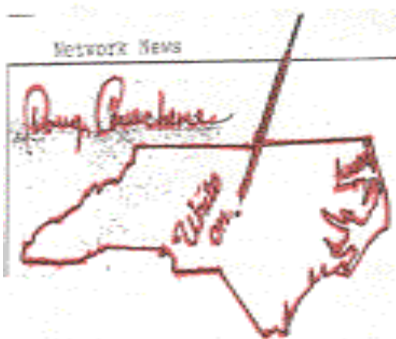




**RETIRED AIR FORCE  
FIRE CHIEFS'  
QUARTERLY NETWORK  
NEWSLETTER  
JANUARY-MARCH 2003**

**HAPPY NEW YEAR WISHES  
HEALTH & PROSPERITY**



**Bob Barrow, Editor**  
“mailto:chief.one@cox.net”  
**Associate Editors Gus Hunter**  
“mailto:dandahunter@aol.com”  
**& Douglas Courchene**  
“mailto:dougecourchene@aol.com”  
”  
*for QNN copies click on*  
<http://www.dodfire.com/index.htm>



**A Gathering of AF Retired Fire Chiefs/Pioneers**  
<http://www.dodfire.com/Retirees/guestbook.htm>



"A Gathering of Retired AF Fire Chiefs/Pioneers" will occur at the Adam's Mark Hotel in downtown Dallas, August 23, 2003. FREE admittances to the ICHIEFS "Fire Rescue International and Expo Hall" opener on August 22, 2003 for all those that can be there. These outstanding meetings are FREE. Look to future QNNs for details and to <http://www.dodfire.com/Retirees>

**soon for registration forms and hotel booking.** Chief Milt Puckett is the Retirees point of contact (POC) with the Air Force. Contact Milt at [helmilpuck@comcast.net](mailto:helmilpuck@comcast.net) or any of the editors for help. **Editor's comments: Ask any of the 52 retirees that attended "Pioneer Day-Dallas 2000" what a wonderful time they had or just look at their photos in DoDFIRE Retirees.** A picture is worth a 1,000 words

**MARK YOUR CALENDERS FOR 22-23 August @ DALLAS 2003 GATHERING**  
Suggestions are solicited. Anyone that can donate a door prize(s) of unique and appropriate nature for this event would be most appreciated. Something found only in your State or area. **Mail to: QNN Editor, 126 Clements Street NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548 or email [chief.one@cox.net](mailto:chief.one@cox.net)**

**TALK OF PIONEERS!** Three Early WW II Pioneers have been in contact with your editor and I will briefly share some of their stories. Doug Courchene's "Pioneers With Intent", and account of early Army/Air Force Fire Fighting, will be in more detail and with

pictures, too. **Chief Bob Vreeland, former Chief, HQs SAC Fire Protection** sent a most generous contribution to the “Stamp Fund” and a bio of his long distinguished Fire Service. Bob is a third-generation Fire Chief. His Grandfather, Father and self were Fire Chiefs in their hometown of Dover, New Jersey, starting back in 1862. Bob’s career started in 1918 tagging along with dad to fires, fire drills and fire meetings. In 1930 he started a Fire Brigade in the Dover High School and was elected their Fire Chief in 1932/33. The brigade assisted the Municipal Fire Department in various duties. Upon Graduation “with honors” Bob secured a position as the Section Chief, New Jersey Forest Service. There he saved a child that had broken through an icy pond. Bob’s Red Cross Lifesaving Training and being an experienced swimmer paid off for the trapped victim. On October 28, 1940, the biggest fire of his young life occurred at The Hercules Powder Company, an explosion followed by a mass conflagration. He was the first mutual-aid fire officer with a fire crew on the scene. At the outbreak of WW II, he entered the US Army and was sent to Fort Belvoir Fire Fighting School. He would spend the next 10 years traveling the world for the US Army. He was sent to Schofield Barracks, Hawaii where on August 9, 1942 he was involved in a 13,000 stored land mine supply area explosion with mass conflagration. Bob, a Staff Sergeant by then led his Fire Fighting Platoon into the fire area and quickly extinguish and safe tied the area for salvage and overhaul. That earned Bob a Commendation and slot for Officer’s Candidate School, stateside. After OCS he joined up with the 2010 Engineering Aviation Fire Fighting Platoon supporting the Battle of the Bulge. On 31 December 1944, an enemy “ME 262” aircraft attacks on a troop ammunition train set several rail cars on fire. Bob, a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. then led his Fire Fighters to a burning car connected to a car load of “105 Howitzer” shells and successfully disconnected the burning car and removed it a safe distance. For this action he was decorated with the “Soldier’s Medal for Heroism” and promptly promoted to Captain. Bob’s experience and leadership was tapped to promote and improve Fire Fighting, Fire Prevention and Fire Safety during his Army/Air Force career. You will have to see Doug’s book for the rest of the story. I hope that Bob and wife, Barbara, can be at Dallas-2003 for a fitting recognition by his peers. Thanks Bob, for protecting our nation and for the dedication to the Fire Service...

