



# The Straphanger Gazette



Volume 3 Issue 1 Find us on the web @<http://www.aerial-rocket-artillery.org> July, August, September, 2010



**“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. A copy can also be obtained from the “members only” section on the web site.



## President's Corner

Having served as Vice-President for the past two years it

is an honor and a privilege to now serve as your President. The last two years have brought growth, financial soundness, member participation, memorable reunions, and perhaps most important – the reconnecting of old friends after long years of separation. We served on the battlefields of a distant land many years ago in one of the most unique military organizations in the history of the United States Army – the Aerial Rocket Artillery. While we, the Association, have come far we still have tasks to accomplish. We must establish administrative and financial policies and set procedures that will

carry us into the future. Continued growth of membership will be a priority since membership is the key to survival. As President I would like to state that Reunion 2010 in Bozeman, MT was, like our other reunions, truly outstanding. Glenn and Linda Brown set the standard last year in Midland, TX and Gary and Licia Bishop picked it up and ran with it this year. What makes reunions great is the location and the effort that sponsors put into them. From the time we arrived at Bozeman on Wednesday, June 23 until departure on Sunday, June 27, we were on the go. Wednesday evening was an open bar and informal dinner at which each member introduced himself, gave unit assignment, dates of tour, and a bit of personal history. The tour of Yellowstone on Thursday, the Little Bighorn Battlefield on Friday, the business meeting on Saturday all went smoothly and were enjoyed by all as well as the excursions in and around Bozeman by those who did not go on tours and those who took advantage of the few moments of free time that were available. Our Saturday excursion to the Vietnam Memorial at Bozeman's Sunset Hills Cemetery was especially memorable. There we were greeted by the Montana Chapter of the Patriot Guard. They all had American Flags and each one greeted us, thanked us for our service, welcomed us home, and presented each of us with a letter of appreciation and a

**Having heard the news of General Custer's dilemma at Little Big Horn, Colonel Rodger bravely led the charge to Bozeman.**



VSM inscribed “It's never too late – Welcome Home.”

That and our time at the wall, paying our respects to the comrades listed there, was a very moving experience. The

Banquet later that day was our final time of camaraderie and was enjoyed by all. We also had a preview of Reunion 2011 –

“Charleston, Where History Lives” – to be hosted by Ray Hatfield and myself, and an overview of Reunion 2012 – Portland, OR – to be hosted by Herb Hirst. On Sunday morning we met for our final breakfast, said our goodbyes, and most members departed for home. We hope all are looking forward to next year in Charleston, SC. I have purposely made my

column short, especially in recapping our activities, because Billy Wood has submitted an excellent overview of the reunion activities and has also submitted photo coverage. Other persons have also submitted write-ups and photos and it may take several issues to give full coverage. I and the other members of the Board of Directors welcome comments and input from members. I have listed the BOD with home phone numbers and e-mail addresses for contact purposes.

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Jesse Hobby, ARA 6

## *A Remarkable Reunion to Remember*

It just keeps getting better and better! We rode our Honda Gold Wing motorcycle approximately 2,000 miles from Mena, AR to Bozeman, MT to attend this year's ARA Association's annual reunion. We anticipated seeing beautiful scenery enroute and at Bozeman, meeting new, exciting people, renewing old friendships and enjoying great western style food - we just didn't know how good it was going to be!

We are fairly new members to the ARA Association and only last year did I decide to become a "Life Member." We have only great things to say about our involvement with this organization, its leadership and its wonderful members.

A little bit of personal history: In July 1966 I arrived at An Khe and was assigned to A Btry, 2/20th ARA, 1st Platoon. MAJ Ray Pollard was our commander. After returning home from this year's reunion I spoke with Ray and told him what a great reunion we had.

One of my flight school classmates and a dear friend, Dave Borgeson, was also in the same tent at An Khe in 1966, as were Rodger McAlister, Allan Klinker, Herb Hirst and myself. Dave was shot down in January 1967 and seriously injured. We hadn't seen each other since then - some 43 years. Dave, Rodger, Allan, Herb, et al were there in Bozeman this June 2010. What a reunion it was for us; one that I'll never forget.

Carolyn and I had such a marvelous time at the reunion. We cannot thank Gary and his lovely bride, Licia, enough for all that they did to make this reunion such a special event. The bus trip



**A reconnaissance of the Mammoth Hot Springs of Yellowstone by Herb Hirst, Willy Williams, Dave Borgeson, Bruce Wilder, Cecil Hengeveld, Billy Wood and Rodger McAlister**

Thursday, 24 June, to Yellowstone Nat'l Park, with our Park Ranger escort/guide "Butch," was beyond expectations! Even the 'brown-bag-lunches' we shared at the river were memorable. And then on Friday, 25 June, we toured Little Bighorn Battlefield Nat'l Park, with our excellent guide and new ARA President, Jesse Hobby.

