



# The Straphanger Gazette



Volume 6 Issue 2

Find us on the web at <http://www.araassociation.com> Jan.,Feb. & March, 2014

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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 .



**Christmas came and went, New Years will follow and fade. But 2014 promises another great reunion in Branson.**

**Book flights early - See note on p. 5**



## *President's Corner*

Happy 2014!

I hope you enjoyed celebrating the Holidays with your friends and family. As I write this Peg and I are preparing to celebrate Christmas with our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Each year we are happily challenged to try and have just the right gift for everyone. Of course the best gift we are able and thrilled to give and receive is the love of family and friends. Another wonderful gift is the remembrance of those who have been in our lives even for a brief time. Family, friends, and those instructors, mentoers and comrades who served with us during our time in service to our country.

In this new year, 2014, I hope you remember those you have served with and possibly reconnect with some of them. Perhaps we can also get them to get their gear together and travel to Branson MO for our reunion (June 18 - 22, 2014). Check out reunion details on your ARA web site ( <http://www.araassociation.com>) and send in your registration form as soon as you can. Now get out there and recruit as many ARA alum as you can.

Peg and I have never been to Branson, but we understand there is something everyone can enjoy doing. We reserved the “golf theme “ room and plan to play some rounds out there before and after the reunion. So whether you have a chance to catch up with a long lost buddy or meet new friends with common experiences, Branson is the place for us all to meet. Bring your photos, movies, or slides that are collecting dust and share as you see fit.

Do you have an idea for a reunion location? Are you willing to coordinate a reunion? Let us know. In Branson we will have a short formal meeting to discuss the future to include the election of association officers. Please consider running for office, after all it's your association.

Cecil B. Hengeveld  
ARA SIX

# CURRENT THOUGHTS FROM THE IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

First I would like to say that I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Second, it is gratifying to say that we did not have any member obituaries for the last quarter of 2013. In fact the only obituary was one that should not have caused any grief to the Alumni and that was the death of Vo Nguyen Giap. While I have no love for him I will give him credit for being a tough old bastard – he was 102.

“Titch” and I have been working with the manager for the “Branson belle” and have gotten a reduced rate for the Dinner/ Show Cruise. As Reunion 2014 draws closer we need to bring to everyone’s attention that the Registration Form has a revision. On the previous form this event was listed as \$52.66 and came from the list provided by our hotel. The new price of \$47.29 and that is now shown on the form found in this edition of the newsletter and on the web site. I’m helping Titch with this as he is recovering from back surgery.

Continuing on Reunion 2014 I would like to bring to everyone’s attention the great job that Cecil and Peggy Hengeveld did with the decor of the Hospitality Suite at our Hershey Reunion. Those who were there and those who get the newsletter will note that Cecil and Peggy brought in a Huey seat, some combat art and other artifacts, and pictures from the previous reunion at Portland. I would like to suggest that those who have mementoes and souvenirs from Vietnam and who can do it (those who drive?) bring them to Branson to display in the hospitality suite. I have flight helmets, steel pot, survival vest, flak vest, chicken plate, and even a couple of working TA-312 telephones. Art work, photographs, slides, videos, maps, uniforms, anything from that time and place in our lives will be of interest.

Lastly, like Asa, I implore members to submit items of interest to the newsletter. We have dug up some of the history of F/79 and have more to publish in the future. There are a couple of web sites for 4/77<sup>th</sup> but contacting the site managers has proven elusive, so if anyone can provide a contact source it would be appreciated.

Final note – If you renew your membership annually – it’s that time again.

Gloria and I are looking forward to Branson and hope to see a big crowd there.

Out for now  
Jesse Hobby  
ARA 6X

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*Editor’s Note:* Not to sound repetitive, but we cannot overemphasize the need for as many ARA alumni as possible to get on board for the reunion in Branson. For this reason, we are running the details again.

It is not just a matter of keeping costs down, filling the scheduled attractions, or pushing for a higher attendance at each reunion. (That is a contradiction in terms considering we are a closed system unit which no longer is a part of the Army’s strategy, and the passage of time reduces our numbers and mobility). In spite of the preceding, the ARA has had a steady increase in attendance at our reunions. Perhaps we are realizing that this may be the last chance to see those we fought along side (or maybe even against for a better bed, a better poker hand, or a better place in the chow line).

We encourage you to register early and get a good room and a place at the banquet table. Look in the old trunks or on the shelves and find some material object that reflects the spiritual journey Vietnam was for all of us.



17<sup>TH</sup> AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY REUNION  
Branson, MO June 18 – 22, 2014



## Showboat “Branson Belle”

Wallace (Titch) and Mary Alice Titchenell are hosting the 2014 Reunion in Branson and, along with Rodger and Marilyn McAlister, Huey and Kathy O’Dell, and Jesse and Gloria Hobby have performed a ground recon and are now ready to pass on useful information for you to use in making your travel plans.

In addition to this newsletter, information for the reunion may also be found on the Association web site ([www.araassociation.com](http://www.araassociation.com)) and will be updated as more information becomes available.

## ABOUT BRANSON

Known as the “Live Music Capital of the World,” Branson, MO, is truly a one-of-a-kind family vacation destination – and an incredible value – with more than 50 live performance theaters, three pristine lakes, 12 championship golf courses, an international award-winning theme park, dozens of attractions and museums, an Historic Downtown district, shopping galore, a full range of dining options, and a host of hotels, motels, resorts, RV parks, campgrounds and meeting and conference facilities.