**Chief James G. Davis at [r11@maui.net](mailto:r11@maui.net)** 1204th Engineer Fire Fighting Platoon Historian - World War II. Also, see <http://www.dodfire.com/History.htm> website for Jim’s story. Jim currently lives in Hawaii. Your editors are trying to hook up Chief Robert “BoB” Vreeland who lives in Riverside, Calif. with Jim who has a computer; but Bob does not. So snail mail is about the only way unless, of course both could be at Dallas-2003. Excerpts of Doug’s and my email to Bob and Jim follows: Chief Bob Vreeland commanded the 2067th Engineer Aviation Fire Fighting Platoon, Camp Ponchatrain, Louisiana. Bob landed at Normandy, France, D+6 with the 2010th Engineer Aviation Fire Fighting Platoon. Chief Vreeland was highly decorated for his WW-II Fire Fighting actions and was discharged a Captain after starting as a Private in 1942. He does not have email. I believe Camp Ponchatrain was the basic training site for the early platoons. James may have received training in La, also. Doug’s book has a chapter devoted to early fire apparatus. Bob wrote: Jim, in answer to your questions, I trained and was licensed on all the early apparatus you noted. You are right about the CLASS designation being changed in the 50s to TYPE designation for Crash Rescue vehicles, i.e.: Class 150 to Type 0-6; Class 155 to Type 0-5 etc. I’ve sent you a Fire Truck History web page

<http://www.dodfire.com/Album/buy.htm> that will clear up the question for you. I am also sending the QNN for you to look over. Doug was Editor 1991 through 2001. I took over the duties in 2002. Kindest regards, Bob

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**Chief Val Allen of Buda, Texas was the third Pioneer.** He enlisted in the Army in 1939 and qualified for pilot training at Carswell Army Air Field shortly after WW II started. He received his Flight Warrant Officer bars and wings in time to participate in the Battle of the Bulge, flying in Troop Gliders on combat mission. CWO Allen spent most of his military time in the Fire Department when not flying; and converting to the new Air Force Fire Protection in 1948. Part of Val's story appeared in QNN's April-June 2002 issue. One of Val's remarkable qualities has been his service to others, both in and out of the uniform. Val helped me while we were both in the fire service and he is still giving excellent advice. We are both rated 100% disabled by the VA, due to service-connected (SC) wounds and health problems. My battle still continues with the VA Rating Board on certain SC residuals and is currently at the Board of Veterans Appeal in Washington D.C. Val has been a Texas Veterans' Service Officer since 1971, helping over 5000 of disabled veterans file and win their long awaited SC rating. He has 25,000 hours logged in helping veterans and he continues to help those that, need help through the complicated VA system. He holds the coveted "Texas Medal of Honor" for outstanding volunteer and patriotic service. Val relates that God willing, he and several other Chiefs (my Texas Connection) will be at Dallas-2003. He has recently been under care of a physician for heart irregularities. So far surgery has not been required. Our prayers are with you and Inez that you may keep the good work going for many more years.

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CONGRATULATIONS to Chief Bill Parsons [chief353@cox.net](mailto:chief353@cox.net) upon his retirement as Chief of Fire Prevention, Eglin AFB Fire Department, November 22, 2002. His extended family, friends and co-workers attended the nicest ceremony and reception that I have had the occasion to attend lately...

