



The Straphanger Gazette



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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 attachment



President's Corner

As I prepare these remarks, I am reflecting upon this past Labor Day weekend when I had the honor to have dinner with two new Army Engineer 2nd Lieutenants. Both have prepared long and hard for deployment and one begins a tour in Afghanistan this October. They have concerns, but are anxious to apply their skills in the service of their country.

You also applied your skills and talents serving. Remember when you received orders to deploy to Vietnam? We had trained hard knowing we would go. I am sure each of us had concerns, not knowing what to expect. Uncle Sam gave us orders and we followed.

Today's force is an all volunteer force. So is our Association. Today you must issue your own orders and follow them to the “Sweetest Town” in America. So start planning to attend the 2013 reunion with your fellow ARA comrades in Hershey PA. It is scheduled from 5-9 June. We plan to visit the Civil War battlefield in Gettysburg, tour UH-60's, CH-47's, AH-64's and operate their simulators. We will have time to explore other attractions such as Hershey Park, Zoo America and other attractions in the area. Hershey is about one hour from Baltimore, Philadelphia, and 2 hours from DC or New York City.

While putting this reunion together, I have had the pleasure to reconnect with two great guys I had not heard from since 1968. It has been great to refresh each other's memory on “how it was”. I am looking forward to seeing them in June 2013.

Our opportunities to reconnect with others who served in our unique ARA units are fast dwindling. Act now and plan to reconnect, revisit our youth and pass on our heritage (swap war stories) to fellow comrades.

By the way one of those 2nd Lieutenants is our granddaughter. Amazing how families who served in the past continue to serve today!

We are proud of both lieutenants as they serve our nation.

Cecil Hengeveld
ARA 6



The Generals Hengeveld and their granddaughter
2 Lt Samantha Wallish,
US Army Corps of Engineers

PAST PRESIDENT'S REPORT

When one makes the decision to attend an ARA Reunion one must also decide how to get there. After registering for "Portland 2012" and making hotel reservations Gloria and I decided to drive cross country from Georgia to Oregon. This decision was made partly to see some more of our beautiful country and to visit with friends we had made during our military career. After many days of driving and sightseeing we arrived in Las Vegas, NV and established contact with Warren and Patricia Mullen, an old friend from my tour of duty with ARA in 1965/66. Warren served as the S5 (Civil Affairs Officer) for 2/20 ARA BN and spent a lot of time establishing relations with local Vietnamese villagers and Montagnard tribes in the area around An Khe. This relationship paid off when one of our helicopters was lost in the mountains around An Khe on February 16, 1966. Local Montagnards were able to point out the area where it went in and enabled the rescue of the survivors. Warren is the only member of ARA mentioned by name in Edward Hymoff's "The First Air Cavalry Division – Vietnam" (1967). He was later assigned to "A" Battery and was my Section Leader for the rest of the tour. We were both assigned to Ft. Rucker, AL (1966-68) and our paths crossed briefly at Florida State University (1972-74) where he was on a Fellowship while I was completing my Bachelor's degree. So, it was after 38 years that we were able to reconnect and catch up on careers, families, children, etc.

From Las Vegas we worked our way to Citrus Heights, CA to visit Ron and Diane Hale, friends from our tour of duty with the 222nd Avn Bn at Ft. Wainwright, AK (1974 – 77). From there it was on to Portland and the Reunion. In addition to the regular attendees there were new/old faces that I had not seen since leaving Vietnam. One of these was James Flemming, who had served with me in A/3/377 and 2/20th. After leaving Portland we made our way to Colorado Springs, CO. to visit another set of friends from our tour in Alaska, Bob and Sandra Chandler. Believe me, when you are at the end of the line (and Ft. Wainwright, AK is about as far north as you can get) and winters are eight months long friends are very



Site of the old Ft. Wolters post HQ



Former WOC Barracks—finally has the barbed wire!

important and you keep up with them. The last set of friends that we visited before returning home were Joe and Arlene Pullano in Arlington, TX. Joe and I had served in 3/377th ARA/11th AAD at Ft. Benning, GA (1963/65) and 2/20th ARA (1965/66). Joe served in Hq Btry at Benning and during the early days in RVN before coming to "A" Battery, while I was in "A" Battery for my whole ARA experience. While we were there we made a trip to Mineral Wells, TX to visit the site of Ft. Wolters, now an industrial park, prison, NG Facility, energy support base for Baker Hughes, and who knows what else. The old BOQ appeared to be a retirement home, the PX was gone, the hospital nothing but a shell, the flight line was a parking area for a lot of rolling stock for energy companies. Most notable was the WOC barracks, now surrounded by barbed wire fences and signs stating that it was a medium security confinement facility. That's



This was my barracks when I was assigned to the 303rd ASA BN prior to going to the WOC program. Now just one of the many abandoned barracks on the post.

what most of us who went through the WOC program thought it was, just without the barbed wire. I did note that the prisoners now had air conditioning. It appeared to be a sad end for a post that had contributed so much to Army Aviation (by the time of deactivation 40,000 helicopter pilots had passed through) and as tribute to Ft. Wolters and the role it had played the city of Mineral Wells has restored the front gate to its original configuration from the 60's. They have also added an H-23D and will add a TH55A when its restoration is complete.



We also found a small memorial that had been established between Weatherford, TX and Mineral Wells to honor the Vietnam Veterans and those who passed through Ft. Wolters as Primary Helicopter Students before going on to Ft. Rucker, AL and/or Hunter AAF, Savannah, GA and then on to Vietnam. In it is a smaller version of "The Wall" and we were able to locate the names of the first two KIA's from A/2/20 – Ross J. Patterson and Freddie G. Lloyd. They died in the crash that Warren Mullen's Montagnard villagers pointed out.



The crash in which Ross Patterson and Freddie Lloyd were killed was on February 16, 1966. Jex Capener and Thomas Rupley survived.

In addition to the Huey on the pedestal there was a Marine Amphibious Track and a small museum with interesting artifacts – weapons, clothing, C-Rations, etc., plus models for sale and insignia of all kinds. I even found the old WO1 and CW2 bars from the Vietnam era.