Located in America’s heartland, Branson is less than a day’s drive from more than half of the country’s population, and with low cost flights to the new Branson Airport, as well as Springfield-Branson National Airport, it’s never been easier to get your family or group to Branson. For more information go to [www.explorebranson.com](http://www.explorebranson.com) and request your visitors guide.

## WHERE WE WILL BE STAYING

Headquarters for the 2014 Reunion will be the **Stone Castle Hotel and Conference Center located at 3050 Green Mountain Drive in Branson, MO.**

The hotel is conveniently located in the heart of Branson’s theater and attraction district, minutes from award-winning golf and mini golf courses, water parks, theaters, restaurants, and other unique family-fun experiences.

**Phone numbers for the hotel are (417) 335-4700 and (800) 677-6906.** When calling to make reservations, inform them that you are attending the Aerial Rocket Artillery Association Reunion to get the contracted rate. On-line reservation is not available.

We have reserved thirty-five (35) Jacuzzi Theme Suites at \$84.00 per night + tax (\$93.74 total). Prior to calling, go to the hotel web site ([www.bransonstonecastle.com](http://www.bransonstonecastle.com)), click on rooms and accommodations and select a suite from a variety of themes, including **Asian, Circus, The Fifties, Honeymoon, Outback, Tahitian Nights, etc.** And, for the golfers there is one called the **19<sup>th</sup> Hole**. Some of these are balcony rooms (click on amenities and property info) for listing. These rooms range in size from approximately 340 – 480 square feet. If you desire something other than the Jacuzzi Suites you may request a standard room (one king or two queen beds) at \$69.00 per night + tax (\$77.00 total). The standard rooms are approximately 270 square

feet. Family suites are also available at \$99.00 + tax per night (\$110.48 total). These have one bedroom with king bed and one with two queen beds. Each has a private bath.

**As with other reunions the rate is good for three days before and after if you wish to arrive early or stay later.**

Although we have only reserved 35 rooms the hotel will make additional reservations as long as they have availability, so you need to make reservations early to be assured of accommodations. Reservations made after May 18, 2014 will be prevailing rate and availability may be limited.

The hotel will also provide a Hospitality Suite/Meeting Room for the ARA TOC and a separate meeting room for the Ladies Meeting on Saturday morning. We may bring in snacks, drinks, alcoholic beverages (BYOB) of choice.

There is a complimentary full hot breakfast buffet each morning.

Parking and Wi-Fi access is also complementary.

For those who are coming in RV's – The recommended parks are the Branson KOA & Convention Center ([www.bransonkoa.com](http://www.bransonkoa.com)) or Oak Grove Campground ([www.oakgrovervpark.com](http://www.oakgrovervpark.com)). These two are in close proximity to the Stone Castle.

## **WHAT WE WILL BE DOING**

Branson is all about entertainment and you can do as much or as little as you want. We have therefore scheduled only two main events – the Showboat “Branson Belle” and the Farewell Banquet. You can make your own schedule or, if you like you can just hang out with friends and catch up on what's been happening in the last year.

### **DAY 1 – Wednesday, June 18**

Check in, get briefed, meet old friends, make new ones. We have planned a Beer and Pizza Party in the Hospitality Suite to continue the meet and greet opportunity. You may also get in an evening show if you would like.

### **Day 2 – Thursday, June 19**

Today begins with breakfast at the hotel or on your own.

As previously stated Branson is all about entertainment. You can do a tour of the town and surrounding area in an updated DUKW, an amphibious 2 ½ truck that dates back to WW2. This tour includes driving into Table Rock Lake and cruising around like a boat ([www.bransonducks.com](http://www.bransonducks.com)). Another attraction of the area is the College of the Ozarks ([www.cof.edu](http://www.cof.edu)), a fully-accredited four year liberal arts college for students who are academically capable but financially unable to enter public or private institutions. Here students work their way through by participating in a work program (15 hours per week + two 40 hour weeks each year) to pay part of their tuition. With scholarships and grants these students graduate debt free with a strong work ethic. You may also take in shows starting in the afternoon and continuing into the late evening. Show schedules are available at the hotel and on the website ([www.explorebranson.com](http://www.explorebranson.com)). Discounted tickets can be arranged through the hotel. More information about shows and other activities will be forthcoming in the next issue of the newsletter.

You can close out the day with friends in the hospitality suite.

### **Day 3 – Friday, June 20**

Begin with breakfast at the hotel or on your own.

You may then use the previous day's suggestions or make up a schedule of your own.

The planned activity of the day will be the **Dinner Cruise aboard the Showboat “Branson Belle”** ([www.showboatbransonbelle.com](http://www.showboatbransonbelle.com)) which will begin at 8:00 pm. For those participating in this event it will be necessary to depart the hotel at/about 6:45 pm to get to the departure area and get aboard. A social hour (5:30 – 6:30 pm) is planned with light snacks to see us through till dinner. The show aboard the “Branson Belle” is an outstanding event. A professional troupe presents music ranging from popular and country/ western to Broadway and patriotic. The highlights are an illusionist and a vocalist who also plays the piano and violin. We will return to the hotel at/about 10:30 pm.

The Hospitality Suite will remain open for those remaining at the hotel.

### **Day 4 - Saturday, June 21**

Begin with breakfast at the hotel or on your own.

The Board of Directors will meet at 8:30 a.m.

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. is set aside for the Association Business Meeting in the hotel conference room. Please note that this is an election year for the BOD.

The Ladies activity for the day will begin at 9:00 am.

Afternoon is free time for all.

The final activity for the day will be the Farewell Dinner at the hotel.  
There will be a social hour in the Hospitality Suite from 6:00 – 7:00 pm.  
Dinner will be in the Hotel Dining Area from 7:00 – 8:30 pm.