Remarkably, we arrived on the anniversary of that momentous battle and there was a contingent of Native Americans there to remember their

ancestors. The bugle calls of "To Horse" and "Charge" are still reverberating in my ears and in my mind. We managed to come back on the bus, with all persons accounted for and no one was "scalped" during the outing.

Early Saturday morning, 26 June, I had been out to refuel the "Gold Wing" and returned to the parking lot of the Best Western Gran Tree Inn where our reunion was being held. We were to have a general membership meeting that morning and later that afternoon a trip to the Sunset Hills Cemetery in Bozeman for a "memorial service." As I turned the bike's ignition switch off and lowered the kick stand in the motel parking lot, a "Harley" rider in a black leather vest with hundreds of patches sewn on it approached. He said, "Morning!" I returned the greeting and we visited for about ten minutes. About 60 of his friends were arriving and also parking their bikes in front of the motel. I asked if they were all together. He introduced himself, "Yes, my name is Joe Deason, I'm the Montana State Coordinator for the Patriot Guards." He never allowed what they were there for, but was extremely friendly and noticed my bike had several military decals on it. Before I returned to my room we shook hands and he said, "Thank you for your service."



**A mini-reunion of A Batt. 2/20th (1966) L-R Dave Borgeson, Billy Wood, Rodger McAlister, Allen Klinker and Herb Hirst**



**Chuck Voeltz and Bruce Wilder join Steve Keller who represents the 7th Cavalry before the monument to the memory of Custer's and his men.**

After the general membership meeting and elections, we had an informal lunch and stood down until about 2:00 pm. Gary Bishop had alerted us to gather at the rear parking lot and stated that we would carpool to the Sunset Hills Cemetery for the “memorial service.” None of us knew what type of service would be held. We had learned there was a replica of the Vietnam Wall at the cemetery.

It was a short, pleasant drive through the downtown Bozeman area, then east several blocks and a right turn into the green, still cemetery. We parked along a shaded path between rows of cedars and firs. Folks quietly got out of their cars and began walking south. After twenty yards or so, I noticed what appeared to be a long row of large American flags, perpendicular to the path on which we were walking. Looking closer I saw that each flag was held by an individual - dressed in motorcycle regalia. And then we could see their bikes...



**A Patriot Guard bike says it all.**

his buddies, men and women, gave each of us a letter and small gift. Then each man/woman said to us, “Welcome home and thank you for your service!” You could’ve have knocked me over with a feather. I was so very surprised and almost speechless. A warmer, more sincere welcome home, I’ve never experienced. Gary Bishop and Joe Deason had arranged this “welcome home” well in advance of the reunion and managed to keep it a secret.

The tears began to roll down my face, I couldn’t hold them back. “That’s the Montana Patriot Guards I talked with this morning,” I said to Carolyn and Dave Borgeson. We walked further and then entered a receiving line and began shaking hands with Joe Deason and his fellow bikers. Joe and



**Billy Wood, a new friend and a “thank you”.**

That Saturday evening the reunion culminated with a wonder-

ful banquet and dinner, complete with a speaker and patriotic program. Much visiting occurred and warm good-byes spoken.



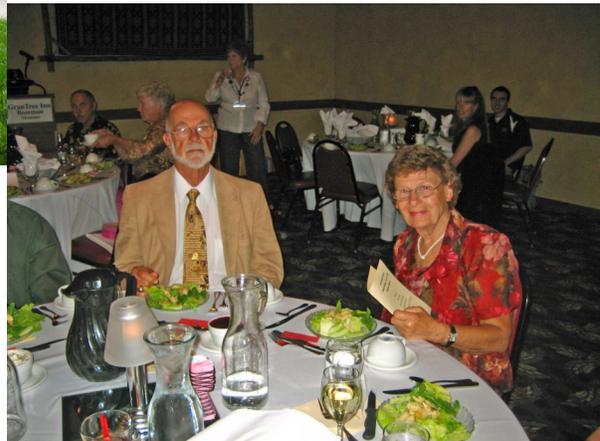
**Viet Nam Wall - Sunset Hills Cemetery- our ARA guys in attendance**

At home now in Mena, the wonderful memories of Bozeman, Yellowstone, Little Bighorn, the “Patriot Guard,” our ARA Association and a fantastic reunion are still vivid. I only wish more of the association would have been there to also enjoy it. Those of us who were there won’t ever forget this one!