So, while we go to reunions to reconnect with old friends from the ARA units that served the Army during the Vietnam era, the journey there and back can be a time for reconnecting with old friends from other times and places, especially those who can't make it to a reunion for one reason or other. These are memories and friendships that will be with us for the rest of our lives. With Reunions for 2013 and 2014 in the making, please make your plans to attend.

Jesse Hobby

ARA 6X

OLD AVIATORS NEVER DIE— THEY JUST FADE INTO MEMORIES AND DREAMS

1991 by Kent Ballard

Editor's Note: While this is not an ARA connected story and a little long, it is a poignant reminder that we grow old and sick and feel we are forgotten. Besides, I am a Naval Flight Surgeon (Class 109) and I like it.

Recently, there was a titanic air show at Genessee, New York. This "gathering of eagles" brought in WWII aircraft from all over the United States and Canada. Aircraft from all American military branches were there, along with combat fighters and bombers from the RAF, the Soviet Air Force, the Luftwaffe, and the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy. It was warbird heaven.

Try as I might, I couldn't adjust my schedule to attend. Feeling somewhat like the kid who didn't get picked for the team, I helped get our bomber tuned up, spit-shined, and polished. I was pretty dispirited when they left. I smiled and waved when they took off, never telling anyone how disappointed I felt. I watched until they flew out of sight, then quietly went home.

When our crew returned several days later, they brought with them a story that put my misery in its proper perspective. Just when you think that you have troubles, you always seem to hear about someone who is facing a real trial.

He was an old man, suffering from serious depression and an incurable illness. His future, such as it was, looked grim. Just a few weeks earlier he had been diagnosed as having Hodgkin's disease. In an effort to cheer their father up, his sons had driven him from Massachusetts to the great air show taking place in Genessee. Their dad had been a Navy combat pilot in WWII. He'd often told them stories about his days as a younger man, a man they'd never met and perhaps never really believed existed. But they knew how his eyes would light up when he talked about his wartime experiences. Dad became young again, if only for a moment, as he remembered being strong and healthy, fighting against fascism so many years ago. The boys hoped that being around the old warbirds would lift his spirits for at least a day.

His sons, loving and attentive, helped him out of the car somewhere on one of the fields reserved for parking. He'd been glancing up more frequently as they got closer to the airfield. With a veteran's practiced eye, he identified the aircraft as they wheeled and banked over the field or taxied to the parking positions. He'd already told his boys that 'his' plane wouldn't be there. They weren't saved after the war like the more glorified Flying Fortresses or Liberators. Still, young men by the thousands had flown and fought in 'his' type of aircraft, and not all of them had made it home.

He knew that the model he flew was only a memory shared by a dwindling band of old men like himself. His own sons had never even seen one of the planes that carried him to war. For the most part, no one knew they ever existed.

The old planes, like the old man himself, were fading away. Once they had been young, the hope and pride of a nation. But now, no one cared anymore.

They walked slowly along the crowded flight line. Over the rumble of the engines, Dad gestured for his boys. "That one's a B-17," he'd explain, "we had those in the Pacific, too. There's a P-38 Lightning. You can always tell by the twin tail booms. They were good escorts. They went in with us sometimes. We were glad to have them around."

Further down the line they passed a Japanese Zero. The old man glared at it silently for a moment, some strange emotion passing briefly across his face. His sons didn't know if it was grief, fear, anger, or a combination of all. He turned and without a backward glance continued his slow walk.

The memories were becoming stronger for him. The breeze carried the scent of rubber, aviation gas, and hot oil, just like his base used to smell. Planes jockeying into position along the line revved their engines, sending gale-force prop wash blowing across the tarmac as people clutched at their hats and leaned into the wind. Overhead was the deep-throated roar of ancient propeller-driven fighter formations passing in review, a sound unlike any other. Air show announcers all over the country call it the same thing: "The Sound of Freedom."

The father and his sons ambled along, pausing occasionally to look up at whatever was flying over. After one particularly low pass by a British Spitfire, the boys turned to remark to Dad and saw him standing as if he were frozen in place. He had walked around the aircraft they'd been looking at and was staring like a man possessed with the next plane in line. A look of incredulous wonder began to spread across his face, "My God," he whispered. "My God, there it is. It's someone who I never thought that I'd ever see again."

"What is it, Dad? Are you okay?"

He seemed to stand taller and his shoulders squared. "Okay? Hell yes, I'm okay! THERE'S MY PLANE!"

It just so happened that 'his' plane was also 'our' plane. Lockheed PV-2 "Harpoons" were never immortalized by Hollywood like the Flying Fortresses of "12 O'Clock High," the B-25 Mitchells of "Catch-22" or any of a score of other films. Why this is so remains a mystery, for the missions they flew were some of the most heroic "and harrowing" of the war. Flying out of New York, Norfolk, and Pensacola, PV-1s and 2s scoured the Atlantic for Nazi U-boats. The WWII cliché "sighted sub, sank same" is attributed to a PV-1 crew. In the Pacific theater, astonished Navy pilots soon realized that the PV-1 could actually outrun the dreaded Japanese Zeros, a feat unheard of for a medium bomber. The Lockheed's phenomenal speed saved scores, perhaps hundreds, of American lives.

With the debut of the heavier and more stable PV-2, Marine Corps pilots and ground crews, as usual, made a few non-standard "field modifications." This normally meant torching extra holes in the nose and welding in as many .50 cal. machine guns as they could cram into the forward bay. The Marines also tore out the torpedo and depth charge racks in the somewhat pregnant-looking bomb bay and installed hooks for 500 pounders and napalm. As if this wasn't enough, industrious gunneys even bolted rails under each wing and loaded them with air-to-ground rockets! Aeronautical engineers were appalled when they heard this, but soon reports came back from the combat zones of Harpoons taking on everything from subs and fighters to tanks and heavy cruisers, all with disastrous results to the enemy. The Harpoons could 'and did' fight anything. And somewhere amidst the fire and fury, somewhere between the Philippines and the Aleutians, there was a young Navy pilot who would live to be taken to Genesee, New York by his sons!

The old man stood at the front of the plane and, after a long moment, simply reached up and placed his hand on the underside of the nose. "I never knew they saved one," he said softly. "I never thought I'd see one again." To his sons, the man sounded as if he had suddenly found something priceless that he had lost many years ago.

