the gunners.
- c. Another pilot in a B.E.2 failed to get airborne. By an error of judgement, he was attempting to fly at mid-day instead of at the recommended best lift periods, which are just after dawn and just before sunset.
- d. A Longhorn pilot lost control and crashed in a bog near Chipping-Sodbury. An error of skill on the part of the pilot in not being able to control a machine with a wide speed band of 10 MPH between top speed and stalling speed.
- e. While low flying in a Shorthorn the pilot crashed into the top deck of a horse drawn bus near Stonehenge.
- f. A B.E.2 pilot was seen to be attempting a banked turn at a constant height before he crashed. A grave error by an experienced pilot.

2. There were 29 unavoidable accidents from which the following are selected:

- a. The top wing of a Camel fell off due to fatigue failure of the flying wires. A successful emergency landing was carried out.
- b. Sixteen B.E.2s and 9 Shorthorns had complete engine failures. A marked improvement over November's fatigue.
- c. Pigeons destroyed a Camel and 2 Longhorns after mid-air strikes.

COST OF ACCIDENTS Accidents during the last three months of 1917 cost #317 10 shillings and sixpence, money down the drain and sufficient to buy new gaiters and spurs for each and every pilot and observer in the Service.

ACCIDENT BRIEFS

No. 1 Brief:

No. 912 Squadron, 3 December 1917, Aircraft type B.E. 2C, No. XY 678, Total solo - 4.0

Pilot Lt. J. Smyth-Worthington, Solo in type -- 1.10. The pilot of this flying machine attempted to maintain his altitude in a turn at 2,500 feet. This resulted in the aeroplane entering an unprecedented manoeuvre, entailing a considerable loss of height. Even with full power applied and the control column fully back, the pilot was unable to regain control. However, upon climbing from the cockpit onto the lower mainplane, the pilot managed to correct the machine's altitude, and by skilful manipulation of the flying wires successfully side-slipped into a nearby meadow. Remarks: Although through inexperience this pilot allowed his aeroplane to enter an unusual attitude, his resourcefulness in eventually landing without damage has earned him a unit citation.

No. 2 Brief:

No. 847 Squadron, 19 December 1917, Aircraft type Spotter Balloon J17983, Total solo 107.00. Pilot Capt. D. Lavendar, Solo in type 32.10.

Captain Lavendar of the Hussars, a balloon observer, unfortunately allowed the spike of his full-dress helmet to impinge against the envelope of his balloon. There was a violent explosion and the balloon carried out a series of fantastic and uncontrollable manoeuvres, whilst rapidly emptying itself of gas. The pilot was thrown clear and escaped injury as he was lucky enough to land on his helmet. Remarks: This pilot was flying in full-dress uniform because he was the Officer of the Day. In consequence it has been recommended that pilots will not fly during periods of duty as Officer of the Day.

Captain Lavendar has subsequently requested an exchange posting to the Patroville Alps, a well known mule unit of the Basques

No. 3 Brief:

Summary of No. 43 Brief, dated October 1917.

Major W. deKitkag-Watney's Nieuport Scout was extensively damaged when it failed to become airborne. The original Court of Inquiry found that the primary cause of the accident was carelessness and poor airmanship on the part of a very experienced pilot. The Commandant General, however, not being wholly convinced that Major de Kitkag-Watney could be guilty of so culpable a mistake ordered that the Court should be re-convened. After extensive inquiries and lengthy discussions with the Meteorological Officer and Astronomer Royal, the Court came to the conclusion that the pilot unfortunately was authorized to fly his aircraft on a day when there was absolutely no lift in the air and therefore could not be held responsible for the accident. **The Court wishes to take this opportunity to extend its congratulations to Major de Kitkag-Watney on his reprieve and**

also on his engagement to the Commandant General's daughter, which was announced shortly before the accident.

FLYING SAFETY TIPS

Horizontal turns. To take a turn the pilot should always remember to sit upright, otherwise he will increase the banking of the aeroplane. He should NEVER lean over.

Crash precautions: Every pilot should understand the serious consequences of trying to turn with the engine off. It is much safer to crash into a house when going forward than to sideslip or stall a machine with engine troubles.

Passengers should always use safety belts, as the pilot may start stunting without warning. Never release the belt while in the air, or when nosed down to land.

Engine noises. Upon the detection of a knock, grind, rattle or squeak, the engine should be at once stopped. Knocking or grinding accompanied by a squeak indicates binding and a lack of lubricant.