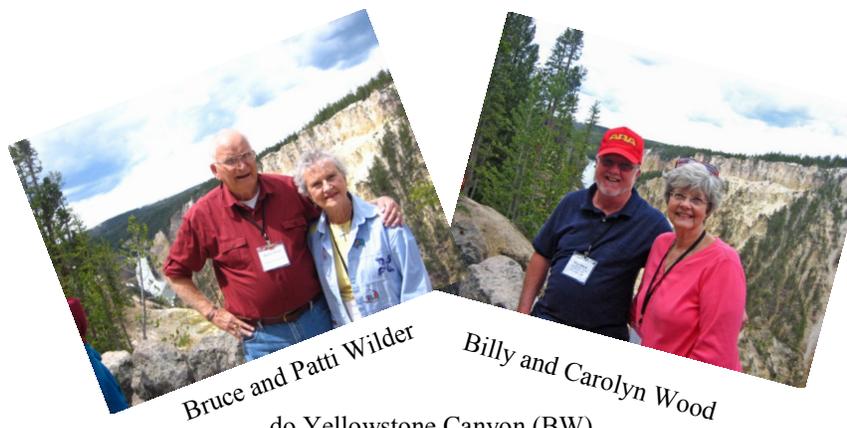
We are truly excited and looking forward to Charleston, SC in 2011 and Portland, OR in 2012.

Can it get any better than Bozeman 2010?

Story and pictures by:  
 Billy R. Wood  
 A Battery, 2/20th (ARA )  
 1966-67



**Doc and Jean Talbot enjoy the fine cuisine and fellowship at the final banquet**



Bruce and Patti Wilder  
Billy and Carolyn Wood  
do Yellowstone Canyon (BW)



Donna and Wayne Jacobs do dinner (BW)



At Yellowstone Billy Wood,, Dave Borgeson & Carolyn Wood did lunch *au natural* - still better than "C" s. (CH)



Cecil Hengeveld demonstrates his skill at "blowing smoke"(CH)



The 7th Cavalry stands ready at Little Big Horn. (CH)



President Jesse Hobby moonlighting as a tour guide. (CH)



The Indians are forming up for the assault. (CH)



Marilyn seems happy that Rodger survived the battle with his hat on. Cecil and Peggy Hengevald and Dave Borgeson enjoy their dinner. (ART)



Box lunches are again the order of the day for the spectators - like Bull Run. (CH)

*So much happened at and around the reunion which highlighted the importance of the women behind the men who defend our freedoms that this issue will carry some special content dedicated to our ladies.—The editor*

## THE LADIES OF THE FLIGHT

Hi Ladies,

I hear that fun was had by all at the reunion. I wish we could have been there, but family comes first. Our granddaughter gave birth to Jasmine Nichole, a beautiful 6 lbs baby girl. What made it so very special was that her dad came home from Iraq for the birth. It was such a joy to see him with his daughter. While he was holding her, she was looking right at him. I know you are all going to say, “now grandma, she’s only 2 days old and she was not smiling”. However, she was indeed. His love for his daughter was so real and the SMILE they shared was so real. Thank you God for showing your love.

He will be going back to Iraq on the 20th of this July. My granddaughter is trying to be so brave and it breaks my heart. Oh, I know she is not the only one out there doing without their husband, but to see her put on that smile and to see these young girls putting on a happy front for their husbands warms my heart. It makes me go back to when we had to smile while we stood at the train station and waved as our husband left for Vietnam. I remember holding my son’s hand trying not to cry, trying to understand the same thing they are wondering. What are we doing in this war?

Maybe, if we keep praying and asking God for no more wars, no more violence in the world, and no more lies to gain power we can change the trend. Let your love for mankind shine through for the world to see.

We would like to share more good news. Our beautiful granddaughter was crowned Mrs. Maine America for 2010 on Mother’s Day in Portland Maine. She will be going to Arizona for the Mrs. America Pageant. They crowned our great granddaughter (a month before) as Little Miss Pine Tree State for 2010. So, you know our cup is overflowing.

Peace and love

Terri (Mother Therese)

#####

**Picture Credits:**

**CH = Cecil Hengeveld**

**BW = Billy Wood**

**ART = Asa Talbot**

## LADIES OF THE ASSOCIATION

As the newly elected President’s Wife, this will be my initial input to the Newsletter. It won’t be the last and I would like to hear from other wives who wish to make input also. We all have a story or stories to tell as Soldier’s Wives, whether we married them before they were soldiers, after they “joined up,” or after they got out, whether they were career or one term.

Jesse and I left our little town of Cairo, GA on June 15<sup>th</sup> and made our way upcountry to Indiana where we meet up with Bruce and Patti Wilder and Roger and Marilyn McAlister and then on to Minnesota where we added Chuck and Jean Voeltz to the party. We had a great time driving across the country and viewing its beauty and finally arrived in Bozeman on June 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Arriving at the Gran Tree Inn in Bozeman we quickly settled in and began renewing old friendships and making new ones. A no host informal dinner and an open bar set the tone. The guys all introduced themselves, identified their units and time of service, and told interesting things about themselves and others (we learned things that we did not know). It was a great beginning and it got even better.