CONGRATULATIONS to Chief Guy J Wills, Jr. [chiefwills@aol.com](mailto:chiefwills@aol.com) upon completion of 50 Years of Fire Service to his country and his community. A most worthy goal, not easily attainable by most in this career field. Attrition takes hold long before the "Big 50" mark hits for a multitude of reasons. Over 80 family, close friends, and comrades attended the recognition luncheon at the Two Trees Restaurant on Wednesday, October 30, 2002. Guy currently serves as Chief, Ocean City-Wright Fire District that is geographically between Eglin Main Base and Hurlburt AFB. Prior to that, he served as CMS USAF Fire Protection (33 year retirement). Editor's comment, it was my pleasure to have served with Guy @ Eglin. CONGRATULATIONS to Chief David Grantham and "B" Shift Station Chief William Bell, Davis-Monthan AFB Fire Department. Both veterans FireFighters have 32+ years of service will be recognized in a dual retirement ceremony, December 27, 2002, 1000 hrs at the main fire station on DM. Those that cannot attend cards are welcomed

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My sincere thanks to those Contributors that wrote stories and/ or sent money for the "Stamp Fund." Everyone enjoys traveling down past's memory lane. True some write better than others. However, don't let that stop you, we can fix that. Your stories are

important. They help the Retired and Active Chiefs bridge the generational gap. Your letters, emails and phone calls make my day.



TAPS:

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**Fire Chief John Schaber (87) Retired at Fairchild AFB, answered his Final Alarm September 28, 2002. Chief Schaber of Cheney, Washington is survived by his wife and son, "Bill". Bill received his dad's QNN by email [Peschab@cs.com](mailto:Peschab@cs.com) and read each issue with him. John had been a charter member of the Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs Group. We will miss him and offer our condolences to the Schaber Family. Editor's comment: Thanks to Fire Chiefs John Eliseo [Homesafe@best1.net](mailto:Homesafe@best1.net) and Art Williams for passing this information.**

**Chief M.C. "Mickey" Butler (79) of Sequin, Texas, answered his final alarm November 11, 2002. Chief Butler had served as Fire Chief at a number of Bases- Foster, Bergstrom, Hill and Pope AFBs to name a few. Mickey was also a charter member of the Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs Group. We will miss him and offer our condolences to his wife, Velma, and Family. Editor's comment: Thanks to Fire Chief Joe Jarrell [firechief6736@yahoo.com](mailto:firechief6736@yahoo.com) for passing this information.**



Click on 0-10

**TSGT RICHARD COXSON (59), US Air Force (Retired) Veteran Fire Fighter RICHARD COXSON of Crestview, Florida, has answered his final alarm on November 28, 2002 while recovering from Pancreatic Cancer surgery at Emory Cancer Treatment Center, Atlanta, Georgia. Richard served as a USAF military Fire Protection Specialist prior to his Air Force retirement. He was serving as a Fire Prevention Education Specialist with the Hurlburt Fire Department at the time of his death. On behalf of the Eglin/Hurlburt FireFighter Group our deepest condolences to the Coxson Family. Mrs. Reita Coxson, wife, of Crestview, FL and six (6) children survive. Please contact Chief Bill Haney, Hurlburt Fire Prevention Chief at 850 884-2966 or [William.haney@hurlburt.af.mil](mailto:William.haney@hurlburt.af.mil) for additional details.**