WATCH THAT FIRST STEP The First Marine Air Wing had this write up in their Safety publication Wing Tips: It was conceded by all that the pilot had accomplished a brilliant piece of work in landing his disabled machine without damage under the circumstances. It is not with intent to reflect less credit upon his airmanship, but it must be noted that he is a well experienced aviator with over 40 total hours in the air, embracing a wide variety of machines, and this was his seventh forced landing due to complete failure of the engine. It was doubly unfortunate that upon alighting from his machine he missed the catwalk on the lower airfoil and plunged both legs through the fabric, straddling a rib, from which he received a grievous personal injury.

Some thought should be devoted to a means of identifying wing-traversing catwalks to assist aviators in disembarking from their various machines."

AIR SHOW 2014



Air Shows are interesting and fascinating to young and old alike. You get to see the latest and greatest in civil and military alongside the oldest and grandest. You also get to see other things that are equally fascinating.

Our VFW Post has access to a Vietnam Era UH-1B done in a Navy "Sea Wolves" motif. We drag it to air shows and other events and use it to educate the public about the role of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Vietnam War. We have maps, fake weapons, uniforms and flight crew apparel and charge an admission fee to tour the site and the helicopter. For an additional fee will outfit the patrons and do photographs. The money goes into the Post fund to support other veterans.

Occasionally the operation gets to be a lot of fun, especially when a group of young ladies show up and enthusiastically get into the photo shoot, as evidenced by the above photo.

**Jesse L. Hobby
Armed Falcon 29F1**

#####

Email addresses for Ladies of the ARA Association

- Baird, Marlene -- flytiger@cablone.net Borgeson, Pat -- pbogson@laliq.com or pborg12@yahoo.com Brown, Linda lindabrown@juno.com Cooper, Roberta rangerover53@yahoo.com Dauley, Donna dnurdgd@comcast.net Doty, Maureen DotyMaureen@yahoo.com Fleming, Gloria --- gwhz@hotmail.com Giles, Rose --- r.c.giles41@gmail.com Gomez, Milly --- chcogomez@aol.com Grice, Kathy--- Kalgrice@gmail.com Hengeveld, Peggy ---awings72@verizon.net Hirst, Cindy --- hirst@q.com Hobby, Gloria gloriahobby@yahoo.com Klinker, Kay --- kayklinker@gmail.com Mahoney, Melba skyqueen1@slo.rr.com McAlister, Marilyn - 5starmcalister@att.net O'Dell, Kathy - i_am_kathy@hotmail.com O'Keefe, Maryetta --- maryetta4@cox.net Padilla, Mary Jane ---mary_jane_padilla@hotmail.com Pullano, Arlene ---joseph.pullano@att.net Quesada, Isabel-- isabra@hotmail.com or sapriisa44@hotmail.com Retterath, Carol --- ranch@westriv.com Roberson, Linda -- snshinede@aol.com Sanchez, Susie -- skdsigns1@verizon.net Szabo, Joan --- sailboats1@verizon.net Talbot, Jean --- asatalbot@juno.com Toepel, Mildred -- mbtoepel@msn.com Tokar, Barbara --BarbTokar@SBC.Global.net Voeltz, Jean --cav2_20th@hotmail.com Wilder, Patti -- pattenmom05@yahoo.com Williams, Dale -- barbierule@aol.com Wilson, Ellie -- geneandellie@comcast.net Peg Zolonowski pegZ48@aol.com

Ladies of the Association

50 PROMISES FOR MARRIAGE OR HOW TO MAKE A MARRIAGE LAST 50 YEARS

Some friends recently celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. When asked how do you make a marriage last 50 years they pull out a card that they have carried for years and let you read it. Following are 50 ways to test your spouse and see how they're doing.

1. Start each day with a kiss. 2. Wear your wedding ring at all times. 3. Date once a week. 4. Accept differences. 5. Be polite. 6. Be gentle. 7. Give gifts. 8. Smile often. 9. Touch. 10 Talk about dreams. 11. Select a song that can be "our song". 12 Give back rubs. 13 Laugh together. 14. Send a card for no reason. 15. Do what the other person wants before he or she asks. 16. Listen. 17 Encourage. 18 Do it his or her way. 19. Know his or her needs. 20. Fix the other person's breakfast. 21. Compliment twice a day. 22. Call during the day. 23. Slow down. 24. Hold hands. 25. Cuddle. 26. Ask for each other's opinion. 27. Show respect. 28. Welcome the other person home. 29. Look your best. 30. Wink at each other. 31. Celebrate birthdays in a big way. 32. Apologize. 33. Forgive. 34. Set up a romantic getaway. 35. Ask "What can I do to make you happier?" 36. Be positive. 37. Be kind. 38. Be vulnerable. 39. Respond quickly to the other person's request. 40 Talk about your love. 41. Reminisce about your favorite times together. 42. Treat each other's friends and relatives with courtesy. 43. Send flowers every Valentine's Day and Anniversary. 44. Admit when wrong. 45. Be sensitive to each other's sexual desires. 46. Pray for each other daily. 47. Watch sunsets together. 48. Say "I love you frequently". 49. End the day with a hug. 50. Seek outside help when needed.