On Thursday (June 24) we set off on a tour bus for Yellowstone National Park. The bus ride was long but a lot of fun as we got to know our fellow travelers. Our guide for the day, Orville (Butch) Bach, was a former Park Ranger, and upon arrival at Yellowstone, introduced us to one of the great wonders of this beautiful country of ours. Entering through the North Gate (Also known as Roosevelt Gate) we went first through the park headquarters area which included “Fort Yellowstone” (the Army was responsible for policing the park during its early years) and viewed Mammoth Hot Springs, one of the “hot spots” of the park. We then proceeded along the northern route, passing many beautiful waterfalls, meadows, and rock formations. The most beautiful of the falls are the Upper and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River. To say they were beautiful is actually an understatement – they were absolutely stunning! We ate lunch on the banks of the Yellowstone River and that was a unique experience. When 54 passengers climb off a bus and start looking for places to sit and eat, you quickly take up any available space. Our driver, however, was a very resourceful person, and quickly opened all of the baggage bays of the bus and we all found places to sit. Our next stop was the Mud Volcano and the Sulphur Caldron. This was another of the hot spots of the Park. One could watch hot mud bubbling out of the ground and smell some very obnoxious odors. One hot spring is aptly named “Dragon’s Breath.” Moving on, we soon arrived at the area known as Lake Village, where we viewed Yellowstone Lake and heard a very interesting

lecture given by one of the Park Rangers. From there we moved on past the West Thumb of the lake and finally arrived at what is perhaps the most famous and spectacular attraction of the whole park – “Old Faithful.” While waiting for it to perform (they can time it to



**Old Faithful—Always**  
Photo by Cecil H.

+/- 5 minutes) we had the opportunity to explore the Old Faithful Lodge, reported to be the largest log structure in the world. After observing the eruption we boarded the bus again and began working our way out of the park by way of the West Gate, arriving back in Bozeman late in the evening. This short summary does not really do justice to the fantastic beauty of the area. In addition to the scenery we observed herds of buffalo, elk,

deer, and waterfowl. It was worth the entire journey to get here.

On Friday, June 25<sup>th</sup>, while one group departed for the Custer Battlefield, those of us who stayed behind had the opportunity to visit several of Bozeman’s scenic attractions including a tour of the “Ellen Theatre” and some of the ladies visited “Quilting in the Country” and “Mountain Arts Pottery” where we observed actual production of these handicrafts and had the opportunity to purchase products. I believe that some people actually went fly fishing and trail riding. It was a very eventful day that ended with everyone dispersing to local eateries for dinner. Our group wound up at Ted’s Montana Grill where we feasted on various bison entrées.

On Saturday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, the guys spent most of the morning in the General Membership Business Meeting. The ladies had the opportunity to visit the “Gallatin County Farmers and Craft Market” and again make local purchases. Later that morning we had a ladies gathering at the Gran Tree Inn and got to know each other better and swapped wives stories and talked about children and grandchildren. We had so much fun that the men complained about the noise coming from our room, which was adjacent to theirs. In the early afternoon we had free time for lunch and to wander around Bozeman doing the tourist thing. Later in the afternoon, we all boarded POV’s and drove to the Vietnam Memorial Wall at the Sunset Hills Cemetery. After parking and making our way up the hill to the

monument we were surprised to find an Honor Guard from the Montana Chapter of the Patriot Guards waiting for us. The men and women of this organization, all holding American Flags, had formed a line to welcome, us and presented each member with a “Welcome Home Letter and Pin” (See the Chaplain’s Corner). Our guys truly appreciated this. For some it was the first time that anyone had said “Welcome Home” and thanked them for their service. It was a very emotional time for all present.



**The Ladies gather at the Vietnam Memorial (photo by Billy Woods)**

Back at the Inn it was time for our Reunion Banquet. We had a great meal, a great speaker, great random prizes, and great camaraderie. While the men paid tribute to fallen and departed comrades, we also said goodbye to one of our own. We had received word that Adele Beck, wife of Fred Beck, had died on April 28<sup>th</sup>. To honor her memory we placed a lighted white candle on a side table and said our own goodbye. She will be missed (See Final Flight section).

Sunday morning was our last gathering. We had breakfast and most members departed for home. Some were home that evening and for others it was another two weeks before we finally got there. I think that it was a very memorable time for all who were there. Patti Wilder has put together the roster of wives and if anyone wants contact information you may reach her

at 423-245-6116 or e-mail: pwilder@

charter.net.  
Gloria Hobby  
“Falconess 6”  
229 378-2281  
Gloriahobby  
@yahoo.com



**Jesse Hobby and the Patriot Guard line of Honor**  
Photo by Billy Woods

## From the Founders Chair:

Hello my fellow Straphangers.  
 Now that the 2010 ARA association reunion in Bozeman Montana is over, it is time to focus on a new year. We have a new ARA commander and officers. Let us help to continue forward in the growth of the association. My understanding is that Gary Bishop did a bang up job of putting on a great reunion and everyone had a great time. Thank you Gary, you are a true American. Those who command future reunions will have a hard time matching your skills.