## DINNER MENU

### Garden Salad

### Combination Plate of Roast of Sirloin and Chicken Chardonnay

### Roasted Red Potatoes

### Steamed Vegetables

### Dinner Rolls

### Chocolate Cake

### Tea/Coffee/Water

Socialize in Hospitality Suite from 8:30 pm until ?

## Day 5 – Sunday, June 22

Final breakfast and departure from the Branson area.

## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FROM THE IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

First I want to add to what “Titch” has put together for Reunion 2014. We all travelled to Branson together and met up with Huey and Kathy O’Dell and Rodger and Marilyn McAlister. “Titch,” Huey, and I took care of administrative details with the Hotel Management, Chamber of Commerce, and College of the Ozarks while Rodger and Marilyn checked out the RV parks and Mary Alice, Kathy, and Gloria met with the catering staff of the hotel to decide on the dinner menu. After these meetings we loaded up in the van and got the lay of the land. Basically, we had a mini-reunion.

Now, as “Titch” has stated, Branson is all about entertainment but there is a misconception that Branson is primarily “Country and Western.” There is such a wide variety of entertainment that anyone can find what interests them. There are country/western theaters and shows and those that feature popular and classical themes. There are illusionists and comedy of all types.

To truly know what is available at Branson you need to go to the web site ([www.explorebranson.com](http://www.explorebranson.com)) and check it out. You may also call the Chamber of Commerce (1-877 Branson) and request your own Branson Vacation Guide. The 2014 edition should be available in early January.

While we were there we took the “DUKW Tour.” It’s hard to imagine that a 2 ½ ton truck will float but these do. We also did the “Branson Belle,” which will be a highlight for anyone. We did the late cruise, departing at 8:00 pm, had dinner and were entertained for about two hours, returning at 10:30 pm. Other shows that we have previously seen and would recommend are the “3 Redneck Tenors,” the Shanghai Circus (Acrobats of China), Legends in Concert (Dick Clark’s American Bandstand Theater). Would also recommend a tour of the College of the Ozarks where students work their way through college, most often in their chosen major. Areas of interest there are the greenhouses, a water powered mill, and a fruitcake and jelly kitchen which produces over 30,000 fruitcakes a year. You may also purchase a wide variety of student made products and can schedule lunch there (with advance reservation). This event is a self guided tour.

When we arrived on Tuesday, September 10, we discovered that we were not the only advance party at the hotel. The reception committee for the 589<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion was also there. When they found that we were from 2/20<sup>th</sup> ARA we were greeted like long lost brothers and invited to their reunion. The 589<sup>th</sup> served in the Phuc Vin area and were very familiar with places like LZ Evans and Jane. These were the guys who drove the Rome Plows in jungle clearing and built the roads and airfields that we drove on and flew from. They recalled how our guys had flown cover for their operations and convoys. They even had pictures of ARA Cobras in revetments that they had built. It was a memorable experience meeting those who had both supported us and been supported by us.

So, I encourage all who have attended reunions in the past to do so again next year and invite fellow ARA Association to come along. If anyone needs a phone number please contact me.

Out for now.

Jesse Hobby  
ARA 6X

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**IMPORTANT HEADS UP** -Start booking your flights early for Branson. Southwest Airlines will cease flights into Branson on June 6, 2014. That leaves Frontier ([www.flyfrontier.com](http://www.flyfrontier.com)) and requires a connection through Denver. (Air Train is a subsidiary of Frontier but has limited routes)

Hopefully the highways will be open!