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**Fire Pioneer Paul E. Odell answered his Final Alarm, December 15, 2002 at his home in South Pasadena, Florida. I received this information from Chief Sandy Sanchez who noted in the Colorado Springs paper obituaries December 19, 2002 issue account: Paul was a Fire Protection Engineer for the U. S. Air Force for 33 years in Colorado Springs, CO. before moving to Florida in 1979. He was born in Anderson, Indiana. He is survived by his wife of 33 years, Grace Odell of South Pasadena, 2 sons, Bruce Odell of Oxnard, CA, Shannon Odell of Bremerton, WA, Daughter Joyce Geddes of Las Vegas, NV, 2 step sons, William E. Doud of Centerville, VA, Jeff Doud of Fort Collins, CO, 3 step daughters, Kelly Whitmore of Cook, MN, Sally Doud of Colorado Springs, CO, Terry Bajza of Colorado Springs, CO, Brother Gene Odell of Indianapolis, IN, 18 Grand Children and 13 Great Grand Children. Chief Odell was with the U.S. Army Air Corp's Fire Protection in 1941 and was instrumental in the development of many of the Aircraft Crash Fire Rescue training programs and operating procedures. On behalf of the Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs and their families, I have given Chief Odell's family our deepest condolences upon the passing**



of a dear friend and comrade. Would appreciate the widest dissemination of this message as possible wrote Chief Bob Barrow of the Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs.

Wrote by: Chief Bob Barrow, USAF CWO4 Retired

EDITOR, Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs

[chief.one@cox.net](mailto:chief.one@cox.net) (850) 243-1274

Wrote by: Chief Doug Courchene, USAF CMSGT Retired

Founding Editor, Retired Air Force Fire Chiefs

[dougecourchene@aol.com](mailto:dougecourchene@aol.com)

One of the most revered fire pioneers has left us. His legacy will live on. The Air Force Fire Protection Family is deeply saddened by his passing. According to Grace, Chief Odell's wife, Paul was very ill prior to passing. I'm so glad I had the chance to honor Chief Odell in "Pioneers With Intent" with an advance copy of my book still un-published.

"Humility arises as today's fire fighters come face to face with giants of the past, upon whose broad shoulders we stand to see that which had not been seen before. Without the giants of yesterday, visions would be shortsighted and the shrubs nearby would be mistaken for giant redwoods".

"Chief Odell organized fire and rescue departments at Army Air Corps Bases in seven states in 1941. He led convoy of Class 125 Crash Trucks from Chicago, Illinois to New Orleans, Louisiana and started a fire school at Camp Ponchutrain. In 1943, Chief Odell became Chief Fire Protection, Northwest Service Command and delivered more fire trucks to Alaska. Chief Odell headed Fire Protection, Headquarters, Tactical Air Command, 1946-1949. Chief Odell served as Chief, Fire Protection Air Defense Command (ADC) for 23 years. He ended a distinguished 33 career in 1973". Doug's book will have more of the story when published...

**QUARTERLY NETWORK NEWSLETTER (QNN) is a work in progress.** A 38-Year Friendship Rekindled. Between Chief Joe Jarrell, [firechief6736@yahoo.com](mailto:firechief6736@yahoo.com) of Austin, Texas and Chief Bill Chilson, [redshamrock303@aol.com](mailto:redshamrock303@aol.com) of Sterling Heights, Michigan. It was at Selfridge AFB, December 31, 1964, they were last together. The occasion, a joint Retirement Ceremony for two decorated veterans of WW II and Cold War Era. Both men were finishing a distinguished military career that started with Bill in 1942 in the US Navy and Joe as a Combat Rifleman in the US Army (Pacific Theater of Operations for both). More recently, Joe as NCOIC of Selfridge Fire Department and Bill as the Station Chief. Joe and Bill are planning on being at the Dallas-2003 Gathering to catch up on some of those missing 38 years. **Editor's comment:** Bill and I had served together at Kelly AFB and K-10 Air Base, Korea, in 1952/53. We had kept in contact with each other and I was aware that he had retired at Selfridge AFB in the 60s. Joe and I had developed a close relationship (emails, snail mail and phone) and found that we had a lot of mutual friends. When Joe mentions Selfridge in the 60s, a light bulb went on in my brain and I asked the question if he knew Sgt. Bill Chilson? Reply, "one of the best NCOs I ever work with, how do I get in touch with him". That's networking in action. The QNN email listing includes 315 members at last count. Most of these listings include phone numbers and a brief "bio" of past and present status. Thanks to the website "Retirees Survey" <http://www.dodfire.com/index.htm> for this information. Please complete this survey if you have not done so, or have a status change. The reason this is mentioned, almost weekly a request is received from someone looking for someone else. Use these email listings to

communicate with one another. In most cases it is as easy as clicking on the email listing. Let your QNN Editor know if someone needs locating...