It is time for everyone to start planning to join us for the Aerial Rocket Artillery 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion in Charleston, SC!

Until next time, "Clear Left, Sir.

### ARA REUNION 2011 CHARLESTON, SC

Ray Hatfield and Jesse Hobby are co-hosting the 2011 ARA Reunion and have established the reunion website on the internet. Go to [www.ara-reunion.org](http://www.ara-reunion.org) to view the home page. Click on "Discover Charleston" to learn what this city has to offer. The website will be fully operational by October 1, 2010 with all details filled in and we will be ready to accept registrations at that time.

I would like to thank all those who made our trip to Bozeman so special, including all the wives. We had a wonderful time renewing past acquaintances and forging new ones with those coming for the first time. Each year our friendships grow as we get to know each other better. And we have a fantastic time doing it. We are here to support our husbands and we are so proud of them. This was one trip we will always cherish and I know we are all looking forward to next year. I don't know about y'all but I'm lovin it!

Jean Voeltz

Secretary to the Secretary

Bruce Wilder and Chuck Voeltz doing what old and new secretaries do—scary



This marks the burial site of the remains of the horses recovered after the battle. We must always remember the fallen and those who supported our efforts. (ART)



Hey Terry! Don't question the chow. Just eat it!(ART)



The memorial of the Lakota Sioux at Little Big Horn. Indian politicians make speeches too!

These are the brave souls who made the trip

|   | MEMBER           | GUEST        |
|---|------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Larry Mobley     | Regina/Libby |
| 2 | Rodger McAlister | Marilyn      |
| 3 | Hal Caldwell     | Ginny        |
| 4 | Huey O'Dell      | Kathy        |

|    |                 |                  |    |                 |              |
|----|-----------------|------------------|----|-----------------|--------------|
| 5  | G. Bishop       | Licia            | 25 | Fred Beck       | Barry        |
| 6  | Wayne Jacobs    | Donna            | 26 | Don Bennett     | Carol        |
| 7  | Stan Davis      | Maria Crouthamel | 27 | Bob Furney      | Mary         |
| 8  | Jesse Hobby     | Gloria           | 28 | Erik Johnson    | Deborah      |
| 9  | W. Titchnell    | Mary Alice       | 29 | Mark Tolliver   | Kelly        |
| 10 | David Courchane | N/A              | 32 | Steve. Stumpff  | Mary Jean    |
| 11 | Asa Talbot      | Jean             | 33 | Stephen Cole    | Maxine       |
| 12 | Charles Voeltz  | Jean             | 34 | David Ogle      | N/A          |
| 13 | Johnny Grice    | Kathy            | 35 | Larry Jensen    | N/A          |
| 14 | Steve. Melancon | Jan/+2           | 36 | Jim Dauley      | Donna        |
| 15 | Billy Wood      | Carolyn          | 37 | Vern Estes      | N/A          |
| 16 | Bert Toepel     | Mildred          | 38 | Benito Romero   | Jane +3      |
| 17 | Herb Hirst      | Cindy            | 39 | Correy Couch    | Patti        |
| 18 | B. Wilder       | Patti            | 40 | Terry Bell      | N/A          |
| 19 | Mike. Russell   | N/A              | 41 | N. G. Brown     | Linda        |
| 20 | Willy Williams  | Dale             | 42 | Bill Retterath  | Carol        |
| 21 | Dave Borgeson   | N/A              | 43 | Allan Klinker   | N/A          |
| 22 | Waffy Voss      | N/A              | 44 | George Govignon | Sheila       |
| 23 | Gene Wilson     | Ellie            | 45 | Cecil Hengeveld | Peggy        |
| 24 | D. Rounkles     | N/A              | 46 | Roy Ward        | Glenda/Logan |