One of his boys slipped around to the port side of the harpoon. He'd seen an open hatch and one of our crewmen standing near it. The younger man had decided to ask, plead, "beg if he had to" for permission to let his father climb aboard a Harpoon just one more time. Please, please!

To his surprise and delight, he was informed that we welcome visitors aboard our plane. In fact, we encourage them to climb in and take a look around. It's no fun having a bomber if you can't show it off once in a while, right? Besides, we're maintaining a living piece of American history, and we're rather proud of that fact.

The fellow who climbed into the hatch did so with the grace and familiarity of a young naval aviator, not an old man suffering from Hodgkin's disease. Our crewman offered to show the old gent around and point out objects of interest in the plane, a courtesy we perform for all visitors, but one of the man's sons tugged at his sleeve. "Dad knows his way around in here. Can we talk outside for a moment?"

Our crewman was somewhat bewildered, but he was beginning to realize that something out of the ordinary was going on. He'd seen that eerie look in the old fellow's eyes and it was plain that these other two guys wanted to explain his behavior. He hopped out of the hatch and listened to them. They told our man about their dad's crushing depression upon learning of his incurable disease, how they had hoped to just cheer him up a little, and how overjoyed he was to see that a bunch of characters from Indiana were actually flying around the country in a plane that he thought no longer existed.



PV-2 HARPOON (BUNO 37230) at the National Naval Aviation Museum Naval Air Station Pensacola FL 18 JUN 2009

Our man knew there was more to it than that. There was a lot of happiness and relief in these men, too. Their mission was accomplished: against all odds, they'd broken the black spell on their father. While the old aviator was still merrily poking about in our plane, a couple more of our crew strolled up munching on hamburgers. "What's up? Anything going on?"

"Yeah. Wait'll you hear this!"

Within minutes, two of our crewmen set out to round up the rest of the gang. The old man was still climbing in and out of the plane, kicking the landing gear and inspecting the bomb bay, when they all arrived. Our whole "away team" shook his hand and took pictures of him and his boys. The old fellow's joy was infectious, and our guys were glad to be a part of it. Then, someone in the crew came up with a brilliant idea. It was whispered from man to man and a hasty conference was held under the huge wing. Heads nodded all around. Yeah. It was agreed. They had to do this!

We were scheduled to make a flight the next day for "Aviation Classics" magazine. They wanted some pictures of our rare Harpoon doing its stuff. A photographer had been sent, a swift chase plane had been reserved, and takeoff was set for the following morning.

As is always the case, every seat available was already spoken for. Despite its size, and not counting the pilots and flight engineer, there are only five seats aboard our plane. She was designed as a combat aircraft, not a passenger plane. Even among the members of our organization, a flight is a rare treat. To be honest about the matter, at a fuel consumption rate of nearly two hundred gallons an hour we can't afford much joyriding. At air shows, our fuel and other expenses are paid for by the promoters of the show so every time we lift off, five lucky people get to take a "free" ride.

These seats are always reserved well in advance, usually for our own people who've spend countless hours of hard work and a lot of their own money to "keep 'em flying." It's a privilege we all look forward to every summer.

Our crew looked at the ancient Navy pilot standing beside the Harpoon. He constantly touched the aircraft as if to assure himself that it was really there and not just a dream. There was a haunted look about him, as if he were surrounded by the ghosts of his former comrades. He had survived the Zeros, but there would be no escape from the disease that now had a grip on him. The old veteran was fighting his last battle even as they watched!

"He can have my seat," one of our guys said softly.

"Naw. You haven't gone up for a while. Let him take mine."

Soon, there was a near fight among all five over who would give up their seat. It was a point of honor. Besides, people who fly and maintain old warbirds are slightly crazy anyway. The argument was settled and, beaming delightedly, the whole crew marched over to the man and his sons. They told him about the photo run that was scheduled for the next day and that we just, ahh, happened to have a spare seat available. Would he like to ride along on the flight?

The question stunned him. "Are you serious?" He looked from man to man, and their faces answered for them. They were all grinning like idiots and nodding their heads in encouragement. The aged Harpoon pilot blinked a few times and cleared his throat. Then, with his sons standing beside him, he lifted his chin and answered. "Yes," he said. "I'd love to go. Thanks, thank you very much."

His sons didn't comment on our crew's invitation. For some reason they were suddenly having trouble with their voices. But the way they looked at our people spoke volumes on the subject of heartfelt gratitude. The men from Massachusetts stood with the men from Indiana on an airfield in New York state, and the axiom of a brotherhood among airmen demonstrated its truth once more.

The old aviator arrived at dawn the next day. Only a couple of our people were up and at the aircraft at that time, groggily sipping coffee and still yawning. One of our guys commented that the veteran pilot looked surprisingly wide awake for that early hour. He replied that most of his combat missions had begun at dawn or even earlier. Besides, he admitted sheepishly, he had been unable to sleep the whole night. "I felt like a kid waiting for Christmas morning," he grinned.

Someone reached into a tool box and produced a thermos of coffee. The old fellow accepted a cup and sat a package down on the work bench. "I thought some of you might be interested in this." He carefully unwrapped a tattered and patched photo album. "My boys talked me into bringing it from home when we came up here. I'm glad I have it with me now." He opened the cover.

Our crewmen took one glance inside and snapped completely awake, nearly choking on their coffee. They stared at the book, then at each other.

The album was a gold mine. The then-young Navy pilot had taken dozens of black and white photos of his aircraft, both inside and out. Equally important, he'd taken many close-ups of the mechanics at work on his forward island bases. We had only been able to guess at where

some of the equipment was mounted in the interior of our plane, and how some of the field-expedient repairs had been accomplished under combat conditions. This book could allow us to rebuild and refurbish our plane to her exact wartime appearance, the goal of all military aircraft restorers. We have a thick manual for the bird, but it's no longer possible to do everything "by the book." Lockheed hasn't made parts for this aircraft for over fifty years. We knew that Navy and Marine mechanics had accomplished wonders with baling wire, tin cans, and friction tape: the big question was how? Which backyard repairs could we get away with and which ones could cause a crash? What do you do when a control cable snaps at 12,000 feet or the port engine starts blowing oil or the landing gear jams halfway down?