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**SICK CALL: Chief Bill Wilson, USAF CMS Retired of Fort Walton Beach**

Was admitted to the FWB Medical Center's Intensive Care Coronary Unit, December 3, 2002, with serious medical problems. His condition has not improved; family only permitted. In addition to the heart, lung and kidney systems are seriously affected. Bill is incoherent at present. Dialysis is expected to start 9 December in an effort to turn Bill's condition around. Right now prayers for Bill and family are needed. Son, Ronnie, and daughter, Patty, are keeping close to their dad. The other problem is mom, Ruth, was just recently released from the hospital with non-operable lung cancer diagnosis. Ruth is trying to build her strength up to start treatment for the cancer. The children have asked that mom not be told all the facts.

**Editor's comments:** The power of prayer in numbers and faith in the Heavenly Father works miracles. Let us pray for the sick and their families, for "His" blessing. A wise person once said, "...you gotta know what sadness be yours and what be somebody else's..."

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**STAMP FUND CONTRIBUTORS: Chief Doug Courchene - [dougecourchene@aol.com](mailto:dougecourchene@aol.com)**

For a special donation to the Chief J.K. Schmidt "Stamp Fund", other donations: **Chief Theodore Endy - [chief@borg.com](mailto:chief@borg.com); Chief Bob Vreeland-Riverside, Calif., Chief Chet Weger - [Chetweger@gci.net](mailto:Chetweger@gci.net); Chief Jack Bol - [Jrbol@hotmail.com](mailto:Jrbol@hotmail.com); Chief Joe Cherniga - [JOESKIPP@aol.com](mailto:JOESKIPP@aol.com)** and Mrs. Kathleen Rushin, widow of Chief Bob Rushin, Hurlburt AFB. Kathleen wrote of their grandson, "Robert", a Lt. Paramedic with the Prattville Fire Department is following in Bob's footsteps. *Editor's comment: The QNN is privately funded by members' contributions. They are most appreciated. Email addresses are used whenever possible to promote networking.*

*Editor's comment: The QNN is privately funded by members' contributions. They are most appreciated. Email addresses are used whenever possible to promote networking.*

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**Editor's CONFESSION Continued:** PCS to New Castle County Airport Air Base, (ADC), Delaware, in December 1953 from Korea. F-94Cs provided alert Air Defense mission and commercial aircraft utilized this busy airport. The county had a small complimentary 2-man crew housed in a station next to the Air Force Fire Station with a 75-man department. Fire Chief Charlie Heck, 3 Assistant Chiefs and 3 Fire Inspectors were civil service rated. TSgt James D. Cooper was NCOIC of the military firefighters. I reported in as a new Buck Sergeant happy to be back in the States and less than 3 hours from home in Odenton, Maryland. At NCCA there was a lot of free time on my off-days. I completed OCS correspondence course and several other ECI 95170 and photograph courses. I attended Tech School 95170 at Lowry AFB in Denver, Colorado, graduating top of my class. Received three commendations for saving aircrew and reducing aircraft damage. One was a Viscount twin-engine turbo-prop commercial airliner landing with right engine fully involved in flame. Wing collapsed upon rollout. My crew was first on the scene, quickly cutting a rescue path by controlling the fire that was in the path of the main passenger egress route. Opened main passenger door and assisted passenger safely from the fire area. The Allegheny Airline Company was able to make on-site repair and make the aircraft air worthy again. The other 2 aircraft were F-94C model, fully loaded with 2.5 air-to-air rockets and 50 Cal ammunition with two souls on board. Both aircraft had aborted on takeoff. The most negative duty was