**Jean Voeltz gets her wish. Here are new friends!**

NEW MEMBERS ADDED CY 2010 AS OF 6/27/10

| MEM# | Last Name | First Name     | MI | Rank | Unit    | Btry | Dates   |
|------|-----------|----------------|----|------|---------|------|---------|
| 0615 | Jacobs    | Wayne          | D. | SP5  | 4/77    | B    | 69-70   |
| 0616 | Olsen     | Alan           | V. | WO   | 2/20    | A    | 66-67   |
| 0617 | Norman    | George         |    | L.   | E-5     | 2/20 | B 66-67 |
| 0618 | Eggleston | Robert         |    | SP4  | 3/377   | A    | 63-64   |
| 0619 | Johnson   | Erik           | K. | WO   | 2/20    | B    | 68-69   |
| 0620 | Neal      | Paul           | G. | CPT  | 2/20    | A    | 66-67   |
|      |           |                |    | MAJ  | 4/77    | HQ/A | 68-69   |
| 0621 | Myers     | Jerry          | L. | E-5  | 2/20    | A    | 68-69   |
| 0622 | Tolliver  | Marcus         |    | E.   | CW22/20 | C    | 68-70   |
| 0623 | Jensen    | Larry          |    | D.   | WO1     | 2/20 | B 69-68 |
| 0624 | Anderson  | William (Bill) | L. | CPT  | 3/377   | HQ   | 64-65   |
|      |           |                |    | 2/20 | A       |      | 65-66   |
| 0625 | Hanson    | Richard        |    |      | CW24/77 | A    | 69-70   |
| 0626 | Dauley    | James          |    | F.   | CPT     | 2/20 | B 68-69 |
| 0627 | Estes     | Vernon         | L. |      | CW22/20 | B    | 65-66   |
| 0628 | Hanah     | Bernard        | H. | SP4  | 2/20    | B    | 69-70   |
| 0629 | Haub      | Kenneth        | E. |      | CW22/20 | HQ/A | 68-69   |
| 0630 | Retterath | William        |    | SP5  | 2/20    | B    | 68-69   |
| 0631 | Rounkles  | Dee            |    | SP5  | 2/20    | B    | 67-68   |
| 0632 | Ward      | Roy            | A. | SP5  | 2/20    | C    | 67-68   |

Total active membership is 149 – 91 Life/58 Annual

Extracted from Data Base, submitted by Secretary Chuck Voeltz.

## It's not the places, it's not the stories-it's the people

Shortly after returning from the reunion in Bozeman, Montana, I sent Jesse Hobby an email asking him a question about the membership database. He immediately replied to my email but also requested an article about the reunion. I became a "target of opportunity." As I thought about this task I began to wonder why I go to the reunions. What is the draw? But first things first..

We had a great time! Gary, Licia Bishop, and the entire ARA Board did a marvelous job. The reunion was well organized with plenty to do. There was never a dull moment. In addition to the reunion, my family made it a vacation. Jan and I took our youngest grandson (12) and her youngest niece (10). We got there early so we could go to the Lewis and Clark Caverns. We walked 30 minutes up the side of a mountain just to get to the entrance. We gained 300 feet in elevation. After entering the cave we spiraled down for 2½ hours. My grandson really loved it, so for that reason I enjoyed it, albeit my legs were aching. The next day was Yellowstone on a tour bus with a wonderful guide. It was a 12 hour day and well worth the trip...the only way to see Yellowstone.

The following day the group went to the Little Big Horn Battlefield. I would have loved to have made that function, but I promised the kids we would go horseback riding. As I stated above, a good tour guide and a nice bus is the only way to see Yellowstone, but horseback is the only way to *experience* Yellowstone. It was fabulous. After 4 hours on the horse I could barely walk when we returned to the stables. The young wrangler (tour guide) inquired if my knees hurt? I informed him the pain went far beyond my knees. For the next couple of days my walking stride was perfect for a commercial for Preparation H.



The Riders of Yellowstone—Steve's niece Stevie Nevels, his grandson, Marcus Vlakovic, and the man himself, Steve Melançon

We had a great time and a good vacation but that does not explain why I go to the reunions. It is great fun to look at old pictures. I love to hear the war stories...

"There I was at 1500 feet..." or "do you remember when...?" For a few days the distant mirror behind the cobwebs in my mind got a little clearer and I was back 42 years ago. I love all of this but that is not why I go.

I have many friends and acquaintances in my community. Some I have known all my life. Most are good people, but there are very few I am willing to trust with my life. Not for an instant. It is different with you guys. You are a breed apart. For both of my tours (2/20 and 4/77), I trusted you with my life, daily.

Happenstance and the bureaucracy of the US Army brought us together. Separated from family and friends,



Hugh Odell, Jesse Hobby, Wallace Tichnell, Terry Bell, Mike Russell and Bill Ratterath in a "tight" formation.

you became my family and friends. Not only did we experience the normal risks associated with being in a combat zone, but we compounded the risks by

strapping those inherently dangerous flying machines, loaded with explosives, to our bodies and flying off as if it was a Sunday outing. Each of you, regardless of duty assignment, understood that your action or inaction could mean the difference between life and death. I never found you wanting. That is remarkable when you consider our ages and experience levels at the time.

For me the reunion is a nice way to spend a little time with people I truly trust outside my family. I find it comforting to be with people who have been in combat and seen death, because you appreciate life as no "civilian" can. So why do I go to the reunions? *I go because you are there.* Lord willing, I will see you in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2011.