The Editor

*Recon Branson 2014 - contributed by Col. Rodger*

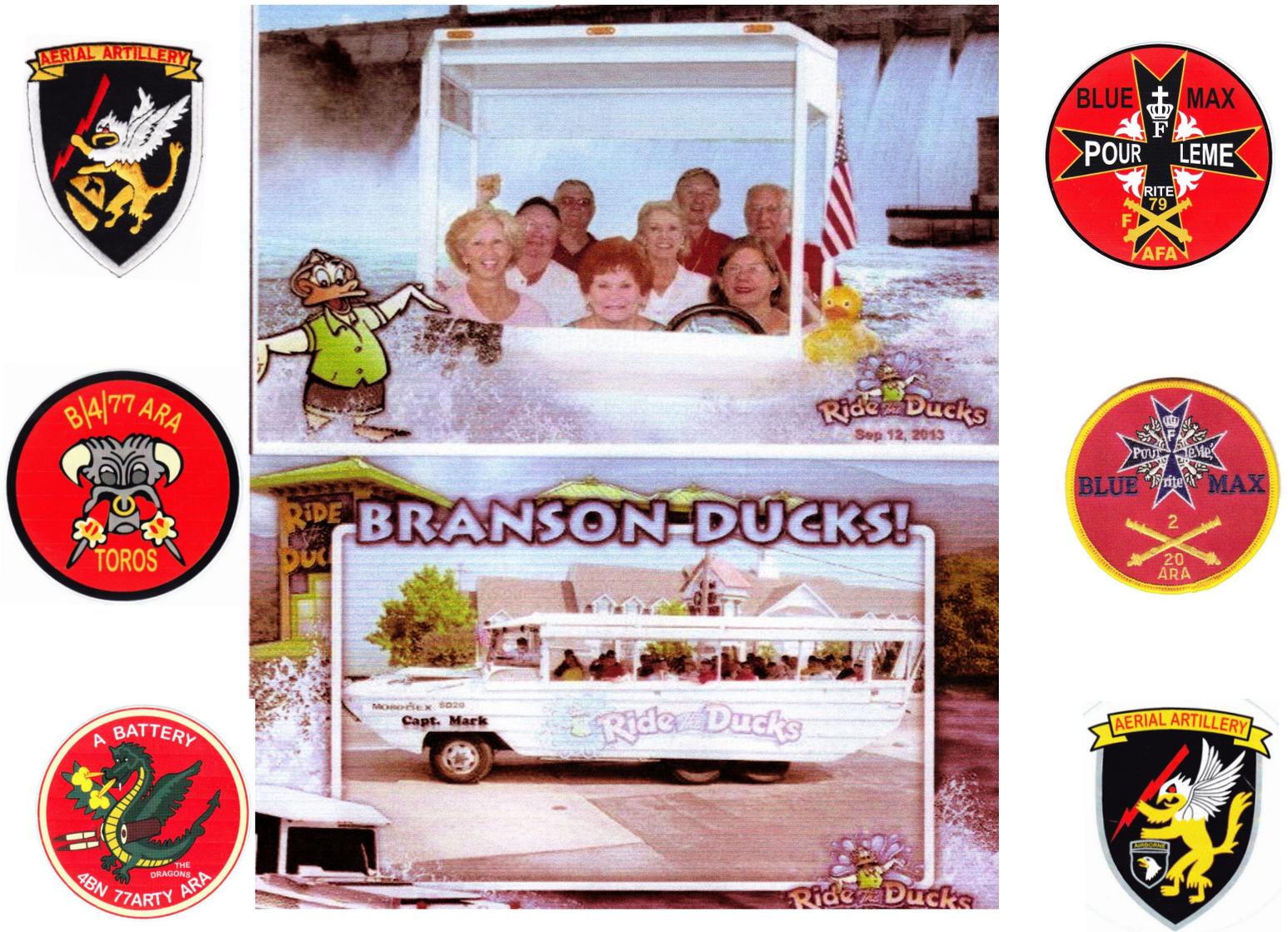
Those who attended the great reunion in Hershey this summer know that we picked Branson, Mo for next year and " Titch " and Mary Alice agreed to be our chairpersons / hosts. As any good Cav trooper would do Titch scheduled a recon and asked for volunteers . Jesse and Gloria Hobby as well as Rodger and Marilyn McAlister and Huey O'Dell and Katy stepped up and planned the infiltration for Sept 10-13. We can only hope that you all have as much fun as we did planning it.

The food was good, the hotel very gracious, the attractions and shows are world class and the company the best of all. So.....

**ARA and FHF**

What's that all about - it's members from our wonderful ARA membership, getting together for FHF (Friends Having Fun)! Our trip was to Branson, MO and we drove in from Utah, Georgia and Kentucky. Our 3-4 day get together gave us time to catch up, eat out, sightsee and laugh a lot! We encourage you all to get together in between our annual reunions. We're SURE we are not the only ones when we say "STOP and SEE us" if you are traveling through our town (Louisville). Make this an overnight stay!

**THE MAGIC OF DIGITALIZATION PRESENTS "THE POSSIBILITIES"**



**BE ADVISED:** Our beloved Vice President Glen Brown, has moved from Midland, TX. His new address can be found on page 11 in the Board of Directors' Directory.

# ATTENTION

## There will be a special shirt available for the reunion!



Arrangements have been made to offer a specially designed shirt for the Branson reunion. This is a quality, collared shirt which will be suitable to be worn anywhere –dining, golf, casualwear or even to work.

The shirt can be almost any color of the wearer's choice and will bear the patch shown. Each shirt will have only this patch. The techniques will be silk screen and the colors will be vibrant

The red ARA logo is on all shirts and there will be a line of type below the patch which says "Branson, MO 2014" in a color appropriate to shirt color .

Cost will be approx. \$16.50 for small through x-large.

XXX approx. \$18.00, XXXX approx. \$20.00, 5X approx. \$24.00. Very tall people may be limited in the colors they can choose. This is a function of shirt availability. The more shirts ordered, the better the price can be. Each shirt must be ordered and paid for by 15 May 2014. The funds must be in the Editor's hands before a shirt is ordered. There will be no extras available at the Reunion, so order ahead of time.

This would be a great shirt for wives, children and grandchildren to wear and show the family colors. Because of the nature of shirt manufacture the more shirts of similar patch the less expensive. Color is not a problem. Shirts will be delivered at the reunion. Pre-delivery will incur mailing charges.

A chart of available colors is below. Any questions should be directed to Asa ASAP. (See page 11)



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### ORDER FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Size: (Circle) Small Medium Large X-Large XX-Large XXX Large XXXX Large XXXXX Large

Color(s) and quantity \_\_\_\_\_



# MORE ON HELICOPTERS VS TANKS

*Contributed by Jesse Hobby*

In the last issue of the “Straphanger” we published the obituary of Lawrence (Larry) McKay and paid tribute to him and F/79 for their part in halting the NVA offensive at An Loc. And while F/79 gets the lion’s share of credit for engaging and destroying enemy tanks this was not the first encounter between NVA armor and the Aerial Rocket Artillery according to our Vice President Glenn Brown. In his book, “BLUE MAX Missions and Memories”, there is a section entitled “Tanks, But No Tanks” (pages 97 & 98) which reads –

“While sitting around the hooch one quiet afternoon, we received a report that an infantry patrol had spotted some tanks, probably Russian made T-54’s on the road southwest of An Loc about 45-50 klicks, headed toward us. We figured that if they were travelling at 30 Kph we had about one and one half hours before they would be upon us. The battery commander had us rearm two Cobras with the little six-pound HEAT (High Explosive, Anti-tank) warheads. As soon as we got our aircraft rearmed, we headed west.