“24 Hr. Alert Standby”. A 3- man crash crew rotated in 4 hour shifts, usually once in a 24 hour period. In good or bad weather we had to stay with our vehicle. Vehicles were not air conditioned back then. If the weather got really bad we could back our equipment inside a hangar and monitor a fire phone. There were no living facilities or creature comforts while there. Other than alert duty, life was good. Jim Cooper, CMS USAF Retired-[fdchief1@cox.net](mailto:fdchief1@cox.net) and I became best friends and remain so to present time. Jim is my next-door neighbor and was my replacement as Eglin AFB Fire Chief. NCCA was a great location, accessible to many points of interest. Jim and I tried most of them out. It was while at NCCA I met my wife to be, Nancy, in May 1955, the month I sewed on SSgt. On September 2, 1955 we were married and settled into our apartment in Wilmington, Delaware. Life was really great then. But Nan was still in the US Army at Fort Edgewood Arsenal and in October she received notice of a pending overseas PCS to France. We decided if she could obtain a hardship discharge, that I would end my military commitment on 26 November 1955 and return to my civil service fire department job. That’s exactly what happened. Nan was honorably discharged in October and I obtained return rights to civil service and transferred to the ready reserves. That story will be reserved for the next QNN April-June issue.



**Nomads Corner: Chief Doug Courchene-**

[dougecourchene@aol.com](mailto:dougecourchene@aol.com) wrote. Evelyn and I completed our RV trip to The Grand Canyon National Park and returned home 104 Meredith St. Mt. Olive, NC, 28365 (919) 658-0802 safely in October. Chief Roy Johnson-[smokierdj@prodigy.net](mailto:smokierdj@prodigy.net) wrote, Sweething’s “honey-do” list completed at the Home 40 and we

are heading out for the Snow Bird roundup. We will give you a shout when we get settled”. ALEXANDRIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (England AFB, LA Facelift) is an ideal rest stop for those traveling through Central Louisiana. Chief Milton “Mickey” Wallace still lives in the area and was England AFB Fire Chief at time of base closure. Mickey maintains a logbook of prior FireFighters with their current address and phone number. He can be contacted at [Mickeywla@yahoo.com](mailto:Mickeywla@yahoo.com) or 318-445-6671. The State & City have combined to revitalize the Base into a recreational Mecca. A grand opening was recently held for a 18 Hole 11 Million Dollar golf course; "England Oaks" located in a gated, 184 unit housing for retirees. Another 180 housing units are rented to the local community both have waiting lists. The old officers club is an upscale restaurant with a new hotel to be built beside it next year; The old school and day care are leased to local Church, the GYM is leased to YMCA and the hospital is leased to State health care unit. ALEXANDRIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT has a NEW 2 MILLION Dollar FIRE STATION. A new 34 Million New Terminal and Tower should be complete in 2004. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service occupy a single big hangar. The Army Joint Readiness Training Command occupies a 3 bay hangar and the old munitions area and conducts monthly war games by Fort Polk. Its’ not unusual to have 747, C141, C5, KC10 and multiple Helicopters all setting on the ramp). The Airport is a mini-park with a large shooting water fountain surrounded by 5 various aircraft mounted on pedestals. Pride Aviation is our fixed base operator and performs aircraft refueling and maintenance for commercial, private and military aircraft. They also refurbish civilian aircraft in 3 of our old hangars. Please call Milton & Shirley Wallace the next time you are passing through Alexandria and

have some time to spend. **Editor's comments: Mickey, thanks for the excellent report and watch out for those "Snowbirds".**

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**"SAC" Senior FireFighter Reunion @ Vandenburg AFB, 25-28 September 2002.**

Chief John C. Eliseo- [homesafe@best1.net](mailto:homesafe@best1.net) -wrote: Our group included Jack & Ruth Schneider, Eldean & Pat Miller, John & Betty Stahr, Pete & Kathy Moreno, Ewen & Norma Garner, Ray & Vi Booth, Phil & Yvonne Medina, Tom & Bonnie Kelly, Juan Chacon, Albert Nash, John & Pat Eliseo, Michael Arzabel, Shanna Henry and Jim & Mrs. McClain. The first day we visited the La Purisima Mission, one of the 21 missions that Father Junipero Serra founded along the California Coast from San Diego to San Francisco. Next we visited Solvang, a Dutch tourist town. The following day we toured the Vandenberg Base Fire Department. A Power Point slide showed us all the stations and equipment. Then they demonstrated several crash and rescue trucks, followed by a tour of the Fire Station. That afternoon, the Base PA bussed us around the base pointing out the historical missile sites including the deactivated AF Space Shuttle facilities and then stopping at the Space and Missile Museum. That evening we held our Banquet Dinner. Awards were presented to Eldean & Pat Miller for traveling the furthest. Vandenberg Fire Inspector James McClain accepted the Distinguished FireFighter Award, (selected by popular vote). John Eliseo presented the Achievement Award to Harold Burks for his outstanding support during the aborted 2001 Sept 14-18 SAC Senior FireFighter Reunion at the AF Academy because of 9/11. Finally an Achievement Award to Jack Schneider for his outstanding support in publishing and production of the SAC Senior FireFighters "Smoldering Embers" newsletters.