Did they do everything on this list? The answer is no. Life has a way of interrupting your plans. Things like Vietnam, moves on military orders or to a new job, and health and financial difficulties often stand in the way. But you keep on trying and that's what will make a marriage last 50 years or more.

Regina Mobley
Blue Max Mistress

2014 ARA ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Larry Mobley
779 County Road 106
Ozark, AL 36360
334-774-6281
Ejalbfu2@gmail.com
Larrymobley123@centurytel.com

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Cecil Hedgeveld
16 Ardmore Drive
Hummelstown, PA 17036
cufly66@verizon.net

VICE PRESIDENT

Johnny Grice
7804 Kristina Lane
Frisco, TX 75034
214-908-0227
Bluemax47@sbcglobal.net

SECRETARY

Huey M. O'Dell Jr.
1933 DeSoto St.
Needles, CA
760-326-3585
hueyodell@hotmail.com

CHAPLAIN

William "Bruce" Wilder
9724 Rosairod Road
Parrish, FL 34219-9200
423-245-6116
wbwilder@charter.net
(Not official member of BOD)
Included for contact purposes

TREASURER

Jules Szabo
5118 Brentwood Farm Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030
C 703-447-9556
sailboatjs1@verizon.net

EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Asa R. Talbot
611 4th Street
Elkton, VA 22827
540-298-7546
asatalbot@juno.com



Chaplain's

Corner

Blessed to be Thankful?

As I write this, the holiday season is coming fast and furious and will be over all too quickly. By then the people will have rushed around amid the hustle and bustle of life dealing with the commercialism of it all. I sometimes wonder if we really know the true meaning of being blessed. I have never lived any place more blessed than the USA. I know we have our problems: an aging population, a lack of well-paying manufacturing jobs, and growing drug problems, just to name a few. However, we are blessed with a beautiful country, convenient transportation via major interstates and major airlines, a reasonably high standard of living - generally speaking, good public education, generous rainfall and good natural resources, good health care—and all that only skims the surface! The USA is ***an incredibly blessed place, and yet, at the same time, it is not a grateful place, and I see this at all levels of society, from the executive who complains about not getting the proper reward for his or her efforts at work when they work less than 38 hours a week and take credit for other people's ideas, to the vagrant on the street who expects the world to provide for him simply because he is here and refuses to lift a finger for himself.***

I asked myself, "Have we grown so accustomed to the Lord's generous provision we simply take it for granted?" If so, no wonder our Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays are centered around shopping! Yes, we live in an age so self-absorbed that no one really takes the time to be grateful anymore.

It all reminds me of a true story from over a century ago. In 1883, it is said that in New England the sun did not rise. That's right, the people awoke to an eerie darkness. They went outside to do their chores in stony silence. No rooster crowed, no birds chirped, none of the usual sounds that heralded a new day. At the very start, people began to gather in small groups to question what was happening, to wonder and discuss what was taking place. Slowly, people began to make their way to the churches. They say that by noon every church in New England was filled to overflowing with people on their knees crying out to God. There were cries for mercy, people begging for forgiveness and others confessing their sins. They say that there were few people who didn't pray the day the sun didn't rise. The churches were full late into the night.

As the next morning neared, great crowds began to gather on the hilltops and the high places near their homes and churches. People were staring toward the eastern horizon. Every eye was fixed on that point where the sky touched the land. Every eye watching—hoping to catch a glimmer of the first rays of the sun. As the sun began to come up over the horizon, people began to shout and yell praise to God, they clapped, danced and rejoiced because the sun shined on the land again. As if in one voice, they began to praise the Lord for the sunlight, the warmth and the joy of God's new day.

They had no idea that on the island nation of Indonesia, the sleeping giant of a volcano, Krakatau, had come to life. They had no idea that this great mountain exploded and sent a huge cloud of dust and ash into the upper atmosphere. This black cloud would be carried around the world by the jet stream. It was said to cover whole regions, covering the sky from horizon to horizon. Few people had any idea that a volcano, half way around the world, could create such a cloud that could block out the sun. Yet for most of those people that was the very first time they ever thanked God for the warmth and wonder of the Sun.

And I know this lack of gratitude, this amazing ability we have to take things for granted, is not unique to either modern USA or 19th century New England. In that great Thanksgiving text from Deuteronomy (8:11-18) we read, "...Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God... when you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses...and your silver and gold is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt... Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.' But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant...."

The only solution to ingratitude is to make a conscious effort to take time to think and thank. And may it be so with each and all of us.

Peace,
Bruce Wilder
Chaplain



AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

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