Steve. Melançon -B/2/20 1968, B/4/77 Aug-Nov 1971  
77th FA Btry ARA (Prov) Dec 1971 - Feb 1972



Tich Tichnell, Hugh O'Dell, Steve Melançon, Hal Calwell, Dee Roukles, Mike Russell, Larry Moberly and David Courchance—faithful over the years!

## ***FINAL FLIGHT***

*While we are blessed to report no deaths among our members, in keeping with our desire to honor the women who allow and support our military careers, we would like to honor the following ladies -The Editor*

Adele H. Beck passed from this life on April 28, 2010. She had been planning to be with Fred at the Bozeman reunion. In a display of great courage, and with the support of his son, Barry, Fred came to Bozeman and celebrated with his friends. There is no question where or when we will see Adele again. Her heart belonged to her Lord as much as to her beloved husband of 49 years.



### **TRIBUTE TO ADELE BECK**

**We are Soldier's Wives and always will be because the men we are married to were and always will be Soldiers. They have their own way of honoring and saying goodbye to fallen and departed comrades and we are now saying goodbye to one of our own. Adele Beck, wife of Fred Beck and mother of Barry Beck, died on April 28, 2010. We wish to honor her memory with this simple and moving epitaph.**

**The rumors of many battles are stilled,  
And the soldiers rest in peace beside their rusting swords.**

**And you who loved it all so well  
Now lie quietly beneath the soft flowers  
Whose sweet warmth tempers the wind to your fragility.**

**Above you, like a flag, the red autumn leaves  
Flutter in the sunlight,**

**And a bird flying south,  
Pauses to sing his clear notes,**

**Ringling like a bugle sounding taps.**

**And now, we who loved you leave you,**

**A soldier's wife, Buried with honor.**

*As read by Marilyn McAlister*



**Fred and Barry Beck at the final banquet.**

**(ART)**

## ***A Great Lady Has Passed!***

Pamela Murphy, widow of WWII hero and actor, Audie Murphy, died peacefully at her home on April 8, 2010. Her late husband was the most decorated soldier in WWII but Mrs. Murphy established her own 35 year career working as a patient liaison at the Sepulveda VA Hospital, treating every veteran who visited the facility as if they were a VIP.

Any soldier or Marine who came into the hospital got the same treatment from her. She would walk the hallways with her clipboard in hand making sure "her boys" got to see the specialist they needed.

If they didn't, watch out. Her boys weren't Medal of Honor recipients or a movie star like Audie, but that didn't matter to Pam. They had served their country. That was good enough for her. She never called a veteran by his first name. It was always, "Mister." Respect came with the job.

"Nobody could cut through VA red tape faster than Mrs. Murphy," said veteran Stephan Sherman, speaking for thousands of veterans she befriended over the years. "Many times I watched her march a veteran who had been waiting more than an hour right into the doctor's office. She was even reprimanded a few times, but it didn't matter to Mrs. Murphy. Only her boys mattered. She was our angel".

Audie Murphy died broke in a plane crash in 1971, having squandered millions of dollars on gambling, bad investments, and yes, other women. "Even with the adultery, and desertion at the end, he always remained my hero." She went from a comfortable ranch-style home in Van Nuys, where she raised two sons, to a small apartment—taking a clerk's job at the nearby VA to support herself and start paying off her faded movie star husband's debts. At first, no one knew who she was. Soon, though, word spread through the VA that the nice woman with the clipboard was Audie Murphy's widow. It was like saying General Patton had just walked in the front door. Men with tears in their eyes came up to her and gave her a hug. "Thank you," they said, over and over.

The first couple of years, the hugs were more for Audie's memory as a war hero. The last 30 years, they were for Pam. One year she was asked to be the focus of a Veteran's Day column for all the work she had done. She shook her head no. "Honor them, not me," she said, pointing to a group of Veterans down the hallway. "They're the ones who deserve it." The vets disagreed. Mrs. Murphy deserved the accolades, they said. Incredibly, in 2002, Pam's job was going to be eliminated in budget cuts. She was considered "excess staff." "I don't think helping cut down on veterans complaints and showing them the respect they deserve, should be considered excess staff," she said. Neither did the veterans. They went ballistic, holding a rally for her outside the VA gates. Pretty soon, word came down from the top of the VA. Pam Murphy was no longer considered "excess staff." She continued working full time at the VA until 2007, when she was 87.

At 88, attending a conference for homeless veterans Pam wanted to see if there was anything she could do to help some of "her boys." Pam was 90 when she died. What a lady!

**(Adapted from Dennis McCarthy, LA Times, April 15, 2010)**



## Chaplain's Corner



### Welcome Home!

“And the Father ran to his son, hugged him, and welcomed him home!” So goes the story of the Prodigal Son.