The four of us going on the mission talked before takeoff about tactics. We decided to go low and fast toward the grid given by the ground pounders. When we got airborne, we turned west and stayed at treetop level and cruised at 150 knots. We decided at some point to arm the system in case we saw the tanks and had to fire quickly. As soon as I flipped the Master Arm Switch, I popped over a tree line and found myself looking down a dirt road from about 150 feet altitude, and face to face with seven or eight enemy tanks coming toward me. Almost in self defense rather than aggression, I fired several pairs of rockets at the enemy column hitting several. As I broke off to the left, I could see my wingman making his first run on the column.

The tanks started deploying off each side of the road as they had no doubt been trained to do. They headed for the heavy cover about 50 to 100 meters off the road. Before they could get into the tree line we stopped five of them and damaged the others to some degree. As far as I could tell the tanks never got off a single round. Evidently the encounter surprised them even more than it did us. We had definitely messed up their plans for attacking somewhere, possibly even An Loc or Quan Loi.

We continued firing into the heavy trees where the three remaining tanks disappeared with unknown results. I never saw any other enemy tanks during the remainder of my tour in Vietnam.

I believe it noteworthy that the NVA tried this same plan again in 1972 with better results. The NVA attacked An Loc and Quan Loi in early April, 1972 with tanks and infantry. Blue Max Cobras kept it from becoming a rout, but the siege continued for two months and many Blue Max Cobras were shot down. The NVA lost more than 100,000 men in the attack and still got defeated by the skeletal remnant of the American forces.”

Glenn Brown served with “A” and “C” Batteries, 2/20 ARA from April 1968 – March 1969.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR F/79

As the drawdown of American Forces in Vietnam continued in 1971 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile) became the last combat element of the division. On 1 August 1971 “C” Battery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (ARA), 20<sup>th</sup> Artillery stood down and was re-designated “F” Battery, 79<sup>th</sup> Artillery (AFA), 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade (Separate) 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile). F/79 would stand down on 31 July 1972.

The following information was extracted from the “History of F/79” prepared by Captain John R. Parker III and Chief Warrant Officer Ronald L. Tusi.

## OPERATIONAL SUMMARY

During the period 1 February 1972 through 31 July 1972, “F” Battery, 79<sup>th</sup> Aerial Field Artillery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade (Separate), 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division (Airmobile), continued to perform its myriad assortment of missions. In a General and Direct Support role, the unit supported medical evacuations, troop insertions and extractions, visual and electronic day/night surveillances, and close air support for friendly troops in contact. As U.S. troop withdrawal continued, and the role of U.S. forces was downgraded, “BLUE MAX” found itself in an even greater demand. Missions that had been performed by aviation units which had since “Stood Down” became a part of the Battery’s responsibility. Flight hours increased each month, until they peaked in the month of April when the enemy launched their Spring/Summer Offensive against Loc Ninh-An Loc. In that month alone 1623 combat hours were flown. This was by far the greatest number of combat flight hours ever logged by any U.S. Army aviation unit of comparable size in the 10 year Vietnam conflict. This six month period, highlighted by the offensive was to see ARVN and U.S. Airmen engaging enemy forces equipped with the most sophisticated weapons they had thus far employed in the war. During the offensive which began on 5 April 1972, “BLUE MAX” provided continuous day and night Aerial Rocket Artillery support against numerically superior forces which had surrounded the city of An Loc. The enemy’s goal and one that was publicly announced to the world was to capture An Loc and establish a “People’s Communist Government” thereby proving that U.S. Vietnamization efforts in South Vietnam had failed. In their gallant support, “BLUE MAX” Aviators encountered the most intense anti-aircraft fire ever experienced by U.S. Army Aviation at any time or place in history. Daily missions became daring encounters in which the Cobra Gunship was pitted against enemy tanks, missiles, and anti-aircraft weapons of virtually every caliber in the enemy arsenal. With artillery support nonexistent, friendly forces were on the brink of defeat on several occasions. In each instance “BLUE MAX” was decisive in denying enemy forces an assured victory. When inclement weather and the proximity of friendly forces to the enemy precluded the use of heavy tactical air support, “BLUE MAX” was the only air support which could be employed. After two and one-half months of savage fighting, 3 badly battered enemy divisions (5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> NVA) abandoned their offensive with virtually no gains in MR III. This battle has since proven to be the impetus for the ARVN and the South Vietnamese people to defeat and drive the communist aggressors from their country. During this period alone (5 April through 25 June 1972), “BLUE MAX” was credited with 1039 enemy kills and an impressive number of enemy weapons and supplies, to include 12 tanks destroyed and 4 damaged beyond use. Although this in itself was a monumental effort, the units greatest acclaim lies in the countless U.S. and ARVN soldiers it had saved by its courageous and responsive support. For its actions, “S” Battery, 79<sup>th</sup> Aerial Field Artillery was recommended for the U.S. Presidential and Valorous Unit Citations, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and the U.S. Army

Aviation Unit of the Year. Although its successes were many, they were not accomplished without loss. Thirty-three percent of the unit's aviator personnel were killed in action and others had been wounded. Of the original 12 Cobra Gunships in the battery inventory, 75% had been lost to battle damage. Of the 21 gunships flown against the enemy only two escaped without battle damage. The gallantry of the aviators of "BLUE MAX" has been recognized by the recommendation of one Distinguished Service Cross, 17 Silver Stars, and 33 Distinguished Flying Crosses.