Our crewmen suddenly realized that the fellow sipping coffee and looking calmly back at them was not merely an old man suffering from Hodgkin's disease. He was also a retired United States Navy officer, a combat experienced aviator, and a government-trained expert on Lockheed PV-2 Harpoons. A few hours earlier, they felt as if he needed them. Now, it dawned on our crew that they needed him "badly" and the knowledge he had carried for nearly half a century.

"Sir, when the rest of our people get here, would you consider giving us a, uhh, briefing?"

He sat his cup down and smiled. "Be glad to."

Later that morning they were assembled around the elderly pilot, hanging on his every word. His constant touching and staring at the aircraft had not been the ghostly reminiscences of days gone by, but a careful and professional examination. Instinctively, he'd been giving our Harpoon a pre-flight inspection. He'd been quietly "grading" us on our reconditioning, maintenance, and craftsmanship. He'd noted where we had done well, and where there was need for improvement. Our crew jotted down page after page of memos on everything from how the navigator's table folded up to which hydraulic lines to inspect frequently. To no one's surprise, he said that some portions of the manual were nonsense, then went on to tell us how to do things the right way.

He gave our pilots detailed information on how to crash-land the plane in the event of total power failure. Harpoons are not noted for crash survivability, something we all keep in the back of our minds. His crew in the Pacific had been lucky to have him at the controls. He ran out of fuel once and had to belly in on a beach. The plane was a total loss, but the young Navy flyer saved his crew. Someday, God forbid, we may have to try it ourselves.

The veteran continued on for some time without any apparent fatigue or effects from his illness. Presently, a civilian aircraft noisily taxied up to the Harpoon and braked to a halt. Two men clambered out of the plane, the photographer and his pilot. They exchanged information with our pilots on how the photo flight was to be handled, shook hands, and hopped back in their plane. The Cessna turned and began to taxi back out to the runway.

Flight line workers began to circle the Harpoon, warning spectators away from our bomber and clearing a path for it to roll out from the parking area. Our pilots and engineer climbed up into the cockpit and began their pre-flight checklist. Two of our people, one at each engine, stood guard outside with fire extinguishers while four more eagerly entered the plane.

For the first and only time in their lives, the old man's sons watched him climb into a PV-2 Harpoon. Just inside the hatch, he turned and looked at his boys for a long moment. Something seemed to pass between them for an instant, then he gave them a "thumbs up" and shut the door.

He never thought that he'd see another of "his" planes and certainly never dreamed he'd fly in one again, if even only as a passenger, but fate had reserved him one more takeoff, just one more time. The last flight was under way!

Our pilot shouted out his window. "Clear!" The ground crewmen stood by with the fire extinguishers, just in case. The number one starter motor engaged the flywheel, causing that eerie high-pitched whine that quickens the blood of anyone who ever heard it. Then the pistons fired, coughed, and fired again, blowing out rapid puffs of smoke as the Hamilton-Standard prop began to spin. The engine smoothed and revved to a high idle, pounding out a sound like nearby thunder. Number two engine whined, backfired, and blew out a great cloud of white smoke. Its prop remained motionless. Doubtless cursing under his breath, the pilot initiated a restart while the ground crew eyed the engine suspiciously, extinguishers at the ready.

The flywheel built up speed again, the switch was thrown, and this time the mighty Pratt & Whitney radial roared into life, fairly bellowing strength and defiance. The whole aircraft shook visibly as the great 2,000 horsepower engines warmed up. The brakes strained to hold the ship in place while the preflight was completed, then they were gradually released and the bomber started to roll.

As always, she gained speed rapidly. Halfway down the strip, the barn-door sized tail lifted and the plane seemed to balance on her main gear. Then, with the awesome sound of a warbird, "the Sound of Freedom", the Harpoon thundered into the sky. They circled the field once, gaining altitude. The chase plane fell into formation with them, the photographer taking advantage of a beautiful cloudless day. The Harpoon banked gracefully, easing back over the airfield. Together the two aircraft made repeated passes giving the cameraman every shot he could wish for. When the photo run was over, both planes slowed and dropped into a landing glide path, flaps and gear down.

The smaller plane led the way, touching down well ahead of the big blue Navy patrol bomber.

It was the moment our crew had been waiting for. The airspace was now clear.

The Harpoon's gear went back up and the engines throttled forward. She picked up speed, streaked over the runway at a breathtaking fifteen feet, and rocketed back up in a tight climbing turn.

One of our ground crew grinned at the old pilot's sons. "I think your dad is in for a little treat." The Harpoon was now going in excess of two hundred fifty knots. The bomber stood on one wing, whirled around in a high-stress turn, and dove like a falcon - straight towards the field. Her engines were audible for miles, and the vast crowd of spectators looked up as one. "What the hell are they up to?" Hot dogs and soft drinks were dropped by the score as people snatched for their cameras. The plane shrieked over the flight line, a blue streak above the Mustangs and the Liberators and that thrice-damned Zero. In the wink of an eye, they blew past the throng of spectators as babies cried, women covered their ears, and children howled with delight. The slipstream sent hats, programs, and paper cups flying in every direction.

The plane rocked back on its tail and flew into the sun. The crowd squinted and tried to follow it. Eventually even the sound of the engines grew faint. The plane was gone, but to where? A few minutes passed, then someone shouted, "There! To the north!"

They'd gone for altitude, and were now diving back in again. But this time something was different. The plan was flying strangely. A teenager asked his father, "Are they in trouble?"

The Harpoon was dodging rapidly left and right and flinging itself up and down in the dive. Experienced combat pilots, and there are many at air shows, knew at first glance what the Navy bomber was doing. "Jinking" is how pilots are trained to avoid ground fire in combat. The plane was coming in under evasive action and gaining speed at an alarming rate. Two hundred sixty knots, two seventy, two ninety! Then, the aircraft straightened and flew with determined precision, seeming to aim itself at a point just opposite from the crowd on the other side of the runway.

The bomb bay doors snapped open and half dozen dark oblong shapes spilled out.

Spectators gasped as the objects tumbled and fell, whistling loudly as they came. The missiles hit the field and exploded into a spectacular red and green spray. The crowd sent up a mighty cheer as they realized what they'd seen, and the sons of our passenger laughed and cheered loudest of all.