Sorry for the late report but my Gall bladder operation was performed on 30 Sept. On my way from the OR to the recovery room, my ticker decided to stop for a break. They restarted it with the "Paddles" and caused much concern amongst the DR's since none had an explanation for this occurrence. Anyhow it set me back a few weeks during recovery but now I'm about 90% the old grouch that I used to be. **Editor's comments: Thanks to John and Jack Schneider for keeping the SAC Senior FireFighters Group together over the years and a good report. Bob**

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Expect the Inaugural Edition of "PEDRO NEWS" to arrive in your email box on New Year's Day if you are a "PEDRO PUKE" AND HAVE SIGNED IN WITH [PedroNews@frontiernet.net](mailto:PedroNews@frontiernet.net) , Please provide the PEDRO Detachment(s) / location(s) where you flew and dates (from-to) for our Data Bank. Editors Steve Mock [h43husky@frontiernet.net](mailto:h43husky@frontiernet.net) and Paul Metzner [pjmetzner@acninc.net](mailto:pjmetzner@acninc.net) are requesting your photos, war stories, articles and jokes and anything that you feel will inform, interest or entertain fellow PEDRO Brethren. **Editor's comment: Steve and Paul you have a great newsletter going and I predict great success. Bob Barrow**

**A FIREFIGHTER'S PERSPECTIVE: B-52 CRASH at McCoy AFB, Florida in 1972, Tail 0625 crashed short of runway at McCoy after multiple engine failures on 3/31/72. 306th Bombardment Wing (Heavy), was McCoy's host unit. A young A/1C Craig Smith was assigned to the McCoy Fire Department in 1971/72. This epic crash, is**



found on Craig's website at <http://home.attbi.com/~43spanner/webdoc1.htm>. Craig is a 24-year veteran with the City Fire Bureau of Portland, Oregon and has a several web pages worthy of investigating at <http://home.attbi.com/~43spanner/index.htm> titled "Fire Career Page". Now back to a day Craig and a bunch more will never forget. Craig had taken up position mid-runway during the in-flight emergency. I can remember arriving and starting up the TYPE 0-11A pump engine to make sure it was warm and ready. After looking up and down the runways I noted that most everybody was in position. The B-52 Heavy was fully loaded with fuel and bombs and just short of the runway approach end when our crew chief commented that it didn't look lined up right. It was so close up it seemed close enough to touch. It just hovered there for a second, and then it rolled, pointing one of its enormous wings directly to the ground and slammed into the base housing area just off the runway. One of the crewmen used his ejection seat but punched straight into the ground. The B52 had taken off minutes before with a full fuel load of about 40,000 gallons. I think every ounce of fuel went up that second of impact, covering a two-block housing area. The first thing I thought was nukes or at least high explosives but it was just fuel. Next thing I know my crew chief was yelling, "GO!" So I went. The normal way to the housing area was off the base and out the main gate. I don't think any of the crash rigs had ever been off the flight line. Today we were going straight down the runway to the perimeter fence. I don't know who was first, but there was a hole cut in the fence when we arrived. This rig was by no means the perfect off road vehicle and I wasn't sure it would get over the bump between the fence and the off base road, but it did. I don't remember names of streets anymore and wasn't worried about it then. We knew where we were going; the problem was, as we got close, it looked like a war zone, with debris everywhere. There was no real aircraft left to set up on, like we are trained to do. Just pieces of all sizes and fire everywhere, car fires-several house fires-tree fires and fuel fires. We weren't sure where to start so we just worked ourselves to the main fire we could see. I can remember having to drive down the sidewalks, taking out several mailboxes with the front bumper. We got to the main part of the fire and let loose with the turrets. The plane went down in the only vacant lot in the whole housing area, I've wondered if the pilot managed to do that or if it just happened. The only recognizable part of the aircraft, other than part of the landing gear in the middle of a living room, was the tail section. We removed the tail gunner; he was the only crewman I saw that was still in one piece. He was burnt to a crisp. I remember his sunglasses still on his head. The big flames seemed to go out pretty quickly with the "AFFF" on the crash rigs that made it up close enough to apply foam to the fire. By now the Orlando fire crews were showing up and the focus had turned to the structure fires and victims. It was then I noticed all the radio traffic. I don't remember a word being said since our initial dispatch. I wonder if my crew chief had been listening. We then focused our attention after the main fire to extinguishing spot fires and assisting the Orlando crews mop up the house fires. The rest of the day was spent placing our rigs back in service so the military flights could resume at McCoy. Seven B-52 crewmembers died instantly that day, and one 10-year-old boy died three days later from burns he had received. It was a very somber time at McCoy Air Force Base after the crash. It was still fresh on everyone's mind when I left for Ubon, Thailand, a month later. As tragic as it was, it has always amazed me more people weren't hurt or killed that day.