After the enemy had been defeated at An Loc, "BLUE MAX" was deployed to Military Region I to participate in the Quang Tri Offensive. The unit departed Long Thuan on 25 June 1972 and was operationally ready for its 1<sup>st</sup> combat mission on 27 June 1972. During the month of July, which would be the last the unit would serve in Vietnam, "BLUE MAX" provided Aerial Field Artillery support for four major insertions of South Vietnamese Marines into and around the city of Quang Tri. After 7 years of distinguished service "BLUE MAX" stood down. The last combat mission was flown on 31 July by Captains Billy H. Causey, Paul J. Kedrow, Thomas W. Garret, and 1LT Johnny F. Ganas.

As mentioned above, 1/3 (9) of F/79's pilots were killed in action between 5 April and 24 June of 1972. This was perhaps the highest number of pilots killed in action in such a short period of time, especially considering the size of the unit. Following is a list of KIA's and WIA's.

CW2 Charles S. Windler	Aircraft Commander	5 April 72	Loc Ninh
CPT Henry M. Spengler	Pilot	5 April 72	Loc Ninh
CPT Robert F. Williams	Aircraft Commander	11 May 72	An Loc
CPT Rodney L. Strobidge	Pilot	11 May 72	An Loc
CW2 John R. Henn, Jr.	Aircraft Commander	24 May 72	An Loc
CW2 Issac Y. Hosaka	Pilot	24 May 72	An Loc
1LT Stephen E. Shields	Aircraft Commander	20 June 72	Tan Khai
CPT Edwin G. Northup	Pilot	20 June 72	Tan Khai
CW2 John L. Dilallo	Maintenance Test Pilot	24 June 72	Long Thuan

Two pilots were wounded during this same time period.

CW2 Roger L. Cauble	Aircraft Commander	11 April 72	Loc Ninh
CPT Marco A. Cordon	Pilot	21 June 72	Tan Khai

(Marco Cordon and Mike Brown survived having their tail boom blown off by an SA7 missile. Story published in "Straphanger" Jan/Feb/Mar 2013)

Also included in the history of F/79 is a Letter of Commendation written by COL William H. Miller, who was the senior U.S. Advisor on the ground at An Loc.

#### A LETTER OF COMMENDATION

13 May 1972

The purpose of this memorandum is to report on the superb performance of your unit:  
"F" Battery – 79<sup>th</sup> Aerial Field Artillery

During this period, I was on the ground in An Loc with the Division Commander of the 5<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division. The perimeter was the sum total of 1-grid square. Elements of the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> NVA Divisions supported by modern tanks converged on this little perimeter. There was no artillery covering An Loc and after one week no artillery was able to fire out from within. Additionally, there were no friendly forces outside to provide security or any form of early warning. The area was attacked day and night. Anti-aircraft fire from 23mm, 37mm, .51 caliber, and other assortment of weapons rendered an extreme hazard to aircraft.

To come to the essence of this commendation, let me state in Doughboy foxhole language what your unit did to save me and a small handful of Americans, plus an ARVN Division. The aforementioned unit went far beyond expectation of normal support – of all the massive support that was provided me at An Loc to coordinate, the Cobra emerged as supreme. Every radio screamed when they heard the Cobras were on the way, mainly because of their cheerful and willing pilots, the extreme accuracy of the weapons, it's own built-in FAC, own gunner-pilots, and no time was wasted in engaging the targets. Noteworthy was the ability to strike from high or low level, and its short turn-around time for re-fuel, re-arm. The importance of this support is beyond my faculty to report. This unit was the mainstay in brunting the big tank attack, 12-15 April 1972. The exact number of tanks destroyed I am not sure, but whatever the number, it was great. Additionally, the Cobras at countless times supported ARVN Infantry trying to re-gain lost ground. The accuracy and closeness is no doubt unparalleled. An Loc is still in friendly hands.

In my opinion, I truly believe that this type support can only be labeled as unprecedented. Aside from the support, the can-do attitude, and the feeling of warmth for the man on the ground were of the highest order. The everlasting statement by the individual pilots which stated "I'll be back as soon as I can re-arm," is best described as "nothing more could have been asked."

I highly recommend the Presidential Unit Citation and any other valor awards that can be bestowed upon this fine unit.

William H. Miller  
Colonel, Infantry  
Senior Adviser, 5<sup>th</sup> ARVN Division



## Chaplain's Corner “The Holidays are over?”

As I started to park my van at the Publix Grocery Store Parking Lot, in Parrish, FL, a young man moved in front of my left fender with his buggy and stopped it within my space. I stopped short and waited until he could see and witness my presence and maybe recognize my intentions of occupying the one remaining spot in that lane.

When he did, he was so polite and apologetic and immediately moved his buggy until I could safely park. Being that it was the day after Christmas and I was still feeling the “Spirit of the Season,” I remarked that I was willing to move to another lane even if it meant walking a greater distance. He was quick to reply that “No it’s alright and I don’t mind waiting.” He was still in the “Christmas Mood.”

A short conversation ensued about Christmas and how great the 79 degree temperature was, while it was hard to sing, ‘I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas,’ with much meaning. We both agreed that there is something about Christmas that causes people to be more polite and good-natured. They hold the door for each other, allow merging when in tight traffic, smile, and speak as if they were really interested in your life. However, a few days later – like after the twelve days of Christmas, they don’t even think about the door, merging in traffic, smiling, or even speaking.