Genessee, New York had just been bombed by a planeload of Indiana watermelons.

After pulling up from its surprise "bomb run," the Harpoon slowed to cruise speed, circled, and came back for a final pass before landing. She swooped in low and slow, one wing tipped in salute to the crowd while cameras clicked and video recorders whirred. Then, the great flaps lowered, the gear came down, and the tires screeched on contact with the tarmac. The bomber taxied to the parking apron, turned, and rolled slowly to her assigned area.

Flight line workers held back the crowds who surged in around her, waving, applauding, and holding children on the shoulders. The old aviator's sons stood with our ground crew, shielding their eyes from a final wind blast as the port brake was locked, the starboard engine revved, and the plane ground-looped perfectly into exactly the same spot she had left. The engines were cut, number two giving its characteristic double backfire, and the props clattered to a halt. The elevator surfaces on the huge tail lowered and thumped softly down to their rest positions. The flight was over, the bomber now silent.

Our crew formed a semicircle around the hatch, the veteran's sons standing expectantly in the front. For a long moment, the hatch remained closed. Then, the handle rotated, the door swung slowly open, and a figure appeared at the top of the access ladder. The sons looked up solemnly, as if seeing their father for the first time. He paused there, returning their gaze. Then, the emotion became too great for even him to control, and his loving, joyous smile became framed by streams of tears that rolled down both cheeks. He hopped down the short ladder and into the arms of his boys. Our crew surrounded them as they gripped each other, laughing and weeping, in an impassioned, back slapping, three-way hug.

The scene was best described to this writer by one of our female crew members.

"Oh, you should have seen it! These macho guys of ours in the plane came out and they were all crying. They were embarrassed by it, but they had to keep wiping their eyes. The old man was the happiest person I've ever seen in my life. He kept on laughing and crying at the same time and asking his boys if they saw the bomb run. They were nodding and hugging him. The ground crew was sniffing and snorting and looking at everything except each other. I finally gave up myself and said, "What the hell?" So, I started crying too.!

The aviator told everyone within earshot how happy he was to have been with us, even if only for a short while. Another of our ladies appeared at his side and asked if he would like to join our organization. Before she could even finish the question he exclaimed, "Yes!" She pulled an application out from behind her back and, grinning, handed the old fellow a pen. He quickly read the document and signed it on the offered back of our flight engineer.

After handing the paper back, he reached inside his jacket. "I have my checkbook with me. I can pay my first annual dues right now and---"

There was a cry of outrage and our "recruiting officer" steadfastly refused to take a cent. She looked around threateningly at the rest of the team and called for a forum. By immediate and unanimous voice vote, the veteran was made a life member of our crew on the spot, all dues waived forever.

Addresses and phone numbers were exchanged. The retired naval officer was told that he could expect our first organizational newsletter within a week and that we'd stay in touch by mail, keeping him abreast of developments with the plane. He replied that he had many photographs and notes pertaining to PV-2 Harpoons that he'd send us, as well as personal observations and letters answering any questions we might have in the future.

After some time, they had to leave for the long drive back to Massachusetts. Our men shook his firm hand for the last time, our wives and girlfriends each gave him a kiss, and it was time to leave. One of the sons kept repeating to our crew, "You don't know. You don't know what this has done for Dad. This has brought him back. He's his old self again. You just don't know!"

Well, maybe we don't. But we have a pretty good idea. We know what he did for us. Whatever else life may have in store for him, the veteran will always know that one of his planes is still flying, crewed by a new generation. And we will know that we have a friend, our senior member, who we can turn to when the skies grow dark and we need advice.

Sometimes people ask me why I love air shows. I never know what to tell them.

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THE FORTUNATE AND THE UNFORTUNATE

WO Mike O'Connor was recently the guest of honor at a Veterans memorial in Old Orchard, ME. Mike was the only ARA trooper who was held as a POW in the Hanoi Hilton. This photo was taken shortly after his release from captivity.

On February 4, 1968, Mike O'Connor was a pilot aboard UH1-C 65-09561, C Battery, 2/20 the ARA 1st Cav. Div. His aircraft was shot down, the other three crewmembers were killed and he was a prisoner of the NVA. Note the hash marks on his sleeve. (11). Each represents six months in combat and most of his were as a POW.

We regret to report that Dan Pruitt, B Battery 2/20th 1965-66, passed away about a year ago. He was a victim of PTSD.

FINAL FLIGHT



CPT Ronald A. Bartolucci, 65, of Brooklyn, NY, formerly of Ansonia, CT, made his final approach on August 31, 2012, at his residence.

He was born in Derby, CT on August 23, 1947, son of the late Albert D. and Lucy J. Mastrosimone Bartolucci. Ron was employed as a litigation attorney in New York City for many years. A proud veteran, he honorably served in C Battery/ 2/20th ARA, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) as a pilot in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam era and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross Medal.

He is survived by a son, Mark Nepf Bartolucci of Stony Brook, NY, two brothers, Kevin Bartolucci of Riverside, CA and Dennis Bartolucci of IL, and dear friend, Anita Pins of Brooklyn, NY.

CPT Ron Bartolucci, US Army, Pilot, A/C, DFC, C 2/20th ARA, RVN 69-70. Born 23AUG47, Died 31AUG12.
DUTY NOT REWARD

He was laid to rest with military honors on 6 September, 2012 in the family plot in Mount St. Peter Cemetery, Derby, CT

When I arrived at C 2/20th ARA, Quan Loi, RVN, Ron was one of the old guys who taught newbies (like me) how to fight the enemy with the AH-1G Cobras we flew. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for one of the many combat missions he flew during the year he served in Vietnam. He went on to become a very successful attorney back in civilian life and I never saw or spoke to him again, but that time we served together in RVN was all I needed to know that he was a Great American and I would never forget the outstanding fighting spirit example he demonstrated to me and the other men of Blue Max, 2/20th ARA. Rest in Peace, Ron

CPT Dave Newman, 2/20th ARA RVN 70 - 71

ALL GAVE SOME AND SOME GAVE ALL REMEMBERING THE FALLEN

W.O. Ronnie Beals, was (is) a Vietnam Veteran, who fought in the US Army, C Battery, 2nd Battalion 20th ARA, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). On December 29th, 1967, WO Beals, along with crewchief PFC Lupe P. Lopez, Corporal. Clifton Henson (doorgunner) and Larry Doyle (pilot), all set out on a combat support mission in their UH-1B gunship, when they began to take rounds from hostile fire, so much that their gunship lost power, and they crashed into a body of water, Beals died as a result of his injuries, and was listed as KIA.