**Think this life is special...live and savor every moment... This is not a dress rehearsal!**

*The Desire To Serve, The Ability To Perform, and The Courage to Act*

**The AF Fire Protection Motto. Two recent fires/disasters bore up this motto.**

Andersen AFB, Guam slowly digs out after Typhoon Pongsona makes a direct hit 8 Dec. -- <http://www.af.mil/news/Dec2002/121102224.shtml> -- has the story. **Fire Chief Paul Giles wrote of the FireFighters involvement.** We had just recovered from two typhoons within three days of each other a few months back. Typhoon Pongsona was way worst! Wind gust of 85 MPH were registered before the wind gauge broke. It tore the stall doors off the Fire Station, destroyed all the hangars except one, with extensive structural damage throughout the Base. Since the storm we've been downtown assisting in mutual aid the past 5 days fighting bulk storage tank fires. The P-15 is really showing off! It 's awful to say.... but this is the times FireFighters really shine! All the firefighters are doing great and the Wing and "island" is really proud of them.... as I am!

Lackland AFB at the Base Exchange Service Station witness a tragic fire due to errors by a customer dispensing fuel into 5 gas cans setting in the open bed of his pickup truck. The blaze was quickly out of control when static electric ignited one can. The driver standing in the bed threw the pump nozzle and burning can out of the truck, catching himself on fire and the pump island surroundings, too. Click on the WebPages -- <http://www.af.mil/news/Dec2002/121102225.shtml> -- for the story. **Fire Chief Jerry Ball wrote of this incident occurred at the AAFES fuel station on Lackland.** It was captured on the video surveillance system. I didn't realize how much interest this incident would have with the news media. You often heard of incidents of static electricity but the fact this was



Photo of Pickup at AAFES Gas Station

caught on tape makes good copy. We had four pump island-standers who assisted the burn victim prior to our arrival. He is at Ft Sam Brooks Army Medical Center and doing well recovering from 3rd degree burns on both legs below the knees. I was the senior fire officer on duty, the fire crews arrived in less than 5 minutes from time of notification and quickly extinguished the blaze and overhauled the fire area. We are preparing short condensed videotape for e-mail to other bases for their information.

**Comments from Donald Warner, Chief of Air Force Fire Protection:** The Lackland fire was caused by a static electricity discharge resulting from filling portable gasoline containers in the back of the truck. This solution is simple: Portable gasoline containers should never be filled while inside a vehicle or in the bed of a vehicle. The lack of ground causes static electricity to buildup and a spark to occur. To no one's surprise, the spark causes a fire. We're looking at our fire prevention program and I intend to energize our public education efforts in the near future. In my view, it's long overdue.

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**Bob Barrow, 126 Clements St NE, Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548**