I related to him a story of leaving the Christmas Show in Branson, MO in 2010, while trying to take my place from the left lane as we merged to exit the parking lot. I could tell by the look on her face that the young mother in the van next to me was not going to look my way, or else she would have had to have acknowledged my presence and continued the merging process which was going great without a hitch. As it came my time to merge, she immediately, if not sooner, closed the space between her front bumper and the rear bumper of the car in front of her. I was forced to stop and that left me looking straight across at the woman. To let her know that she had caused me to miss my turn in the merging process, I gently tapped my horn to get her attention. Without hesitation, she, staring straight ahead, flipped me the international finger of friendship! I was able to speak calmly to her while wishing her God’s blessing during this Holy Season of Christmas. As one would guess, she did not acknowledge my blessing!

But why is it that we can demonstrate an atmosphere of friendship and kindness during this special season and lose it for the rest of the year? The “lady” whom I encountered in Branson didn’t even keep it from the beautifully presented story of Christmas out to the parking lot! We have been empowered by God to be people of Peace and we should walk in that mode of Friendship daily displaying the love of God to others.

I close with the parting words of the stranger I met in a more friendly parking lot, “Wouldn’t it be great if we lived like it was Christmas all year long!”

Peace & health,

Bruce Wilder

“De mortuis nil nisi bonum” - Diogenes

*(Of the dead, nothing but good)*

Here is an obituary that should not cause grief for any of us, especially those who lost friends in Vietnam. This comes from the October 21<sup>st</sup> issue of Time Magazine. It seems rather strange that Time gives him such a glowing write-up after labeling him and Ho Chi Minh as Communists from the end of World War II through the end of the Vietnam War. Further, they declare that it was nationalism, not communism that fueled Vietnam’s bloody effort to rid itself of outsiders. It is equally strange that half of the country didn’t want communism and that at the end of the French Indo-China experience everyone who could flee from the North left. After the fall of South Vietnam everyone who could leave the country did. This is just one of the many reasons why I don’t subscribe to “Time.” A further reason is that in 2013 their choice for “Man of the Year” was Pope Francis followed very closely in the polling by Edward Snowden. Time milks every ounce of freedom out of the First Amendment. Time will say that they do not judge the man but only the impact they have on the world. In our perverse world right becomes what the majority thinks is right and treason can be overlooked. Other NVA generals have written that it is incomprehensible that we did not capitalize on the American victory at Tet, nor continue the bombing and mining of Haiphong and Hanoi for three more days. They say they were beaten on both counts and would have given up. They had nothing left after Tet. Such is the fate of wars that are run by polls and politicians with no stake in the cost. *Contributed by Jesse Hobby with additional commentary by The Editor*

DIED

## Vo Nguyen Giap

### Victorious general

Most military commanders would be happy winning a single war. Giap, the North Vietnamese general who died Oct. 4 at 102, could claim two. His 1954 defeat of French troops at Dien Bien Phu marked the end of French Indochina. Then, as his nation’s Defense Minister in 1968, the self-taught strategist oversaw the Tet offensive against American forces that hastened the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and the ultimate fall of South Vietnam.

Second in standing only to his mentor, North Vietnam’s communist leader Ho Chi Minh, Giap was ruthless, willing to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of his fellow Vietnamese. “Any American commander who took the same vast losses would not have lasted three weeks,” said Army General William Westmoreland, who commanded U.S. forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968. But Westmoreland’s infamous “enemy body counts” didn’t count what mattered. The Vietnamese were fighting for their homeland, and Washington seemed unable to grasp that it was largely nationalism, not communism, that fueled Vietnam’s bloody efforts to rid itself of outsiders. —MARK THOMPSON



TIME October 21, 2013

Credit to the old bastard. He lived to be 102 and, thanks to our politicians, could claim to have snatched victory from the jaws of defeat.

# Ladies of the Association

Hello ladies of the ARA.

No matter when the men in our lives served in Viet Nam or what their mission involved, all of us have the ARA as a point of connection in this hurried and fast evolving world. With the technology and social media available to us, today, what a difference we would have known if this was able to be used during the Viet Nam war.

Speaking of the war, during our recent vacation on a Danube river cruise, a gentleman named Ron overheard Cecil talking about the ARA and his time as a helicopter pilot in Viet Nam. Ron approached Cecil and asked what year he was there. Cecil told him and Ron said he had been a pilot in 'Nam also but did not have a great experience. He went on to say he was disappointed with the US Army and how he was treated after being wounded. After listening to Ron speak about his medical issues and where his life choices had taken him, he asked Cecil about his career. Cecil shared his military career in a nutshell and also spoke of the fulfillment he received when serving as Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs here in Pennsylvania. Ron congratulated Cecil on having such a fine career and told Cecil, he wished he had been able to stay in the US Army and do somewhat the same.

As an Army nurse, I think Ron was still trying to heal and deal with his Viet Nam experiences and we both encouraged him to contact his fellow unit members and reconnect with them. His wife also indicated that there are still some rough patches they need to resolve and move forward. We spoke with him and his wife for at least 2 hours and later Ron found us and thanked us for taking the time to share thoughts and reflections. Perhaps Ron reached out to Cecil because of that common thread of Viet Nam. Or just maybe he needed to talk with someone who has been there and truly understands. I am glad Cecil was able to provide even a brief positive note for this gentleman. I think we all agree that no one goes to a combat zone and returns as the very same person they were before they served in that far away place. For many of our warriors, healing and reconciliation still has not happened. I hope and pray that all the men and women like Ron find peace.

May 2014 find each of you happy, healthy, and anxious to reconnect with each other in Branson at our reunion in June.