Ladies of the Association

Message for the ladies of the ARA members

The recent ARA board of directors meeting held at Natural Tunnel State Park, Duffield, VA on 15-17 September created an opportunity for four ladies to venture into Kingsport, TN. While the men discussed vital items specific to the Association and next year's reunion in Hershey, PA, Gloria Hobby, Jean Talbot, Patti Wilder and I visited a huge antique shop in downtown Kingsport and had a delightful lunch at The Mustard Seed Café. Since most of us have collected "too much stuff" over the years and have tried valiantly to downsize, we still made some very necessary purchases at the Nook and Crannies Antique shop which once housed a department store.

As the planning for next year's reunion continues, I have checked out some very nice places for the ladies to visit. The Hershey Theatre and the Hershey Gardens are two favorite places for visitors coming to Hershey. Of course Hershey Park and Chocolate World will be open and for those who are bringing grandchildren there is a free shuttle from the hotel to these two locations.

I have a limited list of emails for the ladies, so please send your current email address to me at

awings72@verizon.net

and I will add it to our listing.

I have a special request. Please electronically send favorite pictures of your husband when he was in Vietnam and one from the present time. We want to take these pictures and make them into something very special for the Hershey reunion. To you guys: share this request with your wives, as I hope you share the Straphanger.

Hope your summer was wonderful as fall colors change the leaves and temperature changes are upon us. Cecil and I are truly looking forward to hosting the 2013 ARA reunion in Hershey, PA, and seeing everyone have a great time at the THE SWEETEST PLACE ON EARTH.

See you soon,
Peggy
ARA 6's Crewchief

(He flies the plane but you know who keeps it running and clean).

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

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Chaplain's Corner

Back to the Basics of Life

The new Board of Directors has just completed its first mid-year meeting at the Cove Ridge Center at Natural Tunnel State Park, Duffield, VA, where detailed plans were made for our 16th Reunion to be held in Hershey, PA, on June 5-9, 2013.

During the meeting I couldn't help but notice the preplanning that went into making this meeting successful. The Board President, Cecil Hengeveld, laid out his proposed agenda and methodically moved through the talking and discussion points until we reached an approved 3 day agenda for the reunion. The four members present were very civilized and contributed appropriately. When there were "sticky" points; pros and cons were presented and we were able to move to completion.

Were there differences of opinions? Yes, there were many. Did it cause any confusion and frustration? Yes, several times; however, it did not stop us from being united in purpose and enthusiasm.

I thought to myself when the meeting was over, "Why can't we as citizens of the United States of America conduct our social, political, and economical business in a like manner?" There seems to be so much turmoil and dissent among our leaders, the political parties, and the general population.

One would be correct in their assessment of the world's conditions today if they identified it as being confused and frustrated. It seems as though our world is racked with unrest these days more so than in the last half of the 20th Century. Multiple countries are experiencing daily rioting and contempt for the United States. Embassies are attacked, burned, and officials killed during the mayhem.

Our position as a nation on the world stage has been weakened. We have lost the respect of other nations. Our financial reputation is in danger of further erosion. In a nutshell, we are in trouble as a nation. No longer are we a nation holding on to the heritage of our forebears. Some citizens are calling for retaliation. They want "an eye for an eye!" Others would be satisfied if we just simply left the world arena, brought our troops home, ended our financial aid, stopped being the earth's police force, and started taking care of our social and economical problems. This predicament causes confusion and frustration.

The essence of who we are is being undermined by a more modern era of thinking. Respect for God is being challenged daily in our nation's capitol, military services, workplaces, schools, and homes. Our constitution is being watered-down by those seeking power. Our courts are being pressured to abandon time honored and proven laws to make way for a new wave of beliefs and precepts.

So how do we achieve peace among ourselves and others?

I suggest that we listen to the words of the famous country and western singer, Waylon Jennings' song, "Back to the Basics of Life."

We've let the darkness invade us too long

We've got to turn the tide

Oh and we need the passion that burned long ago

To come and open our eyes

There's no room for compromises.

*We need to get back to the basics of life
A heart that is pure and a love that is blind
A faith that is fervently grounded in Christ
The hope that endures for all times*

These are the basics, we need to get back to the basics of life.

Our creator said that we are his people and that he is our God. I believe it is time we did an inventory of that relationship. We can't keep turning our backs on God and expecting God to be there for us. May God bless us all in our efforts to live a Godly life, ease our confusion and frustration, and give us peace.

Peace and true hope,

Bruce Wilder
Chaplain

A group has recently surfaced called "The Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans. These are the collateral damage of the war. These are the kids who were left behind and may or may not have seen their dads return. These are the ones who pay the price for the PTSD and Agent Orange casualties.

They are growing with each day and presenting photos which they are finding in their treasure troves and memory boxes. The one below is of "the boys of the 2/20th in 1968-69.

Most are identified, but some are wanting to be known. Can you spot someone you knew?



I hope you will encourage these younger folks to pursue their memories. We are a diminishing group but these are the folks who can keep the flame alive and supply graphic evidence that "we were soldiers and once young".

The Editor.

C/2/42 Aerial Rocket Artillery

3/377 Aerial Rocket Artillery

11th Air Assault Division

1963 – 1965

The first Aerial Rocket Artillery unit was "C" Battery/2nd Battalion/42nd Artillery/11th Air Assault Division. Activated in February of 1963 it was de-activated in October of the same year. Headquarters and "A" Battery/3rd Battalion /377th Artillery/11th Air Assault Division were activated at that time and by summer of 1964, with the activation of "C" and "B" batteries, had expanded to a full battalion. The battalion stood down on July 1, 1965 and was re-flagged as 2nd Battalion/20th Artillery (ARA)/1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Deployment to the Republic of Vietnam began in August.

The following information was extracted from web site www.eleven-bravo.uk/thewar/combataforces/ara.php and was reprinted with the permission of site owner Mike Ruffle.

Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA)

In the Aerial Rocket Artillery (ARA) battalion, the objective was to deliver timely aerial artillery fires throughout the area of operations and to respond rapidly to any tactical mission that might be assigned. In furtherance of these objectives, SOPs were developed that proved to be successful in application. They were modified as necessary to cope with new problems. The following paragraphs discuss some of the problems encountered and aerial artillery operations in general.

Fire Mission Response

To provide rapid response, each battery designated an alert platoon, with the crews waiting in or near the aircraft which had been untied and pre-flighted. The platoon or section leader monitored his radio or telephone at the aircraft for fire missions. When an aerial artillery battery received a fire mission, the "alert" platoon or section was normally airborne within 2 minutes and en route toward the target.

Upon receipt of a "Fire Mission," the aircraft were started and run up, and checks were made while the platoon or section leader copied the mission. The format differed slightly from the standard artillery fire mission in that only the essentials of target location, direction of movement (if a moving target), and a brief target description were given initially. An early innovation was added by the battery operations providing a heading and time to target computed while plotting the target. This allowed the aircraft to proceed immediately toward the target without wasting valuable seconds finding the proper maps, plotting the location, and determining the correct heading prior to take-off. The platoon or section leader, plotted the target, planned the attack, and gave his fire commands, while en route

To reduce response time, the following factors were considered:

- Location of fire units. Response time was reduced by positioning ARA as close to the target area as the situation permitted.



- Pre-positioning of fuel and ammunition. This also reduced response time by allowing aircraft to be refueled and rearmed at positions as close to objective areas as security permitted.

Direct lines of communication between supported and supporting units. Considerable time was consumed when fire mission requests were relayed through various headquarters prior to reaching the unit to deliver the fires. Therefore, whenever practicable, the missions of reinforcing or general support-reinforcing were assigned to provide a quick fire channel for the supported unit.

En Route Procedures

To avoid detection en route and reduce exposure time to ground fire and air defense units, aircraft were flown "nap of the earth" with altitudes of 50 feet being regarded as 'high'. Through proper training and an alert attitude the threat of striking unseen obstacles was reduced to a minimum.

Flying at this low level greatly increased the problem of navigation, particularly when over great expanses of wooded area. DECCA, an electro-mechanical system graphically displaying the aircraft's position, proved to be of little value on short range flights because of the time delay in orientating and checking for accuracy. DECCA was used as a means to navigate to the objective area.

The ability to navigate to and sometimes below tree-top level was a must for air assault operations and increased as a direct function of training and practice. Accurate map reading combined with the use of a pre-selected course to the target area for a computed time (dead reckoning) proved to be the method most practical, accurate, and successful, for en route navigation.

The flight, regardless of the number of aircraft involved, was normally in an echelon formation en route so as to avoid more than one aircraft passing over the same point. It became the flight leader's responsibility to insure that all aircraft in his flight were advised of en-route obstacles.

Attack Techniques

With a platoon or section attacking a target from a single direction, one of two formations was used depending on the target's disposition. The first, employed primarily against a linear type target, was a formation of aircraft in column or "trail" with about 800 meters between aircraft. With all aircraft attacking parallel to the long axis of the target, a separation was necessary to allow each aircraft to fire and break off before the succeeding aircraft initiated firing. In the early days of ARA, no precise range or deflection probable errors had been established for the M3 rocket system because of uncontrollable variables such as air currents and gust effects. However, the range spread was known to be greater than the deflection; thus, the trail formation was more effective against a linear target than the second attack formation of line or "spread." In the spread formation, all aircraft came up on a line running perpendicular to the direction of attack. Normally used against area type targets, this formation had the advantage of permitting all aircraft to fire simultaneously and to maximize the volume of fire and surprise. Each aircraft, depending on its position in the formation, was assigned a corresponding portion of the target, much like individual howitzers firing a deflection spread. A disadvantage of the formation was the loss in aircraft maneuverability in the event of any weapon system being forced to break off the attack. The inside aircraft had to insure that the outside aircraft had turned away from the target before he too could turn.

Altitudes used in attacking the target with either formation were approximately the same. Tree-top level was maintained once the attack was commenced until reaching a point 2,000-2,500 meters away from the target. A pull-up to approximately 300 feet was then initiated so that the rockets could be fired at a negative angle to decrease range dispersion. This momentary increase in altitude was maintained only so long as it was necessary to fire the desired number of rockets. Short ranges between 1,200-1,800 meters were normal. After firing, an immediate transition back to "map of the earth" flying was started with the turn away from the target, taking advantage of whatever terrain was available for masking return fire. If more than one attack was required, another attack direction was usually selected to confuse the now alerted enemy.

The primary element of a fire mission using these techniques was accurate target location (six place coordinates). Since, when using direct fire techniques, the aircraft were subjected to greater exposure over enemy terrain, minimum time spent searching for the target was desirable. Often, friendly forward observers gave vectoring information to attacking aircraft with much success. A fault that was to be avoided in this technique was the tendency of an inexperienced controller to maneuver the aircraft too close to the target. Often aerial rocket artillery was called upon to neutralize anti-aircraft, aggressor and defense sites (.50-cal

MGs, mortars etc.) which were obvious threats to any operation which depended on the third dimension for movement. Normally out of range of the division ground artillery, these sites were major threats to the execution of air assault operations deep in the enemy's rear. To eliminate this danger to the troop-carrying helicopters, the aerial artillery was frequently given the mission of neutralizing this threat. More planning time was given to this type of mission than to others to insure that the most effective techniques were used. A thorough map reconnaissance was made to select a flight route and attack direction most limiting for the particular sites acquisition and firing capabilities. Whenever possible, the target was attacked in two or more directions to decrease the chance that aircraft would be picked up and to increase the element of surprise. At a pre-designated time, fire was massed on the target. Surveillance of damage was usually limited to estimates only, since lingering in the target area invited counter-fire.



Elements of the aerial rocket battalion were frequently called upon to provide artillery support for air assault operations.

The objective - to place fire on the enemy.