And on Saturday afternoon, June 26, 2010, members of the ARA Big Sky Reunion, walked up the long road in the Bozeman, Montana Cemetery to the Vietnam Memorial Wall to be greeted by the members of the Patriot Guard Riders of Montana where their motorcycles were uniformly parked in the dress-right-dress tradition, with their members lined up on the left side of the road to receive us with, “Thank you for your service, WELCOME HOME!”

When I came home from my two tours in Vietnam in the 1960's, the only welcoming party I had was my family. Not one other person ever said, Thank you, welcome home.”

In Washington, DC in 1973, while going to sign mortgage papers, I was even forced off the sidewalk into the street by several residents of our Nations Capitol City!

While in seminary when veterans were coming home from Operation Desert Storm, my country tried to expand the Ticker Tape Parade ceremony to cover their mistake by saying it was also for we Vietnam Veterans, even though over twenty years of silence had passed and many of us were no longer alive. My thought was, ‘Too little, too late!’ All these thoughts were put to rest on that beautiful Saturday afternoon as we proceeded through that line of “proud patriots” who personally thanked each and every one of us with a genuine look of gratitude, a firm handshake, presentation of a beaded lanyard symbolic of the colors of the Vietnam Service Medal, and a personal letter of thanks from the Riders. Inside that letter was an individual Vietnam Service Medal bordered on the top and bottom with “IT'S NEVER TOO LATE, WELCOME HOME.”

I was so awestruck that I found it difficult to hold back my emotions. Halfway through the receiving line I came face-to-face with a lady who stood short, but stood so proud with tears streaming down her face as she took my hand and said, “Thank you for your service, welcome home!” That was the moment I had been seeking all these years, and all it took was a group of sincere patriots. I was

overwhelmed by my emotions – I had made it home, finally; and my service was appreciated.

The story of the Prodigal Son goes on to say that there was rejoicing and food. After our “HOMECOMING,” we rejoiced with the Patriot Guard Riders” around the Vietnam Memorial Wall, shed more tears, made new friends, and took plenty of pictures. We then proceeded back to the GranTree Inn for our banquet and to celebrate our rich heritage of Aerial Rocket Artillery and to conclude a wonderful trip to another spectacular part of God's great world and a magnificent reunion. To all those were not able to attend the reunion, I pass on to you the greeting from the Patriot Guard Riders of Montana, “Thank you for your service. Welcome Home!”

May God continue to bless and keep you safe.

Bruce Wilder  
Chaplain/Vice President



Dear True American,  
The Patriot Guard Riders of Montana welcome you and all members of The Aerial Rocket Artillery Association to Bozeman. The PGR and our entire nation are indebted to you for your commitment and service to our country in those very trying times. We cannot say thank you enough, and our pledge is to not let the citizens of this country forget the sacrifices you have made. Our world is a different place today and finally, our military personnel are beginning to get the public respect and dignity they so richly deserve. In the years of your service so long ago, our military was viewed by most, in an entirely different light. Tragic and so very unfortunate, but hopefully, the world has learned a valuable lesson from those times. We cannot ever be allowed to forget all those that unselfishly served our Nation, those that gave their very lives on foreign soil, and the men you knew as friends, crew members and buddies.

Rest assured, you and your fallen comrades are not forgotten and as the years pass by, never shall be. Please accept this pin as a small token of Thanks from all of The Patriot Guard Riders of Montana. As the Thank you again service. May  
Guard Riders of pin so aptly states... for your your visit to Bozeman's Vietnam Memorial Wall honoring all those fallen heroes, always remain a cherished memory in your heart.



Patriot Guard Riders of Montana  
[www.pgrmt.org](http://www.pgrmt.org)

# AERIAL ROCKET ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION

## Membership Application

This form may be used for New membership or for Renewing existing membership. Please circle that which is appropriate.

Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Rank (at time of service in ARA) \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Number \_\_\_\_\_

Retired Rank (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ Service # \_\_\_\_\_

Btry & Bn in which you served \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Service - From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ Call Sign in ARA \_\_\_\_\_

mo/yr mo/yr

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Street or PO Box \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Home \_\_\_\_\_

Work (if OK) \_\_\_\_\_

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.**

If joining or renewing during the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter (Jan - Mar) dues are \$20.00.

If joining or renewing during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter (Apr - Jun) dues are \$15.00.

If joining or renewing during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter (Jul - Sep) dues are \$10.00.

If joining or renewing during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (Oct - Dec) dues are \$5.00.

Life membership (if paid in full) is \$250.00.

Life membership may 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 Larry Mobley

779 County Road 106

Ozark, AL 36360

**For Office Use Only**

Check # \_\_\_\_\_

Check Date \_\_\_\_\_

Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Date Rcvd \_\_\_\_\_