Email addresses for Ladies of the ARA Association

Baird, Marlene -- [flytiger@cablone.net](mailto:flytiger@cablone.net) Borgeson, Pat -- [pbogson@lalique.com](mailto:pbogson@lalique.com) or [pborg12@yahoo.com](mailto:pborg12@yahoo.com)  
Brown, Linda -- [lindabrown@juno.com](mailto:lindabrown@juno.com) Cooper, Roberta [rangerover53@yahoo.com](mailto:rangerover53@yahoo.com) Dauley, Donna [dnurdgd@comcast.net](mailto:dnurdgd@comcast.net)  
Doty, Maureen [DotyMaureen@yahoo.com](mailto:DotyMaureen@yahoo.com) Fleming, Gloria --- [gwhz@hotmail.com](mailto:gwhz@hotmail.com) Giles, Rose --- [r.c.giles41@gmail.com](mailto:r.c.giles41@gmail.com)  
Gomez., Milly --- [chcogomez@aol.com](mailto:chcogomez@aol.com) Grice, Kathy --- [Kalgrice@gmail.com](mailto:Kalgrice@gmail.com) Hengeveld, Peggy --- [awings72@verizon.net](mailto:awings72@verizon.net)  
Hirst, Cindy --- [hirst@q.com](mailto:hirst@q.com) Hobby, Gloria [gloriahobby@yahoo.com](mailto:gloriahobby@yahoo.com) Klinker, Kay --- [kayklinker@gmail.com](mailto:kayklinker@gmail.com)  
Mahoney, Melba [skyqueen1@slo.rr.com](mailto:skyqueen1@slo.rr.com) McAlister, Marilyn - [5starmcalister@att.net](mailto:5starmcalister@att.net) O'Dell, Kathy - [i\\_am\\_kathy@hotmail.com](mailto:i_am_kathy@hotmail.com) O'Keefe, Maryetta --- [maryetta4@cox.net](mailto:maryetta4@cox.net) Padilla, Mary Jane --- [mary\\_jane\\_padilla@hotmail.com](mailto:mary_jane_padilla@hotmail.com) Pullano, Arlene --- [joseph.pullano@att.net](mailto:joseph.pullano@att.net) Quesada, Isabel-- [isaubra@hotmail.com](mailto:isaubra@hotmail.com) or [sapriisa44@hotmail.com](mailto:sapriisa44@hotmail.com) Retterath, Carol --- [ranch@westriv.com](mailto:ranch@westriv.com) Roberson, Linda -- [snshinede@aol.com](mailto:snshinede@aol.com)  
Sanchez, Susie -- [skdsigns1@verizon.net](mailto:skdsigns1@verizon.net) Szabo, Joan --- [sailboatjs1@verizon.net](mailto:sailboatjs1@verizon.net) Talbot, Jean --- [asatalbot@juno.com](mailto:asatalbot@juno.com)  
Toepel, Mildred -- [mbtoepel@msn.com](mailto:mbtoepel@msn.com) Tokar, Barbara -- [BarbTokar@SBC.Global.net](mailto:BarbTokar@SBC.Global.net) Voeltz, Jean -- [cav2\\_20th@hotmail.com](mailto:cav2_20th@hotmail.com) Wilder, Patti -- [pattenmom05@yahoo.com](mailto:pattenmom05@yahoo.com) Williams, Dale --- [barbierule@aol.com](mailto:barbierule@aol.com)  
Wilson, Ellie -- [geneandellie@comcast.net](mailto:geneandellie@comcast.net) Peg Zolonowski [pegZ48@aol.com](mailto:pegZ48@aol.com)

**Contact information for Board of Directors – Please add us to your contact list.**

**President**

Cecil B. Hengeveld  
16 Ardmore Drive  
Hummelstown, PA 17036  
Home Phone—717-566-8941 © 717-525-4786

E-mail [cufly66@verizon.net](mailto:cufly66@verizon.net)

**Immediate Past President/Website Manager**

Jesse L. Hobby,  
145 Oakdale Rd. SE  
Cairo, GA 39828  
Phone 229-378-2281  
E-mail [jesse\\_hobby@hotmail.com](mailto:jesse_hobby@hotmail.com)

**Vice President**

N G (Glenn) Brown  
268 Jeffcoat Rd.  
Haskell, TX 79521  
Phone—940-863-4048  
E-mail [brown.ng@juno.com](mailto:brown.ng@juno.com)

**Secretary**

Huey M O'Dell  
1993 Desoto St.  
Needles, CA 92362  
Phone—760-326-3585  
E-mail [hueyodell@hotmail.com](mailto:hueyodell@hotmail.com)

**Treasurer**

Jule Szabo  
5118 Brentwood Farm Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22030  
Phone—703-631-4566 (O) 703-808-6237  
E-mail [sailboatjs1@verizon.net](mailto:sailboatjs1@verizon.net)

**Editor /Publisher**

Asa R Talbot  
611 4th St.  
Elkton, VA 22827  
Phone—540-298-7546 © 540-430-1849  
E-mail [asatalbot@juno.com](mailto:asatalbot@juno.com)

**Chaplain/ Saber “Staff” writer**

(Not officially a Board member -included for contact purposes).  
William “Bruce” Wilder  
2004 Lynwood Drive  
Kingsport, TN 37660



**AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION**

**Membership Application**

This form may be used for Applying for New Membership or for Renewing Existing Membership. Please circle that which is appropriate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Wife's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Rank \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Number \_\_\_\_\_  
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**List all ARA Units that you served in.**

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Home Work (if okay) Cell

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Association membership is on an annual basis (unless member opts for life membership) running from January 1 to December 31 and is past due on January 31.

Annual dues are **\$25.00** regardless of when submitting.

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