Depending on the needs of the task force commander, either preparatory or on-call fires, or both, were provided. Aerial artillery accompanied the lift formation en route to the landing zone or met it at an orbit point in the vicinity the objective. The drag created by the rocket pods made it difficult for the aerial artillery to move out from a troop formation to fire a preparation before the assault began. Unless required for column escort, it was more acceptable for aerial artillery to select its own flight route to a designated orbit point and to choose a firing direction most advantageous to the fire unit for the preparation. Timing became all important in this technique since the orbit point departure time plus en route time to the firing point equaled the time on target, backward planning was required from the desired time of the preparation. It became standard that the expenditure of ammunition for the preparation was one-half load, with the remainder kept for on-call missions from the fire support coordinator.

Night fire missions were performed regularly and with much success. In actuality, the greatest problem met during night firing was the danger of losing night vision from the lighted sight reticle and the bright burning of the rockets. Techniques and field expedients to reduce the brightness of the sight reticle were used to overcome this disadvantage. Night missions were handled in much the same way as day-light missions with minor variations in the interest of safety, to allow a greater margin for error in the spread of formations and the proximity to terrain. Again, the time-distance technique coupled with visible check points were the primary means of night navigation. Once in the target area, evidence of enemy activity was sought before a firing run was started to assure effective fire. If harassing fires were planned, rockets were fired into the target area without taking the time to determine the target's precise location.

Displacements

The "Lean-and-mean" concept for the aerial artillery was emphasized when the unit was required to move forward and operate for an extended period of time without benefit of any ground vehicle support. The only vehicles allowed forward were the aircraft with whatever equipment could be carried internally.

On one occasion, an ARA battalion was forced to make a night displacement because of a change in the tactical situation. Movement to a previously reconnoitered position was handled smoothly in accordance with the unit's SOP. An advance party was dispatched with radios and a portable lighting set to prepare the landing area. Aircraft were dispatched by platoon to occupy the position as soon as the area was deemed secure. Only dim aircraft position lights were used to avoid revealing the new position. After landing the aircraft, a perimeter was established integrating the rocket ships into the overall defense plan by anticipating their use as an airborne counterattack element.

The aerial rocket artillery battalion demonstrated remarkable flexibility and usefulness in air assault operations. Habitually, ARA elements accompanied and supported each air assault of company size or larger, remaining airborne in the area until initial objectives were secured (aerial direct fire provides the most effective support

for air assault). While the battalion could perform any of the artillery tactical missions, its most versatile role was that of general support, reinforcing direct support battalions with one or more batteries.

Inclement Weather

Operations during inclement weather caused little degradation of effectiveness during daylight hours. The aerial rocket artillery's capabilities were somewhat reduced during hours of darkness with the lower visibilities. As previously mentioned, the pilot needed to see and identify the target before he could place effective fire on it. When visibility decreased below one mile, the pilot could not see far enough ahead to have sufficient time to maneuver the aircraft into the best firing position on the initial sighting. However, the decreased visibility permitted firing at shorter ranges with less danger and increased accuracy after the target had been identified. Low ceilings did not constitute a problem except for ground fog. Only when the ceilings dropped below 300 feet were full capabilities reduced. However, a safety problem was added when aircraft normally operating at higher altitudes than the helicopters are forced lower to remain clear of the clouds. When coupled with low visibility, this caused the crew's concentration to be divided to a point that target observation and identification were less than desired.

High or gusty winds also caused a decrease in accuracy. Gusts caused erratic rocket flight and high winds caused an increase in lateral dispersion. This problem decreased as pilots were trained to fire in crosswind situations. Also, gusty or turbulent weather resulted in sudden, excessive loads ("G" forces) being placed on a heavily loaded aircraft, especially when coupled with any violent maneuver.

Refueling and Rearming

Refueling was accomplished in various ways. The most common during early stages of an operation was to land at a forward support airstrip that had been set up with multi-refueling stations. Fuel was flown into these areas by Caribou, Chinook, and Flying Crane. Areas on the airstrip were set aside for dispensing each of the various fuels and ammunitions required by division aircraft. Aircraft needing to be refueled and rearmed went to the particular stations that fulfilled their needs. This worked satisfactorily.

Later, refueling was done in the artillery's position areas. Five-hundred gallon bladders of fuel were brought in by cargo helicopters and the unit established its own POL/ammunition point using organic pumping equipment. This proved to be the best solution since flying time was saved and simultaneous refueling and rearming could take place. Pre-positioned ammunition was co-located with the fuel so that aircraft could set down between stacks of rockets and refuel and rearm at the same time. The turnaround time for an aircraft was between 4 and 8 minutes, depending on the pumping capacity of the equipment.

Whenever a portion of the unit was sent forward or attached to support an air assault operation, the supported unit generally provided the fuel and ammunition facilities for the rocket aircraft until unit facilities were established.



Fuel Bladders

Source

Aerial Rocket Artillery, Capt. Robert W. Arnold, Capt. Ira E. Greely, and Capt. Lawrence O. Zittrain, 3rd Battalion, 377th Artillery, *Artillery Trends*, April 1965

AND THE MEN WHO FLEW THEM AND KEPT THEM AIRBOURNE



Brian Russ—late 1970



Jim Caldwell—late 1970



Brian Russ and six Crew Chiefs – A /2/20 “Blue Max”

Recognize any of your friends?



Phuch Vinh – Late 1970



“Blue Max” Cobra – Cambodian Border



Quan Loi – May 1970



Vung Tau – Late 1970



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 _____
(At time of service in ARA) (If known)

Retired Rank (if applicable) _____ Service Number _____

List all ARA Units that you served in.

<u>Battery/Battalion</u>	<u>Dates of Service</u>	<u>Call Sign</u>
_____	From mo/yr to mo/yr	_____
_____	From mo/yr to mo/yr	_____

Current Address: _____
Street or PO Box

_____ City _____ State _____ Zip Code

Phone: _____
Home Work (if okay) Cell

E-Mail Address: _____

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.

Life membership (if paid in full) is \$250.00. Life membership may also be paid in \$50.00 installments on a quarterly basis until paid in full.

Total amount enclosed _____ (Please indicate in remarks section of check whether this is Initial Membership, Membership Renewal, Life Membership in full, Life Membership payment #.

Mail completed application to: Aerial Rocket Artillery Association
C/O Jule Szabo
5118 Brentwood Farm Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

For Office Use Only
Check # _____
Check Date _____
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Web address – www.araassociation.com